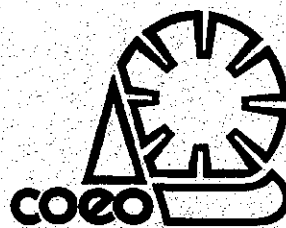


# Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF  
Volume 11, No. 4, June/July 1999

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



# Pathways

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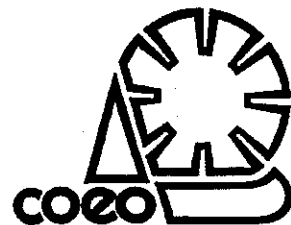
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THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF  
Volume 11, No. 4, June/July 1999

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



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## Features

<b>Can you tell me how to get beyond Amazon?</b> <i>by Liz Newberry</i> .....	4
<b>Women's Fear of Violence in the Wilderness</b> <i>by Tobin Day and Tom G. Potter, Ph.D.</i> .....	9
<b>Validating Voice and Intuition</b> <i>by Darcia Kohuska and heidi mack</i> .....	12
<b>Conjuring Risk and Disappointment</b> <i>by Katherine Browne</i> .....	14
<b>Moon Over The Sleeping Giant</b> <i>By Amy Gauldie</i> .....	15
<b>the Eramosa beaver</b> <i>by Rachel Plotkin</i> .....	19
<b>Mother Heal Me</b> <i>By Jennifer Jupp</i> .....	19
<b>Women Outdoors: The Path That Lead To Here</b> <i>by Beth Mairs</i> .....	20
<b>Voices of Wilderness Women: The Network</b> <i>contributed by Jennifer Jupps</i> .....	23
<b>In the Presence of Women</b> <i>by Angie Stevens</i> .....	24
<b>Conquering Confidence: Reflections on a Women's Winter Expedition</b> <i>by Catherine Dudley, Sue Ferren and Heidi Glackmeyer</i> .....	29
<b>Ice and Life: A Metaphor for Living</b> <i>by Stana Luxford</i> .....	31

## Columns

<b>Editor's Logbook</b> <i>heidi mack</i> .....	2
<b>Sketch Pad</b> .....	2
<b>Backpocket: Creating Plates: Outdoor Adventure for Girls Program Ideas</b> <i>by Deanne Donohue</i> .....	17
<b>Backpocket: Teletubbies and Teen Magazines</b> <i>hiedi mack</i> .....	18
<b>Reading the Trail</b> .....	26
<b>The Gathering</b> .....	32
<b>Prospect Point: The Joy (and Pain) of Empathy</b> <i>By Rachel Plotkin</i> .....	35



## Women and the Wilderness

simplicity  
heaving white pines  
smallness  
in a ceiling of stars  
clarity  
wonder  
damp dew  
mother  
woman  
earth

This collection of writings, dedicated to stories, current issues and reflections of women in the wilderness, has spent a good deal of time warming in the front seat heat of my aged and sputtering Toyota Tercel. It has hiked through Algonquin Park in a dry bag, paddled through the lakes surrounding the Leslie Frost Centre, and been lost in a café in downtown Perth. It continues to be on a voyage of its own... seemingly searching for more — more understanding, more answers, more connections. Or perhaps that is me, the editor — wishing all voices might be found and represented here — the proverbial impossible task.

What did find its way to my desk and email in-box were astute, creative, engaging pieces of

this puzzle, or better yet, this mosaic, this important issue of *Pathways*.

Why an entire issue dedicated to women and the wilderness? I'm thinking of it as a celebration and acknowledgment of the difference in women's experience in the outdoors, rather than a plea for equality or a competition with men and their experience in the same domain. With this issue, we are marking a place of understanding, of opening into the gentleness and strength of simply, and profoundly, being women and being in the world out of doors. We are making sense of how we connect and respond to the wilderness — why it is a place of health and wellness, of courage and completion.

The words I read in these articles are the branches of a hearty and solid tree, reaching out, up, moving to the rhythms of the wind. The seeds of the tree were planted generations ago by women travelers — adventurers in both body and spirit — intrigued and inspired by the earth and our connection to her. As these pages attest, women's experiences in the wilderness are indeed strong and alive, and will continue to bring meaning to our lives and inform our practise as educators.

*beidi mack, editor*

## Sketch Pad

### Artists Corner

Art in this issue was created by many hands. The cover is by Stana Luxford. Contributions by Heather Campbell, Kim Askew, Gerarda Schouten, Adele Mungford, Zabe MacEachren, Taylor Judson, Barbara Mueller, heidi mack, Catherine Dudley, Sue Ferren, Heidi Glackmeyer, Angie Stevens and Karen Zabel. Thanks also to the musical trio "Three Sheets to the Wind" for their rendition of

"Woodsmoke and Oranges" which inspired an ink-on-paper workshop at this year's Wilderness Women's Weekend, designed to create simple artistic responses to the articles written for this issue.



## Seeds of Thought

**A**t the September 1998 COEO conference in Dorset, twenty women and three men generated questions to guide writers for this issue of Pathways dedicated to women and the wilderness. While many of these questions remain unanswered here in writing, they continue to be examined in kitchen, road trip and paddling conversations. Here is a sample of some of the ponderings that inspired this journal edition.

Why might women fear success, i.e., fear or thwart their (our) own potential power?

What does the absence of visible minorities in O.E. mean, what gets to count as O.E.? Whose experiences and needs does O.E. (as currently conceived) speak to?

Why have women, and are women, still struggling to find voices in wilderness education?

Do women need to be seen as competent in 'hard skills' in order to be respected (as leaders or as part)?

What image do men have of women as outdoor leaders? What issues come out of these images? (i.e., struggle for respect)

Is it important for women to play a role in all male-type programs (as a representation or role model)?

Why do women bond on a wilderness trip in an unspoken way (on all women's trips)?

Sage advice a native man shared with me...that men need to allow women to heal—women are the caregivers of the earth. Only when the women heal can men begin to heal, and only then will men and women walk side by side!

What can we as women do to change the way people think about women and wilderness?

How does an average lower income play into women in the outdoors?

What are the differences in dynamics among 'men only' recreational experiences, 'women only' and 'mixed?' Why do we seek these exclusive experiences?

How do we make space for women in the

outdoors and advocate for women, or make women a central priority without shutting down or threatening men?

How do we negotiate space inclusively? ~ of backlash; wanting to include but wanting space for women.

Person vs. man/woman—which does come first? Are we a person, then a woman, or do we empower ourselves more by being woman than people?

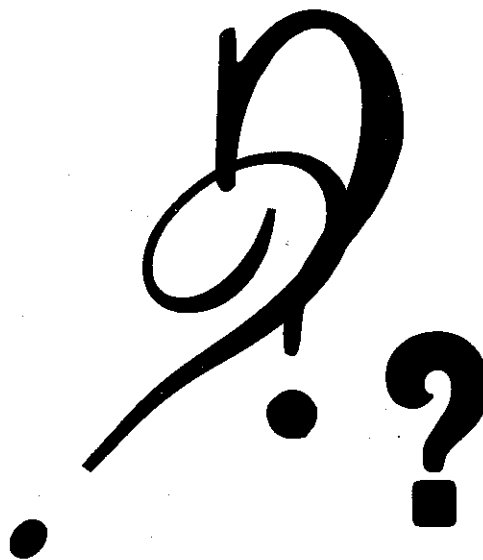
Why does carrying the canoe over the portage garner more respect than cooking a great meal?

What is the history of women in camping—wilderness & O.E.? (timeline)

Why do women have to work twice as hard to gain respect and validation in the outdoor education community?

Where are the role models in wilderness activities in the age 50+ bracket?

Is it possible we can go too far the other way? (in devaluing women who don't prefer camping, sleeping out, staying home with their kids, etc.) In our values, do we (i.e., COEO women) think less of women who don't like wilderness (and all the stuff that goes with that) the way we do? Why does this seem so heavy?



## Can you tell me how to get beyond Amazon?

### Stories of an Outdoorswoman

by Liz Newberry

*I have come to see the way I take up space as an outdoorswoman as extremely conflicted.*

**T**wo years ago I took part in a Rivers Day celebration down the historic Fraser River. There were upwards of 50 canoes on the river that day. Mine was the only canoe sterned by a woman. My canoe-mate was a central figure in the canoeing community of the nearby northern B.C. town, and he received much good-natured chiding for his 'bow-position.'

At day's end, while my friend was carrying some gear up to his truck, I picked up his canoe and carried it the 300 metres to the car park. Heads turned, and one bystander even uttered a surprised "Amazon!" The local newspaper photographer stopped me for a brief photo shoot. I had stumbled onto something deeply cultural here: women didn't steer or carry canoe; further, they didn't seem to believe in their ability to do these things.

My actions during this day of canoeing so obviously disrupted an unspoken norm that I began to question the meanings on a deeper level. Just as women have historically taken a backseat to men in terms of access to experiences and allocation of resources, they have taken a metaphoric bow seat, and turned around to see the power, decision making, and leadership in outdoor experiences in the hands of men. I am one of many outdoors women who refuse to sit idly back; however, I have come to see the way I take up space as an outdoorswoman as extremely conflicted. I'm intrigued by the complexity of it, at the multiple interpretations of my act of carrying a canoe, of the double-edged nature of just doing what I do.

During several years of journeying through lakes, rivers and portages of the Canadian shield, I've simultaneously been on a journey of understanding of how gender influences my experiences and my teaching in the outdoors<sup>1</sup>. My thinking has changed with time and with each new story, and it is my hope that it continues to change. For now, I'd like to share a

few stories that just might resonate as all too familiar.

### Jack, where are we on the map? Steve, am I doing this right? Josh, what's the plan for the day?

While working for the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School, I co-led predominantly expedition-based courses. As an instructor, I find that it more difficult than one might think to be seen as equally competent as my male co-instructors. Students tend to ask my co-instructor significantly more, sometimes all, questions regarding leadership, decisions, navigation and technical skills, often while I sit beside him admiring the view of the clouds and the wide expansive lake. While I understand that the one-sided questions stem from a culturally constructed understanding of men's and women's strengths, and that they are not necessarily a personal attack against me, I initially experienced this phenomenon as nonetheless difficult and threatening. Inwardly, I reacted sometimes with anger, resentment, and frustration, and outwardly I reacted with a need to prove myself, to be seen as competent and skilled by my students.

Over the years, my need to prove myself has faded; while I don't generally like to be seen as incompetent, I am much more comfortable. What has changed is not the students' questions nor their reactions to me, but, I suppose, that I have proven something to myself. I simply *know* that I *am* capable, and am therefore confident in my own competence.

The pedagogical implications are clear: if, at any time in my career, I have felt a need to prove myself, my students, who generally don't have as strong an outdoor background, are also

likely feeling that they are on very unsure ground. As educators we need to figure out what is going on at the confluence of confidence and competence so that we might support our students in walking onto more solid ground.

The self-doubt of seemingly competent outdoorswomen is an extremely puzzling and common phenomenon noted by T.A. Loeffler during her research on women in outdoor careers. She explains that women "view their personal competence through a filter composed of society's perceptions and responses which, in turn, influence their self-perceptions of their competence" (Loeffler 1999). As a result, women's sense of competence tends to be lower than their actual competence, a trend that is opposite for men. Loeffler identifies several strategies that educators can use to help participants gain and claim competence:

- provide opportunities for participants to complete individual tasks
- provide frequent non-threatening opportunities to practice skills
- provide competence claiming opportunities (e.g., a bragging circle)
- provide role models and mentoring
- monitor the learning environment for all oppressions and work to eliminate them
- provide single gender groupings
- and re-frame competence, not as a problem, but as an act of revolution (Loeffler 1999).

### **Who lights the fire, cooks, hauls the canoes, and what difference does it make anyway?**

My instinctive reaction to gender stereotypes has always been to demonstrate that women can be active and skilled in all facets of the outdoors. As instructors, there is much talk about role-modelling and how important an educational tool it is, whether we are role-modelling being strong women, caring men, or simply the ability to take care of ourselves. It's important to challenge notions of what women and men can and can't do, and I hoped that if my female students saw me as strong and capable then they might feel more confident in

their own strengths and abilities. For me, though, even the simple issue of role-modelling, has become muddled.

*On the last and hardest day of an outward bound course, in a rather dramatic ending, our group chose to do an activity called the "Leap of Life." It involved climbing up a 30 foot (skinny) pole, standing on a tiny platform on the top of it, swaying with it in the wind, and leaping off. The last to climb up, I stood frozen on that platform. After a long and difficult time, I jumped. Margaret, a strong and resourceful 24 year old student, approached me later: "In a bizarre way, it was good to see you have so much trouble with the Leap of Life. Finally! Something that's not easy for you!" I was shocked, and I was angry with myself.*

Margaret's gift to me was a sudden realization of the role that I'd been playing, that I had, in fact, cultivated; I had become what Karen Warren calls a "superwoman" (Warren 1985). Women guides and instructors often deal with very gendered outdoor terrain by striving to achieve unparalleled competence, by becoming "superwomen." The superwoman becomes perceived by others as unrepresentative of ordinary women, an anomaly, and, as such, people are not forced to deal with their sexist conditioning that perceives dissonance in seeing women in the out of doors. Her competence is not viewed for what it is — the ongoing struggle to gain parity in a male dominated profession (Warren 1996, 15) — and the further double bind is that her existence makes it difficult to problematize gendered outdoor terrain.

