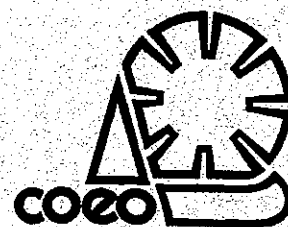


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF

Volume 12, No. 3, Spring 2000

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



ISSN: 0840-8114

Pathways

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Volume 12, No. 2, Spring 2000

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



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Features

Outdoor Education at Camp Tawingo: History and Transition	
Neil Fortin	4
Speaking to the Blind	
Morgan Hite	8
Maple Leaf Outdoor Centre	
Molly Maguire and Ric Gunton	25

Columns

Editor's Logbook	2
Outlook	3
Sketch Pad	3
Backpocket: The Great Seed Journey	
Carmen Schlamb	22
Backpocket: Dandy Learning with Dandelions	
Clare Magee	23
Crafting Around: Carving	
Zabe MacEarchern	19
In the Field: The Canadian Ecology Centre	
Clare Magee	12
In the Field: Mansfield: An Enduring Outdoor Centre	
Bob Berti	13
CORE: Canadian Outdoor Recreation Education Program	
Kurt Bohme	28
On the Land	
Lionel Normand	16
Opening the Door: Nature: My Meaning and Mission	
Cheryl Murray	29
Wildwords	
Bob Henderson	31
Tracking	
.....	32
The Gathering	
.....	36
Prospect Point: Reflections on Bark Lake as a Private Outdoor Centre	
Aaron Sheedy	34

The theme of this issue is "outdoor education in the province not directly connected to a school board or a post secondary institution". Whew! That's a large undertaking, only partly attended to in these in these pages.

A friend, when hearing of this theme, said: "I'd like to see an issue devoted to 'in praise of conservation authorities'". Ontario's CA's have acquired and protected increasingly important greenspace and conduct engaging outdoor education in a variety of forms. "Volunteers and Frogs Pooling Together", a piece about spring monitoring of frog populations, has a conservation authority base. For more of the CA story, readers are referred to a past article: "The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Conservation Education Program: A Forty Year Retrospective" in *Pathways*, Vol. 8, No. 4, July/Aug 1996. Some of our provincial ministries (MOE, MNR, ED and others) have generated curriculum materials, supported outdoor and environmental education events, and more. Again the reader is referred..."The Leadership Roles of the Bark Lake Camp and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation" Vol. 8, No. 5, Oct/Nov 1996; "A Review of MNR's Contribution to Outdoor and Public Education" Vol. 9, No. 3, June 1997. Such citizen's organizations as The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Widlands League, Pollution Probe and others all contribute to the outdoor / environmental education field in the province. Tracking down the web site of those new to you may bring surprise in terms of curriculum-relevant materials and relevant professional development experiences they offer. For more on summer camp contributions, check "Environmental Learning at Summer Camps" Vol. 4, No.5, Aug 1992.

But, enough of what is not in these pages...here's what is. There is a preponderance of "for-your-information" writing about new developments and about how these came to be.

There is a feature relating the history and transition of Tawingo's outdoor education arm. Tawingo received the Robin Dennis Award for excellence in outdoor education at the 1999

annual conference. It was the host site for the 1979 C.O.E.O. annual. There is a feature about the birth of a new outdoor centre. Maple Leaf is a treasure, on its own island near Peterborough. There is intellectual balance to the FYI type of articles found in "Speaking to the Blind".

If you haven't heard of the Canadian Ecology Centre, be prepared to be dazzled. It is one of the "In The Field" column pieces. An update on Mansfield Outdoor Centre is another. If you counsel people who want to develop an outdoor career and for whom outdoor instructor certifications seem important, read about the CORE semester as an efficient, one summer option.

There are two spring-oriented Backpacket activities, another of Zabe's crafting creations, some clever use of words in Opening the Door and in Wildwords. With this year's Gathering (annual conference) returning to Bark Lake under a new ownership and new management, the Prospect Point... "Reflections on Bark Lake as a Private Outdoor Centre" will pique interest as well as provide some occupational insights.