Being an "honorary man" meant that I didn't need to interrogate the paradigm that labels the outdoors a man's domain because I fit into it. Furthermore, and more importantly on a pedagogical level, I had become inaccessible as a role model to women students because they perceived my level of skill as unachievable. I hadn't been role modelling being a strong woman, but something that my students perceived they could never achieve. Presenting myself as strong became a source of alienation

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*As educators we need to figure out what is going on at the confluence of confidence and competence so that we might support our students in walking onto more solid ground.*

*I had become inaccessible as a role model to women students because they perceived my level of skill as unachievable.*

rather than a source of relationship. I am now careful of the illusive distinction between not hiding my competence and skill, and revealing myself as human.

While it's fairly clear that role-modelling the "superwoman" or "superhuman" has very conflicted outcomes, I've always felt it important to role-model healthy gender relations and non-traditional roles. It is, in fact, a common practice at Outward Bound for instructors to consciously reverse "typical" roles in the sexual division of labour during the first couple days of a course; women will teach portaging and navigating, and men will teach cooking and pot washing, for example.

*Near the end of my second Outward Bound course, I was doing a "check-in" with one of my students before she went on solo. This gave us a chance to exchange feedback and thoughts on our journey thus far. She looked at me and said, "Ya know - -this is the first place I have ever been where gender doesn't matter. It feels great."*

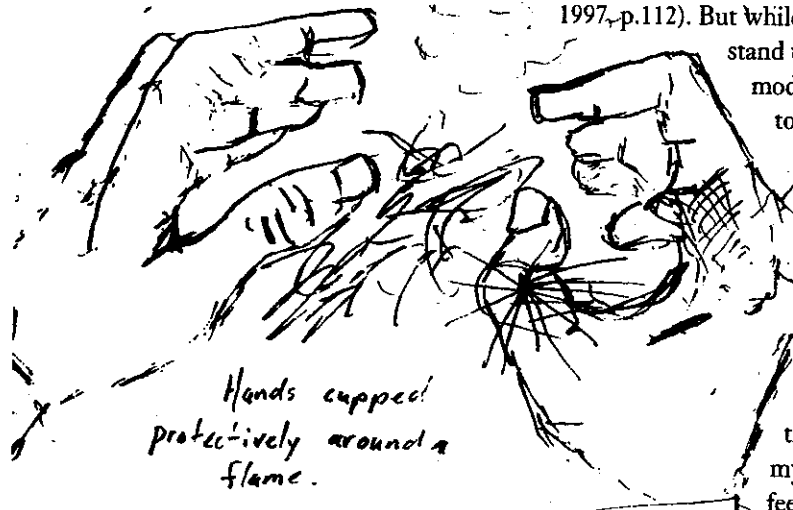
*I felt satisfied, proud. I'd achieved one of my central goals: instructing a course that was gender neutral, that saw no difference in the men and women on the course, where everyone cleaned up, everyone carried canoes, everyone read the maps, everyone had a voice, everyone had a time when they were "leader"—all regardless of gender. I had wanted to create a space where my students could see a strong woman in the outdoors, and where, particularly, female students could find their own strength, breaking out of their*

*expectations for what they could accomplish and what they might be good at, a space where they had strong bodies and strong voices. Somehow, my co-instructor and I, together with the group had managed to work towards creating such a space.*

At the time, I thought I was doing something quite radical, counter-hegemonic even. The naivety of my thinking is stark to me now; I'd thought about gender equality only in terms of the sexual division of labour, and the ability to accomplish difficult physical tasks. I hadn't even begun to interrogate the cultural norms that give greater value to individual strength than to the ability to ask for help, for acts of great individual daring than to collective accomplishment. As a superwoman I was disrupting the norm that says a woman cannot be powerful in the outdoors, but doing it in a way that replaced a man's body with my body without really challenging how a body's ability is valued. Disrupting these norms is about interrogating how the division of labour is steeped in unequal power relations in other ways, and how it is important that we can all play multiple roles.

Another danger in the practice of gendered role-modelling lies in its underlying assumption that women are a homogeneous category, which ignores that "what it means to be a woman has multiple significances and meanings which cannot be separated from class, colour, sexuality, 'dis/abledness and ethnic background'" (Morch 1997, p.112). But while I have come to understand the limitations of role-

modelling, I'm not yet ready to let go of it, as other instructors have. I do think it's important that our students see us in many and varied and, perhaps, unexpected roles. I've been told by female students that, when they start a trip seeing the canoe on my back, it makes them feel more like it is in the





realm of their possibilities. What I do understand is that we need to do more than role-model, otherwise we risk "reducing gender to sex roles and stereotypes in the role modelling practice" (Morch 1997, p. 124). If we want to uncover the inequity hidden in the sexual division of labour, then we need to do more than reverse the roles; we need to explore the meanings of those roles and, through discussion, storytelling, drama, however the means, we must do it and do it carefully.

### Who am I, or rather, how am I seen?

I have started thinking more about what it means to be a woman who works, and often lives, in the outdoors. It's a place where I feel free, and where I am able to be "the core of myself." Yet, it's also a place where the conflict between my "core" and the expectations of society are brought to the foreground.

*One morning on a long expedition with a wonderful group, I decided that it was indeed time for the disco outfit, and so I emerged from my tent in a bright, yellow and black, full-body, polyester, snake-skin "thing". The effect was pure fun. I went around my morning business to the accompaniment of the sounds of hilarity.*

*Later, I started loading canoes with a participant. Our conversation drifted from disco outfits, to urban fashion. Eventually, he remarked that my morning outfit had surprised him, in light of the fact that I was "a butch."*

*I laughed. "OK, John, so what's a butch?"*

*"I mean it in the best possible way. It's a compliment."*

*"I know, but what do you mean by "butch?" What does that mean?"*

*Maybe I was unsure of how to pursue the issue while maintaining the integrity of this good-hearted young man. Maybe I weighed out how long it would take to really uncover what lay masked in this word against the hundred other things that needed my attention. Maybe I balanced the consequences of gaining a further reputation of "raving feminist" against the educational value of this teachable moment, in effect, choosing my battles. Maybe I just didn't*

*want to "go there". So I didn't. But I have thought about it since.*

The outdoors classroom requires some specific ways of being that are not typically feminine. I'm starting to wonder if young women are ever hesitant to take part in outdoor activities because of a perceived threat to their femininity? Is it "cool" for young women to see themselves as strong, physical, self-reliant, outdoorswomen? Maybe. But is it "cool" to be seen as a "butch?" I'm not sure. And it's hard to avoid how that term plays into internalized homophobia. Is labelling outdoorswomen "butches" a way of using homophobia to control all women's behaviour, exerting a not-so-subtle pressure to be more traditionally feminine. Addressing the issue can become extremely complex.

I think it's important to look at what is served by the idea of a feminine woman and a masculine man. If I were a more typically feminine woman, I would probably spend a lot of time and money on my "look;" I would probably not be able to run or jump as far or fast, and I would probably take up a lot less space. Seems fairly political. Also political is the way that terms like "sissy" use homophobia to regulate men to behave in traditionally masculine ways.

Femininity and masculinity play out in curious ways in the out-of-doors. Exploring such issues as experienced by women Outward Bound instructors, Julia Morch reflects that:

*we are constantly bombarded by messages of socially appropriate modes of behaving, talking, walking, eating, and dressing. Femininity is a culturally constructed concept that women both embrace and reject, invoke and struggle against...Control over self means that we have to resist the dominant social codes that regulate our culture. Sure you have the "choice" to cut off or grow your hair. Sure you have a "choice" in the clothes you wear. Or to get a job or an education. But..."Choices are never simple and personal and the consequences for non-compliance with the status quo is not always livable"(Lewis 1993, 87)."*  
(Morch 1995, 129).

*Femininity and masculinity play out in curious ways in the out-of-doors.*



When I have been called “butch” or “not a real woman/girl” it hasn’t changed my behaviour, but it has deepened the tension of following my own path, knowing that it contradicts many mainstream notions of what a woman should be. It’s “living against the grain,” and it’s complicated. It’s not as simple as merely rejecting the cultural norm of femininity, and being done with it. It’s a matter of rejecting those cultural norms and dealing with ongoing internal conflict in the process of re-writing or re-making oneself.

### What now, Amazon?

In the end, the lessons in my stories are really quite obvious; it seems strange that I needed to learn them in such painful ways! But where to go from here? How to get beyond the image of the “Amazon?” How to deal with these issues, and a myriad of others, while in the field? I wish I had all the answers.

Being in graduate school has afforded me a wealth of time and resources with which to reflect on my practice as an educator, and I’ve come to see reflexivity as a key for me. What is implicit in the way I tone-set? What lies behind the questions I ask? Am I asking the right questions? What is implied by simply being who I am, and by showing who I choose to show? In short, what are the assumed messages in the whole of my pedagogy? For now, I’ll just keep doing what I do, and do it carefully, secure

in the knowledge that absolutely nothing is ever simple.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> I want to recognize here that there are a range of other factors such as class, race, physical ability, size, sexuality, and ethnicity that also influence outdoor experience in concert with gender.

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*Liz Newberry is an outward bound instructor, scholar and educator. She is currently finishing her masters degree.*

## Women's Fear of Violence in the Wilderness

by Tobin Day and Tom G. Potter, Ph.D.

All women experience the fear of violence at some point in their lives (Bicher, Pettifer & Torge, 1997; Gordon & Riger, 1991; Warr, 1985). For many women this fear causes an alertness and a feeling of being "on guard while in public places" (Bicher et al., 1997). Instilled by the media, schools, parents, religious institutions, the legal system, families and friends, the fear of violence can act as a deterrent, preventing women and girls from participating in activities that require them to be alone, particularly after dark. Many women do not feel safe to frequent town and city centres after dark, thereby limiting their ability to travel freely (Deem, 1986). Although there is little research specifically addressing violence as a leisure constraint to women, Shaw and Whyte (1994) believe that fear may be a behaviour modifier instead or, in addition to, a preventative constraint. Perceptions of fear, therefore, limit some women's leisure activities within populated areas.

Aware of the consequences of the fear of violence in our own lives, and in the lives of those we love, we, the authors, set out to discover if and/or how the fear of violence affects experienced female travellers in the wilderness. More specifically, does this fear act as a leisure constraint to women in either the participation in or enjoyment of solo wilderness trips? By interviewing seven female students in an Outdoor Recreation program, we discovered political, social and personal underpinnings in their responses. In this article, we will address three major themes revealed through our qualitative research, and mentioned by most, if not all, of the co-researchers in their interviews: a) the existence of traditional stereotypes; b) the importance of situation in determining fear levels, and the significance of trip location; and c) alcohol consumption.

### Stereotypes

Sexual assault is veiled by myths: virgin archetypes counter promiscuous women; men cannot control their sexual "needs"; rapists are not "normal-looking or acting" people (Bicher et al., 1997; Dubinsky, 1993). These traditional myths, deeply embedded in Western culture, lead to assumptions about who rapists are not, and give women false conceptions of safe and dangerous situations. In our interviews with women, we found that these myths are frequently carried with women as they travel into the wilderness. For example, "red-necked fishermen" are perceived to be more dangerous than wilderness travellers who use appropriate gear and engage in appropriate activities.

There is no proof, however, that safe-looking wilderness travellers are less violent than the rest of society. In fact, by dismantling the assumptions surrounding sexual assault it becomes apparent that there is no concrete method to determine a potential rapist or sexual harasser. This is not to say that the women interviewed are ignorant of the facts concerning sexual violence. All seven women recognize that "stranger rape" accounts for a small percentage of sexual assault (less than 20%), and that a woman is most likely to be raped by someone she knows (Bicher et al., 1997). Socialization has taught us to retain stereotypes (Adams, 1993; Bicher et al., 1997; Brownmiller, 1975; Buchwald, 1993; Dubinsky, 1993). One co-researcher explains, "Who is a rapist anyway? I think that [sexual assault by] someone you know is more common, but that does not scare me as much as a stranger [rape]." Emotions cannot always be logical.

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*fear of violence can act as a deterrent, preventing women and girls from participating in activities that require them to be alone*

## Situation determining fear level

In addition to stereotypes, the concept of situations became important during the research process. All seven women concurred that they didn't experience the fear of violence on a regular basis. Fear occurs during times and in places that are perceived to be dangerous: encountering suspicious-looking people; poorly lit areas or run-down neighbourhood streets; being alone at home. In natural areas, the fear of violence can take form in a variety of situations. The absence of other wilderness travellers, for example, can create fear through isolation. In the event of an assault, no one would be present to help the woman in need. Beth, one of our interviewees, who has led wilderness trips and spent much of her youth out-of-doors, explains,

"I don't know how she [a woman who had completed a solo trip] 'did' the night. The nights, that's what scares... the seclusion, too. It's different when you can go home at night and lock your door. You can't lock your tent. There's no one to hear you if something crazy does happen... I probably wouldn't sleep very well."

Highly populated areas can also be potentially dangerous locations as the risk of meeting an assailant is perceived to be greater given the increased number of people. One woman explains this dilemma:

"There is a catch, because the more people you see, the more a chance that someone might assault you, but then again the more people you see might also reduce the chance."

The presence of too few or too many people in a particular situation can either detract from or augment the feelings of safety. There is also a middle ground, unquantifiable and unique to each woman, where a moderate number of people present in a situation results in a setting in which fear is low, infrequent or non-existent.

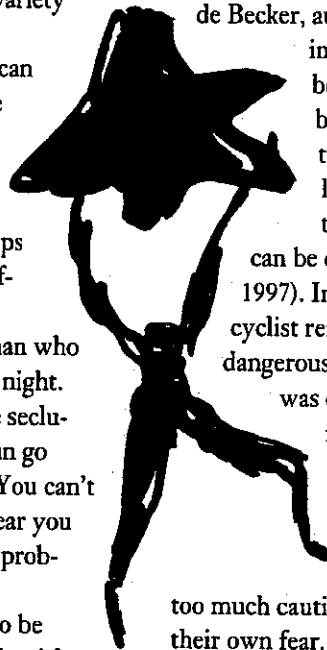
## Presence of Alcohol

Alcohol-intake in the wild is another contributing factor to the fear of violence. One woman cyclist discontinued her trip because she saw some suspicious-looking vehicles in the midst of broken beer bottles on the ground. If there is evidence of heavy use of alcohol in an increasingly populated wilderness, more women may experience additional fear of violence.

As mentioned earlier, deduction cannot always be logical. Real fear, according to Gavin de Becker, author and legal advisor specializing in the prediction of violent behavior, is "a signal intended to be brief, a mere servant of intuition" (de Becker, 1997, p. 277). By living lives surrounded by fear, the purpose of this state of mind can be overused and misused (de Becker, 1997). In following her intuition, the cyclist removed herself from a potentially dangerous situation; while one bike ride was cut short, however, this did not mean that this woman would not cycle alone again. Precaution (such as researching the area in which a woman would like to travel solo) is important, but too much caution can make women victims of their own fear. Learning to distinguish between true fear and false perceptions is an important tool to keep women and girls safe.

Understanding the implications of stereotypes, trip location, and alcohol is a significant learning process in the elimination of fear for women in the wilderness. Comprehension, however, is not a complete solution. To end fear, violence against women must stop. By making outdoor leaders more aware that the fear of violence exists and affects women in the wilderness, the myths of our rape culture can be diffused. Teaching women and girls to trust their intuition, while being aware of the stereotypes they may have internalized, can facilitate empowerment and make wilderness activities more accessible.

*Real fear, is  
"a signal intended  
to be brief, a mere  
servant of  
intuition"*



More research in this area is vital; for example, quantitative studies are required to illuminate the extent of harassment and violence against women in the wilderness. Additionally, more extensive qualitative projects examining how violence affects women not only on solo trips, but also on day-trips and all-women trips, are required to bring the issue of violence against women into the minds of those working in outdoor recreation. By recognizing that fear of violence (and violence) exist for women recreating in non-urban areas, outdoor educators can work towards creating situations in which women feel (and are) safe in non-urban situations and thus help to liberate women travellers and create a more accessible wilderness.

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The moment of release fills the air  
spreads over the fields of Jasmine and Daisy  
Arms upheld in pure exhalt  
Leaves of Oak sway in silent response.

Eyes mist over, there's nothing to see  
Sunflowers arch in upward jest  
Spinning in waves, high tide is in  
Ripened red apple falls to the ground

Blood flows softly to feed the poor heart  
Orange blossoms wait with patience  
Calf muscles tighten as you reach for the peak  
Nature and human feel one and complete.

Tara Wheeler



## Validating Voice and Intuition

by Darcia Kohuska and Heidi Mack

*We are better to not decide for another which intuitions, feelings, or reactions to situations are real and which are false.*

**T**he reason I don't want to stern the canoe is because I'm scared of falling in" I chuckled to myself as the words hit my ears and with a quick glance into 13 year old Annie's concerned eyes, my unmeditated response began "There's nothing to be..." but then trailed off. My brain, thoughts of voice, power, fear, intuition, and adolescent girls made a timely entrance.

I took a breath, stopped overpacking the canoe bag, stood up and gently looked at Annie. "You're afraid that you might tip the canoe if you are sterning". "Yeah", she carried on, "I've never done it before and I'm worried. What would happen if ..."

The fact that I think there's nothing to be afraid of and, that sterning the canoe in the quiet morning breeze seems unproblematic and safe, doesn't mean that Annie should feel this way. In fact, she's white with fear. It's real.

No question. She needs to talk about it because she doesn't feel safe. I need to listen to, not deny (saying "you have nothing to be afraid of" for example) her feelings. This way she can continue to trust herself and have a voice in who she is, how she feels and what she needs. I might not think Annie has anything to fear but Annie is afraid and that, bottom line, is what matters.

In Western culture, we have learned to listen by "fixing" the situation.

How many times have you heard someone's concern or fear be answered by a sentence starting with "Why don't you...?" In so doing we deny the girls and women (and anyone, for that matter) we work with, the affirmation and validation they deserve for voicing how they feel and why they feel this way. Some simple listening guidelines can be followed. As leaders (and humans!) we must suspend our own

perception of a situation - get into the shoes of whomever is speaking and listen. We are better to not decide for another which intuitions, feelings, or reactions to situations are real and which are false. Otherwise our judgment sends the message that others know what is best, how something should be or feel and eclipses one's knowledge of self.

### Intuition Informing Feelings

If we are prone to react to others' feelings and stories by fixing, we may have a greater struggle listening and validating feelings informed by intuition. Intuition can be thought of as a "skill" or a "tool" — albeit less tangible than other tools. Sometimes it is our most valuable tool as outdoor leaders and as women. Intuition guides us in our life, our work and our outdoor pursuits; it's what speaks to each of us as we walk home alone at night or as we consider a lake crossing with a group after a particularly long and arduous day. It informs us although using it as a tool often seems irrational. (Webster describes intuition as "1.a. The capacity of knowing without the use of rational process. b. knowledge acquired in this way. 2. Keen insight." (Webster's II, p. 371).

Hand-in-hand with intuition is the need for women to react to their intuition through voice and expression. To polish their antennae and respond to what directs her from inside — from her individual experience, from her truth, from her intuition. A woman speaking from this place shares information about how she can feel safe and well in a given situation.

Patriarchal culture encourages and conditions women to ignore and question their intuition; it is at times written off as a "woman's thing.", laughed at, suppressed, denied and

disregarded. Given this response to our feelings, we have learned to listen to others directing how we should be and, most detrimentally, how we should feel. (We feel afraid and we say it out loud and we are told: "there is nothing to be afraid of", we say we are too tired to lift the pack or that the campsite "doesn't feel like home" and we are told otherwise).

Intuition can be a critical dimension in rounding out one's own safety net and involves a "complex set of dynamics that are invisible," (COBWS Staff Handbook, p. 17). It is what Loren Eisely referred to as "the unseen, necessary balance" (et. al., p. 17). It is indeed a powerful voice that tells us, "It's okay" or "It's not okay".

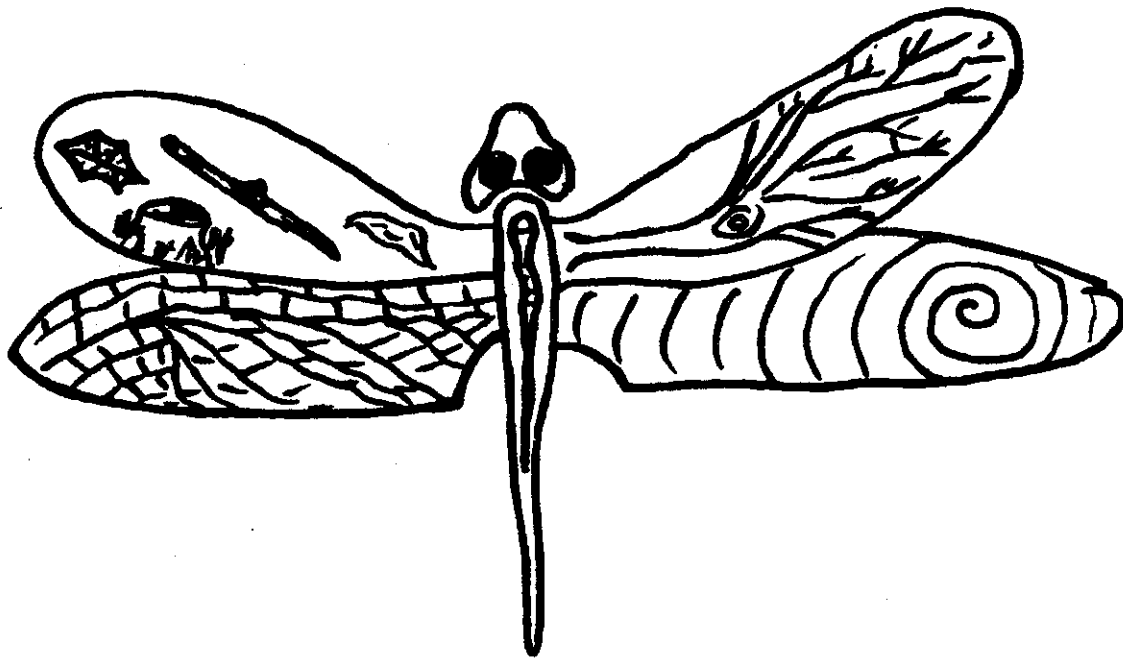
## What Can we Do?

Not only do we need to find, listen to, and develop our own inner voice, we must honour this voice within the women with whom we work. As outdoor leaders, it is our responsibility to validate and encourage these voices, responding with authenticity and compassion. If a woman admits she isn't comfortable being alone on a solo (due to night noises, perhaps), then we must celebrate her courage to speak and honour her for listening to her intuitive sense. Remembering we are not in a position to decide whether a woman's concern is real, false, valid or rational

Intuition alone isn't always enough; common sense, judgment, technical skills and

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*Intuition can be a critical dimension in rounding out one's own safety net*



interpersonal skills are all necessary for our own safety as well as for creating safe environments for those we work with. Intuition is, however, powerful — something to be valued, revered and encouraged. If we reach the place in our personal and professional lives where we listen, trust and respond to the voice that comes from within, we stand the best chance we have at being the effective outdoor leaders we are able to be. If, at the same time, we are able to teach others to do the same, as women outdoor leaders, we are fulfilling a responsibility within our culture to allow each woman to celebrate that gift she possesses which helps to guide her on her path.

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*Darcia Kobuska has been working as an Experiential Educator for 14 years at Outward Bound and Outdoor Adventure programs. She balances her time with both youth and adults, women's groups, corporate groups and young offenders. She is on a continual path of learning and discovery whether its on a mountain or at a sewing machine.*

*beidi mack is an experiential educator working with women and girls experiencing disordered eating and body image issues. She has also been teaching part-time in the Outdoor and Experiential Education department at Queen's University for the past five years.*

## Conjuring Risk and Disappointment

by Katherine Browne

inexperience lured me  
neophyte winter traveller  
woman  
seven nights winter camping  
concerns grew  
risks resounded  
planning had begun

sch — thump, sch — thump  
beat my heart  
fuelled by anxiety  
dangers of winter travel  
reacting to excitement  
to risk  
like driving a go-cart  
fast and confident  
on straightaways,  
yet braking on hairpin turns,  
embellishing contrived risks —  
pumping veins  
soaking up confidence  
though  
I faced adversity.

pre-departure nightmares set in —  
falling through the ice?!  
dawn of the departure breaks:  
orange safety vests, whistles, rope  
squeezed into a car...  
pouring out into Temagami.  
big red truck  
smack-dab  
in the middle of the lake!  
anxiety? gone...  
risk? vapourized...  
disappointment

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*Katherine Browne lives in Sudbury with her partner, Jason, and her mom's plants. She is an outdoor education graduate of Queen's University and a weaving apprentice of Bea Arnold. This piece was inspired by a winter camping week with two other students.*



## Moon Over The Sleeping Giant

By Amy Goukko

I am once again in the presence of the Sleeping Giant, on the shores of Lake Marie Louise. It is late in the evening and the moon has not yet shown her face. Perhaps tomorrow will be the new moon. It's my third summer as a sub-supervisor with the Ontario Ranger Program, at a camp just outside Thunder Bay. Filled with contentment at the thought of beginning another eight-week adventure, I wonder about the young women that I will soon meet. As surely as the Giant has always been here to greet me, I know that this will be another incredible summer ... but why?