In all the articles of this issue, the core principles of effective outdoor education repeatedly wink through, a reinforcement for us all.

On a general *Pathways* note...we're always looking for contributions. The editorial group (first page) continue to plan themes, work with guest editors and seek out content for the journal. We're very pleased to receive contributions. From a feature, to a few paragraph Backpacket write-up, to something fitting one of the other columns ... all are welcome.

Read on ... and please, if motivated, write on.

Clare Magee

Outlook

Wow...two great, well attended conferences in a row: first, the annual at Tamakwa; then, "Make Peace with Winter" at the Frost Centre... Kudos to the "Make Peace" committee: Cathy Beach, Ian Faulds, Tammy Hand, Ian Hendry, Judy Halpern, Flora Smith... Even nature honoured the weekend with a spectacular display of the aurora borealis. Of course, a COEO winter conference must have snow and Sunday's drive home was ...challenging. The fund-raising auction at "Make Peace" was a wonderfully successful event. "Bonnie (Anderson) ...get those knitting needles clicking for Bark Lake 2000!" Her knitted hats were such a runaway success...What next? Mitts? Socks? Scarves? Thanks is expressed to the following businesses for contributing product to "Make Peace"...Algonquin Outfitters, Canoe Country, Chrismar Mapping, G&S Water Sports, Digital Frog, Smoothwater Outfitters, Tuckamor Trips, Ontario Parks and Outdoor Canada Magazine.

The Board of Directors have been working hard to reduce the financial load on the organization. We have been considering the following: -new insurance carrier with lower rates but same coverage, -the necessity of having the office, -membership fees, -fund-raising ideas. The "Sounding Board" will keep you updated on our progress. The Board has also been approached by other "like-minded" organizations (OSEE, OCEGP) to consider working together to reduce duplication of services. Your able officers will be meeting with representatives from these groups near the end of May. As

a point of information, the Portfolio Group for Outdoor Education (Toronto District School Board) has been meeting regularly. Although COEO is not part of the official process, a number of the group are COEO members.

This year's annual conference will be held at Bark Lake on September 29 to October 1. There will be a range of sessions, themed on leadership in outdoor education, that will offer practical ideas for your classroom or field centre. A full program outline and registration information will be provided later this spring.

...The Pinery Weekend happened on May 12 -14. Way to go Carl Freeland and the Western Region.

It's heartening to think of all the behind the scenes contributions being made by our COEO volunteers... There are the executive, the board members, and the regional representatives (see front cover of Pathways). There is the Pathways editorial board (first page), working now to elevate the production quality and to try to reduce costs while keeping the great content coming issue by issue. There are those who planned and conducted last year's events. There is the Conference 2000 committee, the Pinery planners and those thinking ahead to next winter. Thank you all. It's wonderful to feel your support.

Lastly, I send a warm welcome to our fifty-four new members. Pleased to have you join!

Mary Gyemi-Schulze

Sketch Pad

Ria Harting, our featured artist, came to Canada from The Netherlands in 1970 and first stepped into a canoe five years later. Now, together with her partner, Toni Harting, she enjoys slow trips

in Ontario canoe country to get inspiration from nature. Her medium is pen and ink. Ria's work has appeared in books and periodicals and is in collections across the world.

Outdoor Education at Camp Tawingo: History and Transition

In 1961 Camp Tawingo was started by Jack Pearce, just outside of Huntsville on Lake Vernon in the Muskokas. Throughout the summer camp's growth and changes, there has always remained a central vision that it would be a place where children could learn about and develop themselves, their relationships with others, their role in the community, and a comfort with the natural world. In 1970 Tawingo was the first Ontario camp to extend

this concept to the creation of the Tawingo Outdoor Centre. It has operated for thirty years as an independent facility serving schools, families and many other groups. It is the intention of this article to describe outdoor education from the perspective of this independent outdoor education centre

and to show the transition of the outdoor education program from a residential centre to the formal academic setting of Tawingo College.

As mentioned, the philosophy that has driven the success of the summer camp has been the major force for the operation of Tawingo Outdoor Centre (TOC). It is a vision that has believed that it is possible to blend education with recreation, that it is possible to learn and have fun at the same time. Within this belief lies the concept that an individual student can learn at any time and within many different situations. It has been important that each student be given the opportunity to take away some seed revolving around those four elements, self, others, community and nature. This could happen during a class on forest ecology or a session on Nordic skiing, or maybe through performing a skit in a night program and sharing a cabin with some friends. Teachers have told us that there are five reasons why they bring their students to the TOC: to have fun, to live/work in a community, to acquire lifelong skills, to

learn about the outdoors and to learn curriculum-related material.

The co-operative partnership between the teachers and staff that bring their classes and groups to the centre, and the on-site TOC staff has been a key to success. This teamwork has seen both TOC staff and school staff take a major leadership role throughout a school visit from the initial tour to mealtime management and through the various programs. It has been very important for us that teachers take a leadership position as they can see and shape the development of their own students. We believe that not only does it allow for a more positive learning moment for the students but it also gives the teachers a foundation to build on once they are back at school. It is a familiar sight to watch teachers increase their skills and knowledge over the years and become more comfortable with the residential experience in its entirety, knowing that it is the students who benefit in increasingly richer ways.

It has also been another feature of the TOC for most of the full time program staff have come through the summer camp program. They have developed leadership principles and methods, and program familiarity which readily translates into outdoor education effectiveness. Many former staff who have gone on to become teachers bring their schools to the center and were instrumental in helping to develop the early TOC program.

As an independent operation, we have never had any formal affiliation with a school board or any other large organization, which has presented some challenges as well as advantages. Our clients have had to come through word-of-mouth, personal contacts and various marketing efforts. We can never escape the fact that we always need to provide professional effective service that satisfies the customers' goals and needs. As a result of the combination of good business sense and principles, we have been able to build strong relationships with many custom-



ers whether they are teachers, families or other groups. We recognize long term teachers/leaders on a ten and twenty year board as well as individual plaques. In some cases there have been teachers who have brought the same school for twenty or more years or may have brought more than one school over this time. For different reasons, sometimes the torch has been passed from the original teachers of a school to other teachers in the same school who feel that their school's program is an invaluable educational experience and want to see it continue. It is also moments such as special TOC/school staff snacks on the final night or a staff skiing with teachers during some free time that has strengthened the bonds between the camp and the clients. We make these efforts not just for good business but because we truly appreciate the commitment these teachers have shown.

An advantage to being non-affiliated revolves around the fact that we are not tied to one main source of business. That is not to say that in a climate of changing educational priorities and economy we are not affected, but we have always tried to be as diversified as possible, and flexible in hosting a variety of clientele. Above all though, there has always been the consistency of our philosophy, which ultimately guides who we are and what we do.

Evolution continues: residential center to an independent school

It has been in the last six years that we have made one of our biggest leaps, that being the creation of Tawingo College, an independent day school for grades kindergarten to grade eight. Located on site and housed in a log school building (a big log