A sliver of a crescent moon eases into the sky. In the background I can hear intermittent chatting and the nervous laughter of those hugging the campfire. At seventeen, not many of these Rangers have been away on their own before, and an element of homesickness creeps into the conversation. "What do you miss the most about home?" A meek voice sighs, "My parents, my friends and, most of all, my dog." These young women have had a long day with travel, introductions, contract-signing, tours, and learning "the rules." Most are exhausted. I look up to the moon and recognize that, although most of it is hidden, I know that so much more is there. My thoughts turn to the Rangers, who are not so very different from the moon that welcomes them to this place.

So many new things are happening in these days: long hours filled with learning to canoe; swim-testing in the "leech-infested" waters; acquiring first aid qualifications; "WHIMIS" and fire training. Many of the Rangers are still unsure of what they've gotten themselves into but for now they trust the messages written in the bunkhouse, and hope that they, too, will have "the best summer of my life!"

The sky has clouded over and the group seems to be affected by a correspondingly dark frame of mind. It is the first week of work; trees must be planted; bugs are biting, heat is scorching, and rain soaks everything! A few Rangers

put their heads down and plug away at the job, while others spend the majority of their time expressing concern that this work is simply too hard. I am reminded by more than one disgruntled digger that such factors could contribute to sudden death! Acknowledging their protests, I counter with the challenge that putting our shovels into the ground could result in a planted field. This "first week of work syndrome" is familiar to me; most of these young women have never done any heavy, physical labour before, and they have little knowledge of their capabilities. Understanding will come in time.

The clouds break just enough to make the half moon visible. We are feeling safe and successful at our camp for the evening. Hundreds of trees are planted, smiles emerge, and no one met their demise in the process!

"Danger is no stranger to an Ontario Forest Ranger!" The second week of work has come and gone, and this new slogan floats around the camp. One crew has built a board walk, while the other has cleared a ski trail. Logs that would normally have required an attack by a backhoe are speedily moved to one side. On a count of three, five bodies mobilize into action, and behold! a trail! "Show us any log, or any job, and we can tackle it!" now counters the initial wail of "Too hard!" Who could have imagined that this was the same group who arrived such a short time ago?

It is soon to be night, and the sun is setting quickly. The rules dictate no swimming after dark, but a staff member suggests that, if we hurry it up, we can catch a quick skinny dip before the light disappears. "Are you kidding? Swim with no clothes on! When it's still daytime? With everyone around? Hang on — wait for me!!" Sitting, blanket-wrapped, by the fire to dry out, they celebrate their new-found bravery and courage as moonbeams dance around happy faces.

Week four has arrived. These young Rangers haven't needed moonshine to help

*Perhaps brutal at times, it allows each one to see herself for who she truly is.*

them lose their inhibitions, and freedom has run rampant through the camp. Uncovering a sense of independence through discovering possibility has done the trick again. Personal barriers within the group are beginning to fall away and honesty is emerging. Perhaps brutal at times, it allows each one to see herself for who she truly is.

As the Aurora Borealis fills the sky, and the moon rises amidst this northern ceremony, I wonder to myself what the Rangers are thinking at this point. There is little time left in our shared summer, and I am curious as to whether their perspectives have changed as much as mine. If someone were to ask me what I saw in the moon at the beginning of the summer, my reply would have been instant: "A face." But a game has developed over the last six weeks that has inspired all of our imaginations to soar. On the face of that far-away celestial body, we have found a rabbit, a chair and, depending upon how the body is contorted, a bird. Our game in this forest-bound adventure has shown us a different way to hold our heads.

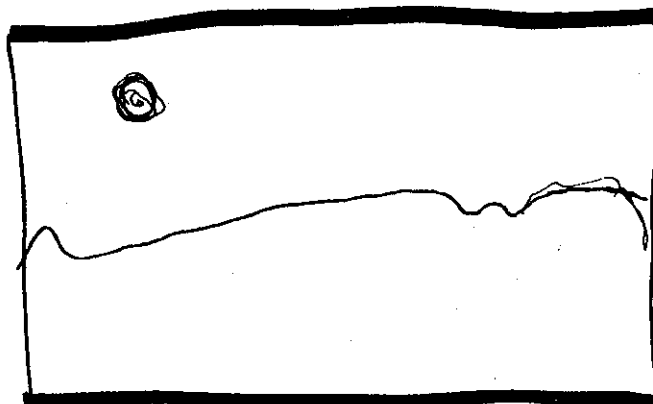
The second full moon approaches and the cycle is nearly complete. I can see it reflected in the Rangers, who have been together now for close to eight weeks. As a group of young women, they have had the opportunity to share a period of discovery. It has been hard work

spiritually, physically and emotionally; they have conquered new challenges, and each one has unearthed her own unique wild side, under the watchful eye of the Sleeping Giant.

As expected, it has again been an incredible journey. I ask myself, "What makes it this way?" In a place where the north wind blows strong and the evening fires kindle the spirit of friendship, these Rangers have come to realize that your expectations of yourself are your only limitations. It is their own wondrous bush adventure that has been washed with a dash of moon magic.

The big green van prepares to take the first half of the group to the airport for their early departure. It has been difficult to get the vehicle loaded amid the torrent of good-byes. Tanned, tear-stained faces peer out of the side windows to catch a last look at the friends they are leaving behind. Out of the corner of my eye I catch a glimpse of a group of Rangers lined up along the road where the van is soon to pass. The horn honks repeatedly, and then I realize that these once modest "young ladies" have lowered their drawers to produce a full moon of their own over the Giant.

*Amy Gouldie is a fresh new inspired and active outdoor educator.*



*Moon over Sleeping Giant.*

## Creating Places: Outdoor Adventure for Girls Program Ideas

by Deanne Donohue

I have been involved in facilitating a heart health promotion programme through the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Heart Beat. Of 8 weeks' duration, it's offered for girls 11-14 years of age, and we've called it Outdoor Adventure for Girls. Every Saturday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. we get together with about 20 girls and participate in a new outdoor activity each week. The Fall programme included:

- team-building games
- Dragon Boat paddling
- team games (soccer, ultimate frisbee and football)
- horseback riding
- hiking
- orienteering
- Taekwon-do
- swimming,
- High Ropes course.

Winter activities included:

- cross-country skiing
- snowshoeing
- shelter-building
- tobogganing
- skating
- horseback riding,
- swimming

There are two facilitators leading the group, and special activities are taught by technical instructors.

Throughout the 8-week schedule, we also teach the participants specific life skills by having group discussions, role-playing, and small group activities. The life skills included are goal-setting, problem-solving, positive self-talk and social support. The focus, when teaching these skills, is on helping each girl develop strategies that she can use to increase and maintain her level of physical activity. In addition, the four components of heart-healthy living (being physically active, remaining smoke-free, eating well, and managing stress) are incorporated into the program.

This program was developed by the Youth Committee of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Heart Beat Program in collaboration with Dr. Michelle Fortier from the University of Ottawa.

Participants have had an opportunity to take part in a research project along with the regular program. The goal of the research was to determine factors influencing young women who were physically active and who practiced healthy living habits. Participants completed a questionnaire and engaged in a focus group interview.

What I'm hoping to do is help this program gain some national exposure and recognition, and perhaps provide others with ideas for programs that girls enjoy. We have implemented this program twice (Winter and Fall 1998) and will run it one more time this winter. We would like to share our successful model with other community agencies in Canada. Our 8-week program has been funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health — Heart Health Initiatives — which has allowed us to offer it to participants for a fee of \$40 (includes transportation, equipment, snacks, and all instruction). The cost for the entire program was about \$2,500 ( facilitators, transportation, facility rental, food, and materials expense included). Some equipment and facilities were donated through partners of the Regional Heart Beat Program (i.e., the Ottawa-Carleton Boys and Girls Club). For this amount of money the participants have been able to pursue activities they wouldn't normally have had the opportunity to access. We have also been able to fully subsidize individuals unable to pay the programme fee.

For more information (we are in the process of developing a module for distribution), please contact:

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*The focus is on helping each girl develop strategies that she can use to increase and maintain her level of physical activity*

## Teletubbies and Teen Magazines: Tidbits for Girls' Group Leaders

by heidi mock

*Believe it or not,  
you are being  
watched very, very  
carefully.*

I have been working in outdoor and experiential settings for the past decade, building and implementing programs for girls and women centered around body image, self esteem, courage, and disordered eating. Working with adolescent girls has offered me some of the best and the worst outdoor experiences (namely canoe trips) of my life. I've learned much the hard way, but the nuggets of information that I carry with me now on trips have helped me to, more often than not, have great experiences with girls. Here's a checklist of these things to help you along the way:

- be flexible
- "check in" with girls individually, casually, and frequently (but not obtrusively) throughout the day
- keep your eyes open for quiet participants, sometimes they simply need to be verbally and directly invited before becoming part of the program
- understand the impact of being somewhere other than home for an overnight
- if going on an overnight, bring story books and bedtime rituals along with you
- ask before giving out hugs or physical affection (eg. "if you want a goodnight hug, I'm here!")
- listen – really listen, validate, paraphrase, encourage, celebrate, let girls know that the way they feel makes sense
- limit quick fix verbal solutions, change what a girl is saying, or give advice
- listen to girls talking to each other, generally speaking, they love to chat and you can learn much about "where they are"
- remember who you were at the age of thirteen or fourteen or fifteen
- be authentic – girls don't like anyone trying to be too cool, motherly, or superhuman
- understand your power as a leader and role model, use it in a positive way
- be sensitive but try not to take things personally
- in general, girls will test you, prepare for it
- use humour, smiles, jokes, laughter, play, be silly... (a lot!)
- appreciate the girls' humour and encourage them to have fun rather than forcing them to be serious
- find things in common with girls and build a relationship based on these common experiences
- be spontaneous, avoid enforcing a schedule
- think about why you are saying "no", ensure your rules make sense. Asking girls to abide by rules that are set in place to make your life easier, not theirs, is counter-intuitive and they will react accordingly
- understand the underlying meaning in physical ailments – take the time to hear the story that is underneath the stomach ache, for example
- believe in the girls physically and emotionally – they are incredibly capable
- whether you know it or not, you are being watched very, very carefully
- understand the balance between child and adult is delicate (they have both teletubbies and teen magazines in their backpacks)
- If you have a tight schedule, know that this will make a trip or time together stressful. Sometimes letting the experience speak for itself is the best plan.
- Girls love playing games, all those two minute time-filling, brain-teasing, cards and ropes and sticks and puzzle tricks ... they will be a hit!
- tell stories and share who you are, invite them to do the same
- let them know they are safe and that you care about their physical and emotional safety
- create a time and a place to hear concerns
- respect their privacy
- understand and plan for a diversity of experience and upbringing
- enjoy yourself

## the Eramosa beaver

by Rachel Plotkin

I find my answer  
in the curved fat body  
of the beaver;

wet brown munching globe  
indifferent to me  
as I stalk her,  
tripping alone the shore.

and it is a single word—  
a nod  
a settling  
taking me in and soothing me —  
I am both sprung and quieted.

the chunk of her in the thin stream  
(so separate from and unnoticed by  
the colourful cement-stuck people and their  
streaking dogs)

reminds me — I blink  
and shift and grin  
and am filled,  
once again,  
with YES.



## Mother Heal Me

By Jennifer Jupp

When I'm broken I turn to you.

When words offer no comfort  
You sing to me of connection and togetherness.  
When my mind is cluttered with worry  
And my world full of injustices,  
You fill me with autumn smells of life  
And death made simple.  
When my heart is cold  
You send spring beauties to warm my soul.  
When touch feels empty  
You sting my face with your winter wind  
And stir something strong inside me.  
When I'm surrounded by darkness,  
You shine the moon.

Mother, you heal me.

## Women Outdoors: The Path That Lead To Here

by Beth Moirs

*...we've laughed  
many a hardy  
laugh, taken  
in many a  
spectacular sunset...*

The summer of 1988 was when I first envisioned my own outdoor adventure company. I was in the company of good friends on a much-needed canoe trip after a prolonged bout of social work induced-burnout. Invigorated by connecting again with what I loved most — canoe tripping — the idea of an all-women canoe tripping company was initiated during an afternoon of rain on our trip. We all enthusiastically played out the idea, whiling away the time, but for me it was more serious an issue, and our discussion propelled me to begin working to make this dream find a reality. It was a strategy for me — a life changing one, not a business one; I wanted to find a way to a healthier lifestyle while doing more of what I loved.