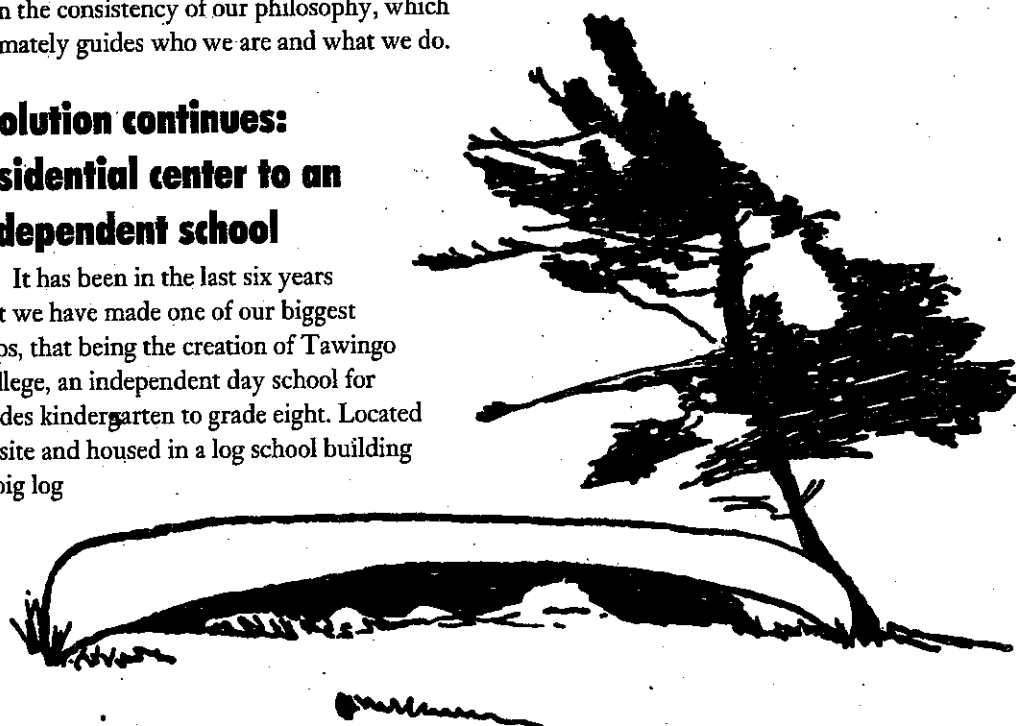
school building!), this new venture officially opened in 1996 and has given us the chance to incorporate into a day school those principles which have built our summer camp and outdoor centre. In 1999, the decision was made that would see the fall and winter program for the outdoor centre being scaled back. Only a few self-maintaining schools would come to the Tawingo Outdoor Centre. The reason behind this change was primarily that the growth of Tawingo College necessitated the focusing of resources towards that academic community that was thriving on site.

As a result of fewer client service needs for the outdoor center, it has now been possible to establish a structured outdoor education program for Tawingo College. The program is meant to serve the students in three capacities

- 1) Enhance the natural and environmental science, and cultural history components of the formal academic curriculum.
- 2) Teach outdoor recreational skills e.g. Nordic skiing, canoeing, orienteering
- 3) Teach outdoor living skills e.g. camp craft, outtrips, cookouts

The various activities within these areas are taught on a seasonal basis and are connected to

*"...sometimes the
torch has been
passed on from the
original teacher to
other teachers
in the same
school..."*



"At fifty three students overall, and an average class size of twelve to thirteen, there is a wonderful chance..."

in-class study in consultation with the teachers. This has allowed the various outdoor education units to complement many in-class goals. It is also the goal of the program to give the different classes different experiences as grades dictate and as well create an incremental learning program where what is learned in one grade can be built upon in other years. For example, younger grades will experience seasonal cookouts, middle grades two-season overnights, and intermediate grades will have three-season outtrips. Additionally an out building has been established as a small nature centre separate from the school where the students gather to start or hold their outdoor class.

In addition to the structured outdoor education program, an important factor in the school is the opportunity for the homeroom teachers to incorporate the outdoor setting in their teaching in any way they feel comfortable. Often my role is as a resource person for the teacher to give specific directions to a site or consult about how a potential outdoor activity may fit a unit of study. It is a strong part of the overall vision for Tawingo College that the natural setting should be incorporated as much as possible to enhance class room work and not solely for the purpose of environmental science or taught only by the OE teacher. It is an incredible two hundred and twenty plus acre site that has a diverse range of natural settings and ecological zones which can be utilized for not only a natural history/outdoor recreation program but also for general teaching purposes.

While some other independent schools also offer outdoor education programming for their students and have some similarities to Tawingo College, there are some unique features that exist within the program here.

First and foremost is the size of the school and class populations. At fifty three students overall and an average size of twelve to thirteen per class, there is a wonderful chance to know the students and create a personal atmosphere within the class. As opposed to the residential center experience where one would see one hundred students from a school for three to four days, here the same students are seen every day

and each class is taught at least once a week. With this constant exposure, it has been exciting to witness the growth and changes in and among the students through the various activities and concepts. It has been interesting that the outdoor education program can offer a different challenge for those students who tend to find in-class work "easy" and at the same time you can see insights and motivation develop which link back to the classroom setting.