Having worked as a trip leader when a young adult, I felt I had the so-called “hard” skills, be they a bit rusty; what I could bring now was the maturity and experience of an adult with a social work degree and a specialization in group work, no less. Not that I wanted to fuse canoe-tripping with some kind of “workshop therapy” experience. I wasn’t that kind of social worker anyway (but more about that later).

It took a couple of years to find a suitable location to launch this venture; now entering our 9th season and 850 participants later, we’ve laughed many a hardy laugh, taken in many a spectacular sunset, and plunged buck-naked into cool, refreshing, clean, northern waters more times than I ever could have imagined.

From the perspective of one engaged in adventure vacations rather than outdoor education, I will share my view of the components of a successful all-women outdoor programme.

### Shared Leadership

When we believe the participants on our trips are resourceful and capable, we have gathered a multitude of leaders. Women who come may or may not be experienced outdoorswomen, but as many of the decisions we need to make don’t require that kind of expertise anyway, we have vast collective knowledge and experience to draw on.

### Guides as Facilitators

Guides, as facilitators, help the group make decisions by asking the right questions at the right time and sharing their knowledge and opinions in a way that demystifies skills and shares powers with others. An effective guide finds a proper balance in her leadership style between stepping back enough in order that participants are comfortable making decisions without deferring to “the Guide,” and remaining fully “in” and “with” the group rather than becoming detached.

### Supporting Individual Choices

A canoe trip is often an intense experience of communal living. While experiencing oneself as part of a community is valuable and sometimes exhilarating, it can also get in the way of enjoyment for some. Always seeking consensus in a group can mean a great deal of compromise and no one’s needs being met in the name of “the group decision.” I believe effective work with women should aim to support individual needs and choices as well. From designing routes to planning the menu, balancing the differing needs of the women who sign up is an important consideration. For example, routes which build in a “rest” day allow those who wish/need to rest to do so, while others can be as

physically active as they desire. Menus which strive to accommodate the strictest dietary requirements of some without compromising the indulgences of others is the goal.

### Unimposing and Non-Prescriptive

Women come on wilderness trips with different expectations, hopes and desires. Most share a common desire to experience a wild place, feel their strength, enjoy a sense of freedom, and have fun. In addition to holidaying it is, for some, part of a spiritual journey; others hope to gain experience and greater confidence in being in the outdoors. The stated hopes and needs of individuals at the onset can really shift and change once actually *in* the experience. The woman who needed solitude can't get enough of the other women and is happily spending every spare moment engrossed in conversation; the woman who really wanted to go exploring on the rest day can't seem to get out of her sleeping bag.

These changes are desirable because a good experience allows one to let go of "shoulds" to get in touch with "wants" and "be in the moment." I believe a great strength of our approach with women is that it is non-prescriptive. Beyond hoping that women enjoy themselves — whether that is expressed in quiet contentment or laughter so hard they "pee" themselves — we don't set up the experience to be either educational or therapeutic nor any other sort of self-improvement. We don't assume that the women coming on our trips want or need to change. Participants are allowed to be themselves and to be present with others to what *will* happen — not what is intended to happen in a structured learning environment with desired outcomes.

### Work to Reduce/Resolve Conflict

We work to get a group of strangers as comfortable with us and with each other as quickly as possible, and we don't wait for conflict to arise so that the group can learn something from it. We have no interest in creating stress for our participants. We imagine

that everyone's life is stressful enough. Having said that, conflict can also be productive, and on longer trips (as in longer relationships) is sometimes unavoidable. Successful resolution of conflict lies in participants gaining a greater appreciation of their own position(s) and others.

### Balance "Getting Somewhere" with "Being Somewhere"

Many of us who have tripped over the years are familiar with the *boot camp* approach to wilderness travel, focussing on going fast and far. I would hazard a guess that most outdoor programmes are beyond that, as we are. Instead, we seek the balance between getting somewhere and experiencing where you are. Not only does this approach seem more respectful of the individuals who have signed up (as it allows more freedom) but it also reflects a less competitive, more cooperative view of us as wilderness travellers, not wilderness conquerors.

### Personal Ideology

Certainly, my bias in terms of offering anything of a social work nature is in part a personal reaction to the kind of work in my past which was causing me undue stress and a reaction to a style of health education I engaged in which was didactic and seemed very patronizing in hindsight. I needed being with women in the outdoors to be different — for me!

As a social worker, my emphasis moved from being a caseworker to being a community developer. This shift found me working with people as collaborators for community change, rather than as my clients. While working for many years in women services, I became increasingly repelled by services which focussed on what women lacked instead of focussing on their strengths. I recall a workshop I attended with a resource person from a successful addictions programme for women in the U.S. They found that in offering services such as support groups for women, it was white women who commonly responded to outreach efforts which invited women to come if they had problems. Women of colour, particularly Afro-

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American women and Latino women, did not respond to outreach efforts which asked them to assume a stigmatizing label (problem drinker/adult survivor of childhood abuse, etc.). The agency had to rethink its approach and assumptions and, as a result, they developed an entirely different programme: one that presumed strength and ability. And more women came.

I feel some corners of the outdoor field have exploited women as a target group in need of some sort of intervention, by virtue of being women. A review of material written for all-women outdoors programmes reveals a constant reference to building one's self-esteem, which is implied as a reason to come. You will notice how many assume that women need to make changes. Notice how many emphasize that all their women's trips are easy. Many assumptions are patronizing to women who may try these programmes once but not return.

### **What Makes All-Women Trips So Successful**

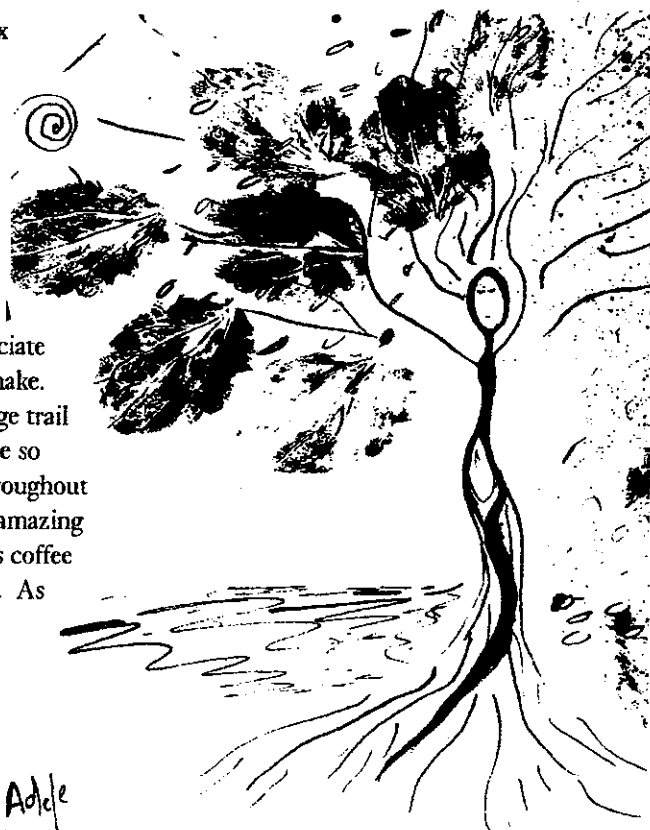
When travelling with a group of strangers, same gender groups can relax some of the tension implicit or feared in mixed gender trips among strangers. Women together, and men together in the wild, tend to be less inhibited — thus trips are usually rowdier and more fun.

As well, all-women trips tend toward less of a hierarchy in tasks and roles. In my experience, women appreciate the various contributions that others make. The woman who runs down the portage trail soloing a canoe is admired, but no more so than the woman who tends the fire throughout the rainstorm, or the woman with the amazing campfire stories, or the one who brings coffee to everyone in their tents one morning. As

there tends not to be a trip "elite" based on physical prowess on all-women trips, women feel a part of the process as actors, not reactors. This offers a kind of satisfaction that says, "We did it," as opposed to a sense that one was there "for the ride" while others made all the decisions that mattered.

To my mind, successful all-women trips balance tasks with process, individual needs with group needs, don't feed into a hierarchical structure and do not focus on strengths rather than deficiencies on the part of the participants.

*Beth Mairs is the founder and director of Wild Women Expeditions, an outdoor adventure company, based in North Eastern Ontario. She is also the author of "Helping Seniors Mobilize: A Handbook on Community Organizing" (1991), and co-author of "Action on Health Barriers: Health Promotion with Low Income Women" (1988).*





## Voices of Wilderness Women: The Network

contributed by Jennifer Jupps

The Wilderness Women's Network (WWN) was established in 1996 by Heidi Mack, an instructor at the Queen's University, Faculty of Education, Outdoor and Experiential Education component. It was created in response to the gap in professional settings for women who work/play in the wilderness. The first weekend was spent in a country living room with seventeen women sharing and learning. Thus began what is now a 110-member group of soulful women who are dedicated to learning and growing in the field of outdoor and experiential education. The WWN not-for-profit organization has a philosophy of making wilderness settings and adventure experiences safe, healthy, and accessible for women and girls.

Who are these members? WWN women come from a range of professions, geographical locations, and life experiences. Expertise and interests within the network includes: wilderness therapy, program development, outdoor certification, camps for girls & women, experiential education, adventure programming & expeditions, self-esteem & self-confidence programming, women's spirituality, art, drama, music, dance, feminist theory, writing & journaling, women & nature, women naturalists, programs for special populations (including youth at risk, seniors, females with disordered eating) and more -- you name it! What an impressive list! In the spirit of the network, all women are welcome, regardless of profession, experience, age, class, race, religion, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation. To some, this list of expertise could be daunting and intimidating -- one might think, "What do I have to give?" A wonderful aspect of this group is that every person is valued -- every person has something to offer, merely by being present and interested! One need not have a speciality to be connected.

As well as a yearly newsletter publication, Wilderness Women's Voices, WWN's main event is a spring conference, held at an outdoor location where women sleep in cabins or tents, and share all food -- its preparation and its consumption! It's a weekend of nourishment for the body, mind and soul as women exchange ideas, books, articles, music, programs, research, concerns, dreams and laughter. In the presence of others who have similar values for women and girls in the outdoors, participants experience a weekend of relaxation in the wilderness. What follows is a feeling of connection with the earth, ourselves and other women.

The Spring 1999 Conference was located at Camp Kawartha, a superb setting north of Lakefield, with 80 women enjoying South African gumbboot dancing, swinging on ropes on a wet afternoon, mask-making, body image and gender issues discussions, a girls' circle workshops, creative movement, drawing, swimming, running and many a quiet afternoon nap.

To find out more about the WWN and to become a lifetime member for \$10.00, contact Libby Dalrymple at: [ldalrymple@lakefieldcs.on.ca](mailto:ldalrymple@lakefieldcs.on.ca)

*What follows is a feeling of connection with the earth, ourselves and other women.*

## In the Presence of Women

by Angie Stevens

*A gentle strength builds when women come together, creating a safe haven for self-exploration and self-challenge.*

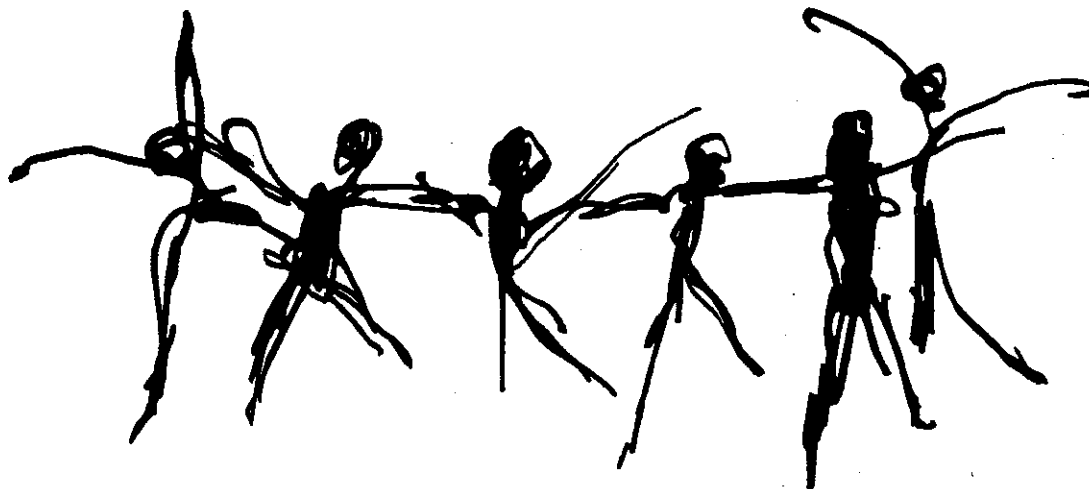
The philosophy of the Wilderness Women's Network is to make "... wilderness and adventure settings safe, healthy and accessible environments for women and girls." This philosophy addresses two important issues. First, why aren't wilderness and adventure settings safe, healthy and accessible places for women and girls to be? Second, what is it that creates that safe space?