Another interesting factor in the day school outdoor education program is the personal background and experience that exists within the student body regarding the natural world. As we draw our students from the local area, many of the students come to the outdoor program with certain experiences and a knowledge level that often develops from living in a small rural community. It is very common for many students to have experience with snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing. Often these outdoor experiences can give students a motivation and desire for the outdoor activity as well as a certain valid knowledge level. It can also create an interesting challenge from an instructional viewpoint as one tries to show a softer use of the natural world. As well, their existing knowledge may not be from textbooks or scientifically correct. Having been taught by their family, it can be difficult to open students up to alternative ideas or facts.

A final unique aspect about the outdoor education structure is that, apart from an effort mark, there aren't any grades, tests or homework as part of the students' outdoor class. It is an opportunity for the students to learn at the level at which they are comfortable and to take away with them the ideas and experience. Having access to over thirty years of TOC ideas and forty years of summer camp certainly allows any teacher at the day school the chance to give all students an incredible range of ideas and experiences.

The Future

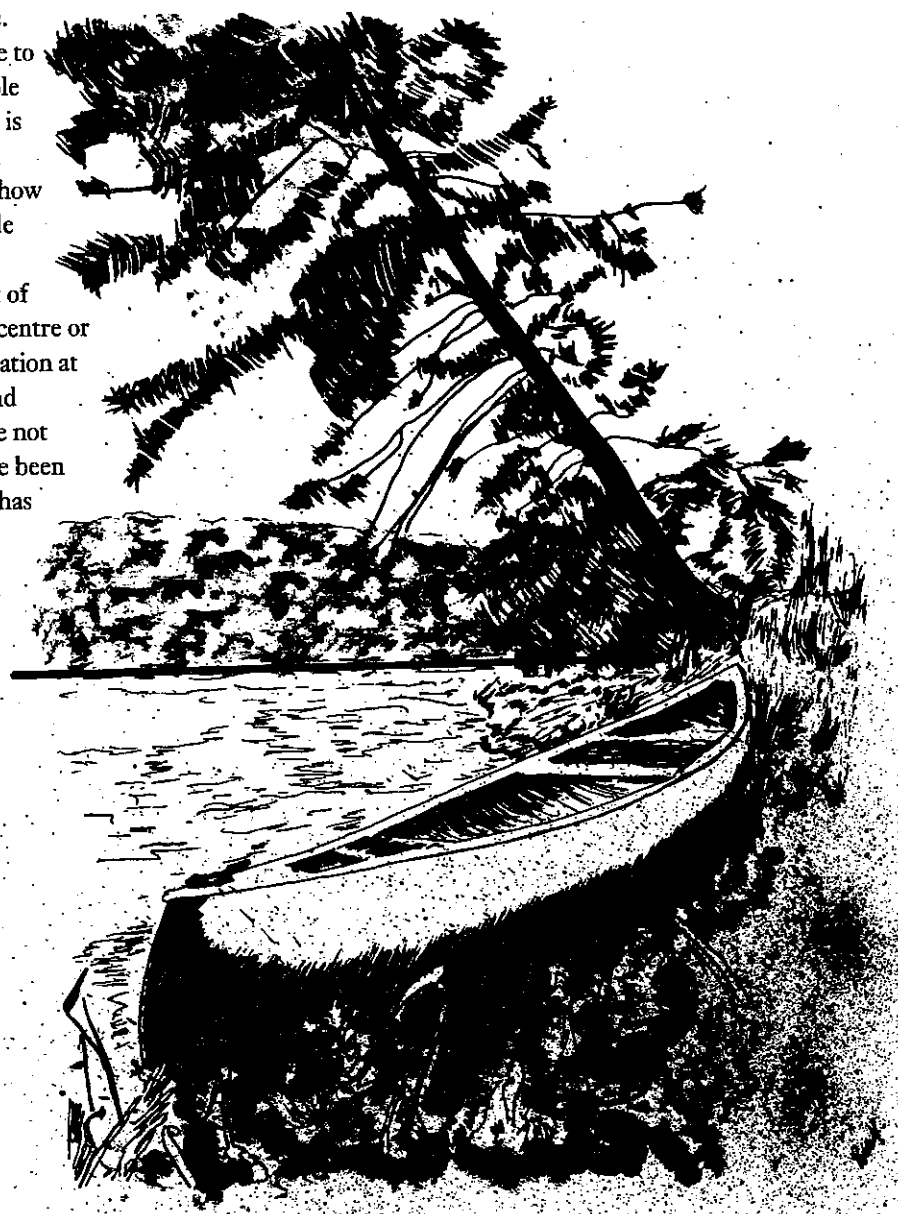
Over the next year the Tawingo Outdoor Centre will serve only long term customers in

the fall and winter who are able and always have been able to run their own program. The spring will see normal co-operative operations for school groups both new and old. Tawingo College is expecting to continue to grow in student numbers and in programs. For example, this winter we started our first Nordic ski team and hosted a local race. With student growth opportunities such as this available onsite, we know the future of extra-curricular outdoor learning is very positive. Outdoor education will continue to play an expanding important role within the school curriculum. It is exciting to think of the potential units and specific activities and how they can be applied to each grade level.

Whether it has been as part of the summer camp, the outdoor centre or Tawingo College, outdoor education at Tawingo has had many faces and transitions. The transitions have not always been easy and there have been many times when the question has

been asked "what do we do now". The answer has always been... to learn and have fun, learn about yourself, your peers, your community, and your place in the natural world.

*Neil Fortin is the Program Director for
Tawingo Outdoor Centre and outdoor education
resource teacher for Tawingo College.*



Speaking to the Blind

Aboriginals could not believe the country existed until they could see and sing it - just as, in the Dreamtime, the country had not existed until the Ancestors sang it.

'So the Land', I said, 'must first exist as a concept in the mind? Then it must be sung? Only then can it be said to exist?'

'True.'

Every morning on our backpacking trip through the wilderness canyons of Utah, some time in the middle of breakfast, Katie and I stop and do this exercise. We put down our mugs of coffee where we are sitting on the cold stone near our tent and take turns closing our eyes while the other describes something he or she is looking at: a nearby bush, a distant cliff, a pinnacle on the canyon's rim, a shadow, a pool in the stream, a seam in the rock.

The goal of this exercise is to describe as accurately as possible, as if the other person were here but could not see anything. For this is just how a person experiences wilderness who can only read about it. In distant cities, enclosed in rooms, they cannot see the desert. Instead, they hang on every word which we, as writers, might include or limit; and whatever version of 'desert' comes to exist in their mind's eye will similarly depend on our descriptive ability. If we do not mention the lizard sunning on the rock, that lizard will not exist. If we do not explain how the sand piles up around the boulder, in their desert the sand will not do that.

So, set with this imagined task of faithfully rendering the reality of a red and gold stone wilderness to distant readers, we take pains to describe in detail, freely using poetic metaphors to add power. The shape of a blackbush plant suggests a wave of twigs breaking against the cliff in which it is growing. The pinnacle above us catching the first rays of sun becomes a castle overlooking its still-dark fiefdom below. Our companions over there camped on a rock surface surrounded by dirt appear to be standing on a lake of stone. The leaves of this yucca are about 20 centimetres long and the colour of the paint on an old, green, Dodge van. The sense of loneliness is yesterday's side canyon was like a

deafening jackhammer.

To our surprise, this exercise does much more than its intended goal of making us better describers. Speaking the place aloud deepens and changes our essential experience of it. Each wall of stone, or bend in the tiny intermittent stream, which is rendered in words acquires anew dimension, as if we were making aversion of it in a parallel word-world, a world empty when we first come here but now rapidly filling with our verbal creations. Being aware of this increasingly rich story-layer which we are building around us and yet exists only in our heads, we walk in wonder on the landscape, where each object or piece of light now potentially represents a poetic idea. It is a mind-bending experience, as if you were able to take a walk across your own imagination.