In my experience, that space exists when I am in the presence of women. I have had many positive experiences in the outdoors with men; in fact, many of my companions for outdoor activities have been and will continue to be with men. However, it is a different experience than when I am with women. A gentle strength builds when women come together, creating a safe haven for self-exploration and self-challenge. There is an air of compassion, not competition, a sense of being supported, not pushed, as you are encouraged to reach your own goals and not forced to meet someone else's. Speaking as a woman, this is my ideal learning environment.

I was very excited about attending the 3rd Annual Wilderness Women's Workshop Weekend, as I had been living out of the province for a couple of years and had been wanting to get in touch with this community again. Upon arriving alone at Camp Kawartha I

was greeted openly, and soon found myself immersed in a large circle holding the hands of women I did not know, singing a beautiful song and harmonizing with voices I had never heard before. Magic had been created in the few short moments of the opening ceremonies. A sphere of belonging and inspiration had instantly grown out of the connection between hands and voices. I felt energized, included and welcomed.

As I write this, I can recall one other time in my life when I have felt this incredible energy around me. It was also an all-women gathering, a "Women's Retreat," in Dawson City, Yukon. I knew very few people at the retreat, yet even in such unfamiliar settings my sense of comfort was strong and secure. The Women's Retreat offered a healing circle, which is a safe space created to speak of hardships and successes, and where feelings which have been bottled up inside can be released. There is no pressure to speak if one does not feel comfortable, but I cannot recall anyone who remained silent and did not share something. As the talking feather reached my hands I felt tears run down my cheeks, and I was suddenly divulging a deep-rooted and painful secret that been troubling me for a year. I felt an incredible amount of warmth and support from these women which allowed me to let go of that secret and set it free.



Upon comparing these two experiences I see similar environments which, for me, provided ideal settings for personal growth and learning. They presented a space where I could let down the barriers that I usually put into place when meeting new people. As I went through the first day at the WWN weekend, attending workshops, eating, mingling and learning, it occurred to me that my inner critic was silent and my usual guards were non-existent. They were not necessary. I was instantly at ease with this group of women, like being surrounded by old friends.

One of the workshops focused on working as a leader in the field of outdoor and experiential education. We spoke of the barriers women face in this field of work, one of which commonly experienced was the frustration of leadership roles. When placed in a situation of shared leadership with men we feel the need to prove ourselves. We find ourselves needing to demonstrate that we are equal and capable. We do this for many reasons: respect, self-worth, and demonstration of our position or integrity in a situation. Some might say this is unnecessary, yet it occurs in many different circumstances.

When I am with a group of women, the need to prove myself is not present. It is replaced by encouragement and support, which builds confidence and the desire to strive to do one's best. For example, at Camp Kawartha there is a climbing wall. I hadn't climbed in six years and, as I had been recently reminded of my fear of heights, I wanted to challenge this fear, so I signed up for the workshop entitled "Climbing for Ourselves." In the past, I have always climbed with men, and on these excursions I often felt pushed and very competitive, needing to prove my ability and my equality. When I would reach a difficult spot, the pressures I felt would enhance my frustration, causing me to expend useful energy on unneeded emotions, exhausting myself and sometimes giving up. This workshop would be the first time I would be climbing with just women. As I waited for my turn, I did not feel pressured or anxious. In fact, I recall anticipat-

ing those feelings, expecting to find them churning in the pit of my stomach. As I approached the wall I felt confident and energized. When I hit a difficult spot and started to get frustrated, I realized the force driving me to get beyond it was not competitive or aggressive — it was support, encouragement and power, in the purest of all forms, coming from my fellow climbers on the ground below. I made it past that hard section and when I came down from the wall I felt revitalized and proud of myself.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to discover my optimum learning environment where I, a woman, have a safe, healthy and accessible space to experience the outdoors and learn about myself. The weekends and times we share together as women are not about being equal to or excluding men, they are about celebrating. They are about exploring the world around us, as only we have experienced it. They are about sharing, growing and learning from one another. About expanding our minds and our resources and letting our creative juices flow.

There is an undeniable enthusiasm that builds when women come together; it begins with a stirring in your stomach, and suddenly you are consumed with an excitement so deep that it fills your soul and elevates your spirit.

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*Angie Stevens has worked as a park interpreter and environmental educator in many different locations from Arkansas to Victoria and is happy to be living in Peterborough again. She will be hitting the trails this summer, as an interpreter for Warsaw Caves Conservation Area*

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*This workshop would be the first time I would be climbing with just women.*

### Resources: Women's voices in experiential education

By Liz Newberry, Warren, K. (Ed.). (1995) *Women's voices in Experiential Education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. 319 pages, \$23.95 U.S. ISBN #0-7872-2059-0. Available directly from Kendall/Hunt (800) 228-08101.

An inspiring and critical book, *Women's voices in Experiential Education* is both relevant and accessible for practitioners, academics, and students of experiential education. It compiles the thoughts, wisdom, critique and stories of 22 authors who are active educators, a quarter of whom are Canadian, into a book that expresses some of the joys, struggles and tensions faced by women working outdoors, with women. Its chief strength lies in the spectrum of voices that celebrate the field, and post important and uncomfortable questions about it — voices rooted in varying degrees of practice and theory.

Karen Warren's stated goal in compiling the book was to remove some of the barriers facing women in the experiential education field, barriers that can seem huge (looming, even...) when you are alone in facing them. It succeeds in providing a mentoring quilt of voices that women working in the field can look to. The themes of barriers and resistance were taken up in several articles, including T. A. Loeffler's work on women in experiential education careers and also sexual harassment, and Mary McClintock's article speaking against the practice of 'lesbian baiting.'

Threads of feminist analysis were woven through most chapters. Warren's lead article debunking some of the myths of gendered outdoor experience can provoke some clear "Ah HA's!" from new and experienced facilitators alike. Among some of the myths she questions are assumptions that outdoor experiences are widely and easily available to women and that the wilderness acts as a tool to remove social inequality. She also uncovers the myth of the superwoman: the outdoor instructor who has achieved unparalleled competence in order to exist as a woman in the outdoors. Martha Bell's article, rich with theory, challenges several

assumptions, including the subjectivity of leadership as being naturally male. Other articles on feminist leadership and ethics, together with an article noting how feminist pedagogy dovetails with experiential education, nicely round out the feminist lens applied to outdoor work. For those interested in what a program created with such a lens might look like, examples may be found in the profiles of Woodswomen, an outdoor guiding company for women, and Connecting With Courage, an Outward Bound program for adolescent girls based on the work of Carol Gilligan (1982).

While striving to include a diversity of voices in this anthology, Warren admits that many voices are missing: the voices of women with disabilities; women working outside adventure-based programs; and older women. However, three chapters in this book do look at issues of racial and cultural diversity in outdoor education in North America, issues that have been largely poorly addressed in literature. Nina Roberts discusses the experiences of women of colour in the outdoors, and uncovers Eurocentric assumptions about outdoor participation. Collaborating with Ellen Drogin, she also examines the barriers that affect the participation rate of African-American women in outdoor pursuits. Both authors call for a transformation of the image of the outdoors to be a place for all people. The book ends beautifully with a collection of narratives from women of many cultures working in experiential education in the U.S...

Several chapters ask hard questions about the ethics and learning outcomes of some taken-for granted practices in experiential education, as they quietly embark on a sacred cow-tipping expedition. Ruth Rohde claims that a stress/challenge approach may be counter-therapeutic for incest survivors, and Anjanette Estrellas proposes a strategy for decreasing stress in the wilderness, a strategy inspired by feminist experiential practice and the eustress (good stress) paradigm. (I would have liked also to see an author reflect on how useful the pedagogical tool of 'challenge' is cross-culturally.) Heidi Mack questions the value of imposing metaphors which, in a sense, asks women to view

*It compiles the thoughts...active educators*

their experiences through a lens determined by the facilitator. Her critique of imposed metaphor is valuable in looking at most facilitator-directed activities, in that it asks us to question both the power dynamics among facilitators and participants and to think about the politics of who makes meaning for whom.

Unable to summarize all chapters, I'll simply say that Women's Voices beautifully blends the insights of years of experiences. In it, I found new perspectives from which to re-read my own experiences as an outdoor educator, yet the theory-junkie, grad student in me still hungered for more. Evidently there is ample room for a second volume! Women's Voices is invaluable in problematizing some assumed practices in experiential education, and in asking us to question not only what we are doing, but why we are doing it. It challenges assumptions regarding the widespread use of popular methodologies for diverse participants, and begins to speak to diversity issue in the outdoors.<sup>2</sup> It sounds trite but, indeed, it is a must-read for all who work in the field.

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent summary of several critiques of current comment practices, see also Warren K. (1998). *A call for race, gender and class sensitive facilitation in outdoor experiential education. The Journal of Experiential Education*, 21(1), 21-25.

<sup>2</sup> Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Other Women and Wilderness Resources

compiled by Katie God

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• Cole, Ellen, E. Erdman and E.D. Rothblum. *Wilderness Therapy for Women: The Power of Adventure*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1994.

• Cowin, Louise. *Women and Outdoor & Experiential Education: Feminist Perspectives on Encountering the Self*. McGill University, 1998.

• Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice — Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

• Henderson, Karla. "Breaking with tradition: Women and outdoor pursuits," *Journal of Physical Education, Health, Recreation and Dance*. Vol.63, No.2, 1992. pp. 49-51.

• Jordan, Deb. "Snips and snails and puppy dog tails: The use of gender-free language in experiential education," *Journal of Experiential Education*, Vol.13, No.2, August, 1990. pp. 45-49.

• Loeffler, T.A. "Assisting women in developing a sense of confidence in outdoor programs," *The Journal of Experiential Education*. Vol. 20, No.3, December, 1997. pp. 119-123.

• Mack, Heidi. *Inside Work, Outdoors: An Outdoor and Experiential Programme for Women Recovering from Bulimia*. Kingston, 1995.

• Miranda, Wilma and R. Yerkes. "Women's outdoor adventure programming," *Camping Magazine*. May, 1983.

• Maguire, Rebecca and S. Priest. "The treatment of Bulimia Nervosa through adventure therapy," *The Journal of Experiential Education*. Vol. 17, No.2, August, 1994.

● Mitten, Denise. "Empowering girls and women in the outdoors," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. Vol.63, No.2, 1992. pp. 56-60.

● Morse, Anne J. "Gender conflict in adventure education: Three feminist perspectives," *The Journal of Experiential Education*. Vol.20, No.3, December, 1997.

● Porter, Terry. "'Connecting with courage,' an Outward Bound program: for adolescent girls," *Experience in the Curriculum* (Bert Horwood, ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1995.

● \*Roberts, Nina. *A Guide to Women's Studies in the Outdoors: A Review of Literature and Research with Annotated Bibliography*. Needham Heights: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

● \*Warren, Karen. *Women's Voices in Experiential Education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1996.

● Yerkes, Rita. "Women outdoor leaders today," *Camping Magazine*. Vol.59, No.4, February, 1987.

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*Magazines: Women Outdoors Magazine*

## Conquering Confidence: Reflections on a Women's Winter Expedition

by Catherine Dudley, Sue Farron and Heidi Glackmeyer

As part of our experiential education studies practicum we were invited to follow a learning path of our own creation; we chose to undertake a women's winter journey.

Thus we found ourselves, three women in snowshoes, wearing substantial backpacks, marching down a trail through an Adirondacks pine forest. Strong, self-sufficient bodies carried equipment, food and clothing to provide warmth and comfort for four days. Minds had to "think positive" as legs grew weary and seemed heavier with the day's passing. Familiar with physical extremes, discomfort and frustrations, we kept our bodies moving.

The driving force behind our goal was: we wanted to be confident outdoor leaders, women who didn't defer solely to the judgment of male colleagues, doubting our own decision-making abilities. We aimed to plan and execute a trip under changeable conditions, rejoicing in the feeling of accomplishment that comes from knowing that we did it on our own. We wanted to venture into areas typically dominated by men, and to push the boundaries of comfort, thus learning about ourselves.

The traditional model of going out into woods to conquer wildness, attain mountain-peaks, or forcefully battle raging whitewater, doesn't hold much meaning for us. In fact, it conjures up notions of nature as female, mother, to be tamed and used by explorers and adventurers. We sought a model that spoke to us as women, that addressed our struggles as facilitators in experiential education. For us, an internal battle; we still doubted ourselves,

failing to recognize our own competence, mistrustful of our decisions and our inner voices. For women, society raises many unspoken expectations; as female leaders in outdoor pursuits, we receive messages, encouraging and discouraging, from many sources. We cannot begin to address the many social, psychological and cultural reasons for low self-esteem in women, and we acknowledge that there are just as many ways to boost it. We chose to go to the mountains in the heart of winter, far from comforts and assistance, to confront our fears, and to invite situations which necessitated important decisions. The mountains — not their summits — were our sanctuary, our place of isolation and nurturing,

our means to the shifting, intangible goal of self-confidence as woman and leaders.

*"We knew that the third day would be tough. Crossing over a high pass, gaining altitude quickly we traversed between a sheer rock face and a small peak. We got an early start, setting out into a white dreamscape of snow that had been falling continuously for two days. Knowing what was ahead, we slogged silently, and with slight apprehension, through the level terrain on the approach to the pass. Our muscles took longer to warm up each morning as the cumulative soreness of bearing heavy packs took its toll. We didn't know it would take us six hours to cover a distance of 3 km. The powdery snow was shifting and unstable. On the steep slopes our progress slowed as we worked to gain purchase with the crampons of our snowshoes. Certain sections presented ice cliffs, with ladders and trees. Problems that we faced seemed larger than life — how to haul our*



*Minds had to "think positive" as legs grew weary and seemed heavier with the day's passing.*

*sweat-soaked bodies and packs up a section that was no further than 50 meters. 50 meters straight up, it seemed."*

We needed that day to expose our fatigue and our doubts; it unearthed our determination, forcing us to work together to accomplish tasks which were impossible alone. Our physical stamina was pushed to new limits and the terrain demanded a high level of mental focus — each step with our showshoes was an important one. Snowshoeing up a steep, icy slope requires a certain amount of technique and an engagement between mind and body. There is a magic zone where the snowshoe grips and allows you to move upwards. Metaphorically speaking, confidence shares a similar pattern.

*"The trail crossed frozen streams, or skirted cliffs where the snow drifted down the fall line. With the right amount of confidence, I was able to use momentum to leap over the stream, or propel myself across the critical zone of the ledge. This was a valuable lesson to learn, since initially I would stop, look at the gap, and let my nagging internal doubt overwhelm me, causing me to freeze midstep. In this scenario confidence meant trusting your body, going with the flow of springing up, over, and across, knowing that your body wants to keep you safe and out of harm's way. When I allowed myself to do this, I leaped across the stream victoriously. It was at this point that I felt I had burrowed a path through the boundaries of my confidence zone."*

Confidence encompasses a spectrum that stretches between self-doubt and self-aggrandisement. As an outdoor leader, you need to trust your judgment, skills, and decisions. Self-doubt is detrimental to you and your participants. Yet you do not want to become overconfident, as this too can be detrimental.

*"At times on the trail that day I became overconfident. I opted to forego the process of kicking out precise steps in the crusty layers of snow. Instead, I*

*placed my feet sloppily without first testing for purchase. I suffered for this overconfidence, as my impatience led to a big slide backwards. Not only did I lose precious ground. I wasted necessary energy struggling to stand back up under the weight of the pack."*

Each step: bold enough to kick out a place and shift your weight, but not too confident to believe that you don't have to test your step. We will continue to strive for that balance: to believe in ourselves, yet remain humble to the teachings and wisdom of others.

"Our confidence was boosted on this trip in subtle and numerous ways, but the image that will remain with me is the three of us inching our way up those inclines like ants on a mountainside, insignificant in the grand scheme of things but working hard to achieve a common goal."

Confidence is gained little by little, and at times there are backward slides, but perseverance pays off. There is a need and a place for strong, confident women leaders in outdoor and experiential education. We will not soon forget our winter trek in the Adirondacks because it confirmed for us that strength comes from inner vision and confidence. Confidence can be found when you work to create your own path, and then trust that path to take you where you need to go.

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*Catherine Dudley, Heidi Glackmeyer and Sue Ferren were all teacher candidates in the Outdoor and Experiential Education program focus at the Queen's Faculty of Education 1998- 1999.*

*This trip was completed for their practitioner's workshop component of the program.*



## Ice and Life: A Metaphor for Living

by Stana Luxford

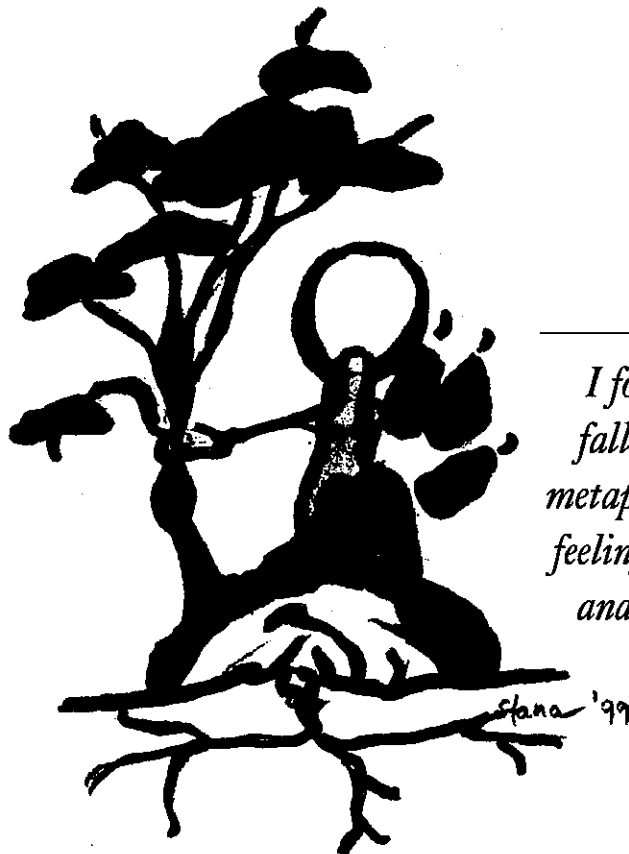
Before I set out for my first winter camping trip with two colleagues, I was plagued by the notion of falling through ice; I had visions of struggling in freezing water. What if the ice cracks while I'm pulling my sled? In reality, equipped with safety gear and strategies, I walked safely on frozen water. Safe and snug in sleeping bag the first night, the moan and heave of ice contracting with the cold lulled me to sleep with its mysterious song.

My pleasure in tracking and exploring in the wintry solitude was immense; however, I came to realize that I had taken water — the source of life — for granted. My appreciation of water escalated when I discovered the incredible length of time it takes to melt snow for food or drink.

We three winter campers reunited soon after to metaphorically chisel another ice hole. Throughout the trip not one of us had wanted to assume leadership, therefore we trod lightly when "falling through ice wasn't a threat." Standing on that first safe layer we recalled our success at living comfortably in winter, our flexibility in changing locations mid-trip, our nourishing meals and our appreciation of the natural winter world. Our words, like the sharp chisel, chipped at the ice layers beneath our successes, revealing common feelings of failure, indecisiveness, frustration, confusion, depression, and lack of communication and awareness.

We probed carefully with the ice chisel to safeguard against misunderstandings or hurt feelings. Initially, I stayed on the flat surface of safe ice, but some internal compulsion drove me to take up the chisel. When we struck water and shared drink, our threesome finally broke silence, communicating diverse views on our experience as a group without specific roles.

Later, I returned to the ice hole and stared at my reflection in the deep water. I saw a woman reluctant to speak her mind and make judgments that appeared inconsequential, given the larger scheme of the trip. Every minute decision had been painful to orchestrate. One issue: travel the lake system or cut through the bush? Instead of suggesting it would be ridiculous to attempt to cut through coniferous forest, I agreed to do rock, paper, scissors to decide!



*I found myself falling into the metaphoric ice hole, feeling cold, lonely and frightened.*

The forest won, but we ended up using the lake system because the woods were too dense to slice through with our heavily-laden sleds.

I found myself falling into the metaphoric ice hole, feeling cold, lonely and frightened. When I could eventually confront and examine my feelings, I managed to clamber out to sure ground, spurred on by friends who had heard my voice.

I've since returned to sprawl on the surface of the ice to drink and to stare into the hole. My visits have helped me appreciate the important role that open and honest communication plays within any situation. And now, even when ice-covered lakes have yielded to spring's warmth, I can confidently chisel an ice hole any time, not only for survival but also to seek greater communication and understanding in the darker places that are often difficult to face.

*Stana Luxford is a 1999 graduate of the Queen's OEE program. She is venturing into a life of pioneering — living in a cabin without running water and electricity and the wonders of winter evenings by candlelight.*

Spring has been an active time for the conference committee. Invitations have been sent out to potential Algonquin Heritage Luncheon Guests with the following request:

Join us for lunch and share the "magic" of Algonquin. Tell us your stories of living and working in the Park and help us to celebrate the Park and the Land as Teacher.

Before lunch, visit Tent City, tour Camp Tamakwa, and meet the conference attendants and other Heritage Luncheon guests. After lunch enjoy a concert by Canadian folk singer Ian Tamblyn, join in with the Traditional Camping Methods workshop, and share another cup of tea and tell more Algonquin stories around the campfire.

Special invitations have also been sent to most (we hope all, with word of mouth travel) Integrated Curriculum Programme (ICP) teachers with outdoor/environmental education credits. At a special forum we plan to discuss "survival of ICP within the new 4-year curriculum, or what strategies and/or changes are you planning in order to survive in a 4-year curriculum"? Please help us spread the word to interested parties.

Our conference flyer is now circulating. If you would like more information about the conference over the summer or copies of the conference flyer to circulate, please write or call Leslie Hoyle (see registration form).

Ian Tamblyn is a musician, songwriter, playwright and producer. He began his recording career in 1976 with his first album, IAN TAMBLYN, and continues to produce CD's, radio broadcasts, and soundtracks for theatre and film. Ian is as prolific a songwriter as he is a traveller. His close associations with adventure travel and scientific expeditions take him from the icebergs of Greenland to the underwater of Antarctica. He writes songs inspired by books, films and the imaginative development of actual experience and travel adventures. Rooted in Canadian folklore and tradition, his music delivers his politics, his humour and his vast knowledge of the world.

Ian's career as a producer includes such diverse talents as grungerockers Furnaceface, accapella quartet Malaika, Alex Houghton and Beth Fergusson. His contribution to the Ottawa arts and culture scene won him the Victor Tolgesy Award in 1996. An accomplished and experienced Canadian artist, Ian's pieces are indisputably part of Canada's folk and

contemporary music heritage.

Born in Thunder Bay (Ontario), Ian currently lives in Chelsea (Québec).

From, *Dirty Linen Magazine*, Feb. 98

IAN TAMBLYN

Antarctica, North Track NTCD3

IAN TAMBLYN

The Middle Distance, North Track NT-17

IAN TAMBLYN

The Body Needs to Travel, Cassette; no catalog number

*Antarctica*, Ian Tamblyn's third instrumental release, explores one of the most remote and unexplored soundscapes on the planet.

Tamblyn records natural sounds and then builds on them with (mostly) guitar, piano and synthesizer. Half a dozen friends help out on sax and percussion, among other instruments. *Antarctica* begins with bird sounds at a New Zealand glacier and then continues with the sound of wind and an ice breaker on the way to Antarctica. The focus is often on sounds of seals, ice crystals, penguins, and underwater explorations. This is lush but sophisticated music that is full of subtle touches.

Tamblyn's premise on *The Middle Distance* is that "The points on the outer map become points on the inner map." The arrangements are nuanced, and Scott Merritt's production is sparkling. The end result doesn't fit snugly into any particular genre, but it is superb, whatever one chooses to call it, "Gather Me Round," which features subtle use of Inuit throat singing, is also included on *The Body Needs to Travel*, which emphasizes the same kind of material, although a trio of back-up personnel make for slightly less ambitious arrangements. The 12 songs on *The Body...*, many with a Northern theme, are interspersed judiciously with Tamblyn's own field recordings, which include whale songs, native ceremonies, throat singers, Greenlandic dancers, a Gaelic song sung by children, and a Russian song recorded on a boat moored near Ireland that sounds eerily like an old operatic record.

All three recommended albums form a trilogy that is very evocative, especially of the world's Northern regions and climate.

Watch for next issue of *Pathways* for our other keynote on James Raffan.

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION FORM**

**COEO CONFERENCE '99**

**The Park, The Land as Teacher**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street

City

Prov

Postal Code

Phone Home \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Work \_\_\_\_\_

COEO Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

May we share your name and phone number for car pooling purposes? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

For this conference, are you interested in being a mentor for a new COEO member?  
(If you volunteer you will be contacted with more information) Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

COEO MEMBERSHIPS				
Regular \$40.00	Student \$30.00	Family \$52.00	Renewal	New

COEO Conference Packages			
	Member	Non-Member	Total
Regular Conferenc (Fri & Sat night; Fri D, Sat B,L,D, Sun B,L)	\$195.00	\$245.00	
Student Conference (Fri & Sat night; Fri D, Sat B,L,D, Sun B,L)	\$175.00	\$225.00	
Heated Cabin (limited number available)	\$ 20.00	\$20.00	
Coco Membership Fee (refer to above chart)			
Total Owing			
Less Deposit (Cancellation Policy: after Sept. 10, 1999 Deposit is forfeit)	\$50.00	\$50.00	
Late Registration Fee (received after Sept. 10)	\$10.00	\$10.00	
Balance Owing			

Please indicate special dietary concerns/allergies: \_\_\_\_\_  
If this is your first coeo conference, please tell us the name of the person who suggested it to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make funds payable to: COEO Conference '99  
Cheque enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Money Order Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_  
Payment is the responsibility of the Registrant. *Full payment* is due upon registration at the Conference. Institutional memberships do not qualify for the member's conference rate.

Please submit form and payment to: Leslie Hoyle  
177 Lloyd Ave., Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 5L4  
(905) 898-1926

# The gathering...

## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>, 1999

- 4-10pm Welcome Tent at the Landing  
Registration at the Office
- 6-9pm Outdoor BBQ
- 8-9:15pm Sessions:
- 1) Algonquin Campfire Stories
  - 2) Night Activities
  - 3) Voyageur Canoe Activities
  - 4) Tea Ceremony
  - 5) Lantern Making
- 9:30pm Opening & Welcome  
Spirit Campfire
- 10:30pm Night Food  
Open Stage Campfire  
Social Campfire

### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 25<sup>th</sup>, 1999

- 7am Morning Paddle  
Sunrise Celebration
- 8am Breakfast in Dining Hall  
Introduce Regional Reps.  
Morning Meditation  
Music
- 9-9:30 Group Energizer
- 9:30-11 Morning Sessions
- 1) rope course
  - 2) Integrated Curriculum
  - 3) Ecstatic Dance/Movement
  - 4) Games & Chaos
  - 5) Wolves in Algonquin
  - 6) Environmental Issues/Ethics in the Park (Panel)
- 11-12 Visit Tent City in the Ball Diamond  
Heritage Camping Skills and Gear  
Visit Display Booths in Dining Hall
- 12pm Heritage Luncheon  
Introductions and Speakers
- 1:30-2pm Ian Tamblyn Concert
- 2:30-4pm Afternoon Sessions
- 1) Debriefing Skills
  - 2) Traditional Camping & Gear
  - 3) Ropes Course for Personal Growth
  - 4) Lacrosse
  - 5) Hike to Drummer
  - 6) Diversity Issues (Panel)

#### Featured Guests:

Ian Tamblyn-composer/singer-songwriter, his music expresses his love of the Earth

Marusia Borodacz -Trained at 'The Moving Center' with Gabrielle Roth using the Roth5Rhythms.

Jim Raffan- Keynote Speaker, Author "The Park/Land As Teacher"

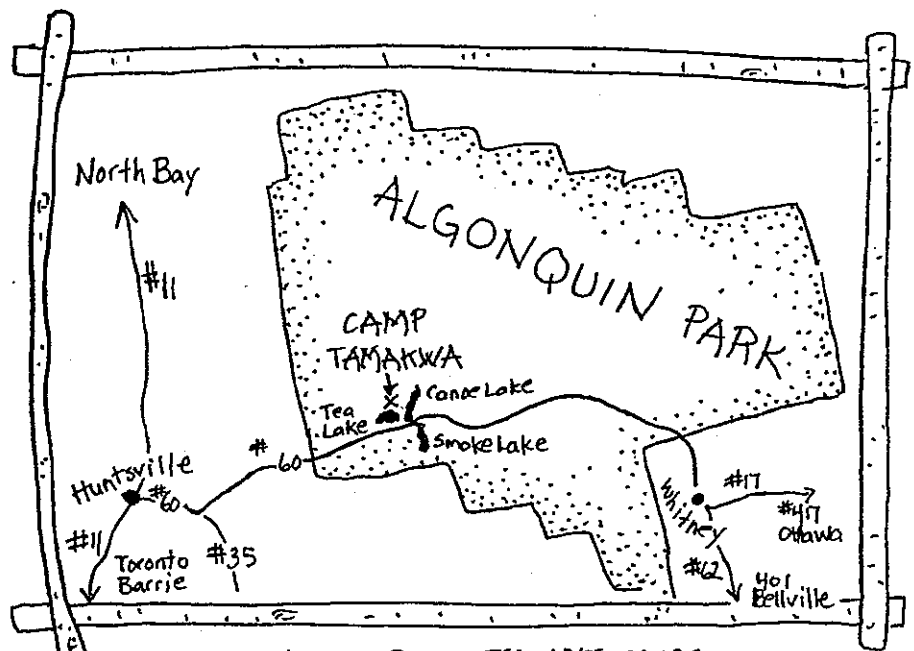
- 4-5pm Optional "Drop In" mini-sessions
- 1) Campfire Cooking
  - 2) Canoe Instruction
  - 3) Roller Hockey (bring skates)
  - 4) Sing Song & Writing Jam
  - 5) Lantern Making

- 5-6pm FREE TIME
- 6-7pm Regional Socials
- 7pm Dinner in the Dining Hall  
COEO Awards  
Key Note Speaker-Jim Raffan  
*The Park/Land As Teacher*

- 8:30pm Ian Tamblyn Concert  
afterwards Dance- Dining Hall  
Campfire - on the beach

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999

- 7pm morning paddle  
Morning movements
- 8pm Breakfast  
Morning Meditation  
Music
- 9:30-11:00 Morning Sessions
- 1) Teaching Primitive Arts
  - 2) Soundscapes/Song Writing
  - 3) School Yard Naturalization
  - 4) Teaching Canoeing  
Experientially
  - 5) Wilderness Contemplation-The  
Song My Paddle Sings
- 11-12 AGM COEO
- 12:30 Lunch / Thankyous
- 1:30pm Closing Ceremonies
- 2pm Pointer Boats begin to leave  
for landing/parking lot.



CAN CALL FROM TEA LAKE CAMPGROUND  
FOR BOAT PICK UP. 633 5561 FOR  
CAMP TAMAKWA

## The Joy (and Pain) of Empathy

By Rachel Plotkin

**W**e seem to be living in the age of anesthesia, and it's no wonder. Confronted with knowledge of dozens of apparently random disasters each day, what can a human heart do but slam its doors? No mortal can grieve that much. We didn't evolve to cope with tragedy on a global scale. Our defense is to pretend there's no thread of event that connects us, and that those lives are somehow not precious and real like our own. It's a practical strategy, to some ends, but the loss of empathy is also the loss of humanity, and that's no small tradeoff. [Barbara Kingsolver]

Empathy is, to me, about being in the world fully — loosening lids, opening shutters, turning the taps back on. Reclaiming our whole bodies. About opening — opening ourselves to others, and opening our feelings, as we respond and connect.

Kingsolver addresses in a large scale what I'd like to examine in the particular, namely that, when we lose our connections to the living things that brush up against us, nudge us in our daily lives, we are losing ourselves, and the potential to live in a world that is bigger, richer, and fuller than the one we now create and inhabit.

### **empathy — humankind's basic emotional faculty**

I believe, like Kingsolver, in empathy as a quality of humanness, that a healthy human feels pain if he/she sees the suffering of another living being. There is no scientific proof for my belief; it is a leap of faith, of optimism, of hope perhaps, and a need to believe in the goodness of humans.

### **recognizing what we do not see**

In some cultures and countries, suffering is accepted as a part of life. Our North American society sets us up, makes it easy for us: the human suffering from which our commodities spring is distanced by oceans; the suffering from

whence comes our food is locked away from sight by cares and walls; the houses in which we live reveal barely a glimmer of the once-forests or marshes that thrived in their place. Suffering is distasteful to us -- we avoid the dead raccoon at the side of the road, or a person huddled in greasy coats and blankets, focusing instead on store fronts or strands of conversation on Toronto streets. Maybe we realize, as Kingsolver observed, that there is too much; we fear that, if we open a little, we will be flooded, overwhelmed, and saddened too greatly, and so we turn off, turn away, shut down.

### **the influence of mainstream**

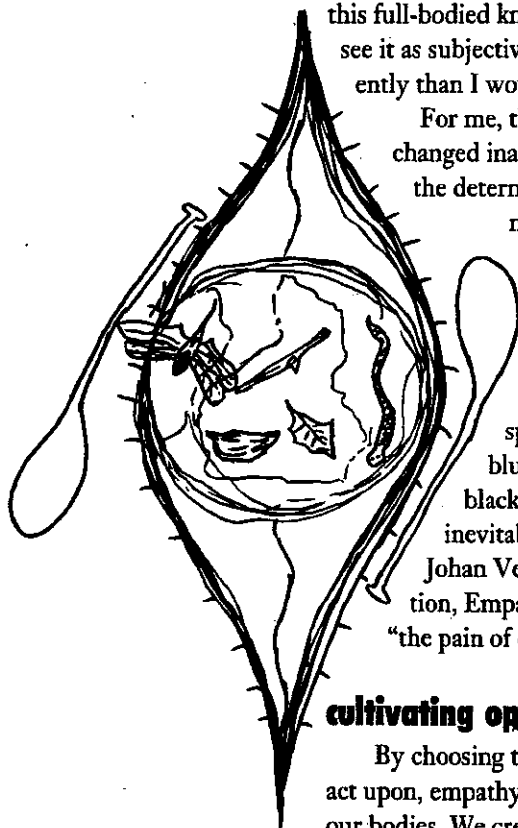
Traditional science and Western culture honour thinking above emotion, and argue that we can best know something by gaining a reflective and detached comprehension of it, a distance from it. We often suppress empathy with reasoning. Descartes ("I think, therefore I am..."), operating on writhing dogs, coolly convinced the public — as he operated on writhing dogs — that their cries of suffering were merely mechanical — that dogs could not feel. We do this, on a less obvious scale, in our day-to-day actions; we ignore or gloss over our healthy responses to the world, and appease ourselves with distraction. (I posed the question, "When are times where you have ignored empathy with thinking?" to a grade seven class, and almost every student articulated examples, ranging from feeling badly for the picked-on person in class but doing nothing, to ignoring the cries of a mother cow as her calves were led away, because they knew it was part of business).

### **experiential knowing**

Experiential education recognizes that there are many ways to know, and encourages knowing the particular, through lived experience, before abstracting. Empathy springs from

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*the human  
suffering from  
which our  
commodities spring  
is distanced  
by oceans*



this full-bodied knowing. When I touch a tree, I see it as subjective, and thus regard it differently than I would were I to look at a forest.

For me, the world bloomed and changed inalterably, once I set out with the determination to notice and embrace more. There is not a day that goes by wherein some relationship that I have with the outside world does not bring me moments of joy — feeling freedom in an open space, or relishing the glowing blue that precedes the night-time blackness. And, with the joy, inevitably comes sadness. Arne

Johan Vetlesen, the author of *Perception, Empathy and Judgement*, writes, “the pain of other addresses me.”

### **cultivating openness**

By choosing to listen to, and maybe even act upon, empathy, we are honouring ourselves, our bodies. We create our world by controlling how fully we participate in it, by what we block out, and what we draw in. Living with empathy means making a conscious decision to draw forward the living things we usually reduce to a backdrop, and listening to the experiences of other, with all senses alert. We can create a world that is both strong enough to contain the suffering of others, and loving enough to care beyond ourselves.

### **carrying sadness**

But what are we to do with more suffering in our lives? Where should we place it? And why (on earth!) should we want additional sadness, or want to cultivate it?

First, I suppose, it brings balance — in ourselves, and in our ‘letting’ in of the world. We revel in the good without allowing a space for sorrow. But I have come to look at sadness differently. It balances the joys in my life that come from my connectedness, and I accept this;

it feels, at some essential level, right, just. I celebrate a tree as it stretches upwards; I mourn for the tree when it is cut down.

### **from sadness comes activism**

Often, my sadness fuels me to act, hanging out in my gut where I feel things most deeply. My sadness weighs me down, until I respond to the circumstances that caused it; if I feel desperate-with a streetperson, I can volunteer at a local shelter; if I feel anxiety-with an unnaturally-caged zoo animal, I can write a letter, or work for preserving wildlife. We can acknowledge suffering, but can act only on behalf of that which resonates with us the most deeply.

however

There is inevitably, much sorrow firmly embedded within me. I guess I have come to honour this sadness that I can’t work out, feeling and recognizing it as a response to a world filled with joy and pain, a world that I can embrace wholly, and lean into with all of my body.

### **Reference**

Vetlesen, Arne Johan. (1994). *Perception, Empathy and Judgement: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral Performance*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

*Rachel Plotkin is presently a student of Queen’s University Outdoor and Experiential Education program. As an activist, she has been involved in protecting wildlife, captive animals and wild spaces. As a wilderness woman she is often outside, gulping it up.*

*By choosing to listen to, and maybe even act upon, empathy, we are honouring ourselves, our bodies.*