For example, describing to Katie I might say:

There is an ominous pile of rubble ten yards away at the end of the gray limestone shelf on which we are camped. The pile is about three feet high and ten feet wide, consisting of reddish stones, as though a small, brick house there had been blown up, or a series of balconies on the cliff above recently collapsed. There is no rubble at all right over here where we sleep. Maybe it has been cleared away, or perhaps it is just about to arrive.

Because I do not make a purely technical description of this mound of stone, because I allow that it has an ominous quality and a possible, mysterious history of being manmade, I invite an imaginative element to enter the landscape. I know I have been successful if a cloud of lighthearted question arises excitedly in the mind of the listener. Who, one suddenly starts wondering, might have owned that house on the limestone shelf that was blown up? What

would the explosion have sounded like in this narrow canyon? Were the balconies that collapsed ornately carved? Who might have cleared away the rubble on our end of the shelf, and how can we thank them?

Or Katie might give a description like this:

There is a shadow positioned on the sunny cliff face across the stream. The shadow is rectangular and perhaps twenty feet across and forty feet high, the shape of some great tower above and behind me on the canyon rim. It looks like a Great Horned owl, as if travelers here are being served notice that we have entered the domain of an Owl god.

Clearly, in order to craft these descriptions, we open the door to our imaginations, and given this opportunity they kick our powerful, fantastical images to attach to the landscape. Perhaps they do this at home as well and we are not aware of it — but here the forms which we are trying to understand, like this shadow on the cliff face, are so new to us that we are prepared to paste onto them any suggestion floating up from the deeper levels of the psyche. The images, like the owl, are frequently large, ancient and archetypal, and by including one of them in a description, it gives a mythic cast to the landscape and to our presence in it. Poetic description, in this way, has the effect of allowing us to enter a kind of Dreamtime.

The experience of participating in mythic time is one consequence of our daily exercise which we have named "Speaking To the Blind," another is that as each thing around us is drawn in the word-world, we are too. We inevitably become characters in the story we are narrating. For example, consider this description, which after a day's hike, I record in my journal and read aloud to all of us:

Pass this point, the canyon widens again for a while, and then constricts even more tightly into a slot barely twenty yards wide, its walls rising sixty or more feet on either side of us. Nicole and I enter this place, hopping from boulder to boulder, making our way up canyon in a hurry. But we are arrested by the sight of streams of water frozen motionless on the rock walls, and we stop to gaze about this still, serendipitous natural freezer. It is November and I doubt the sun will

rise high enough to shine in again here for months. There are Douglas firs and spruce growing, but at this time of year they are simply being refrigerated until the spring. There are pools of thick ice in the sand, and as we walk among them we encounter still pockets of alternatively warm and chill air waiting for us by the rocks where they live.

To hear ourselves described in the account of the journey is to understand that on one level we are now fictitious characters, not actual people in bodies, but constructions in a word-world. This is a ticklishly delightful and liberating feeling. For a person of our civilization, who consumes such a tremendous amount of words every day, to be fictitious, I discover, is to feel important and powerful, full of potential to live exciting adventures and do compelling things. To find oneself in a story is an unexpected privilege, tantamount to momentary fame.

The act of description also satisfies the hunger to participate in the beauty around us, to somehow play a role in this place which we find so mysterious and compelling with this wind-sculpted alcove and hidden chamber choked with sand, its quiet, twisting, eroded waterways and its plants specially adapted to the lack of rain. Where an artist might join with a place through sketching it, studying the detail to see how they build the whole, we can create the same connection by describing in words. Consider, for example the intimacy I acquire with a small, clean stream of water by attempting to capture its sound:

From the main pool the stream becomes complex: water begins to flow through a series of small parallel falls, each about 10 cm high, which lead into other parallel pools, connected among themselves by other falls. Every tiny, pouring fall makes its own small sound; together, like birds in an aviary at the zoo, they have an anarchic, collective voice. If I close my eyes I hear forty different taps, each turned on at a different volume, each pouring into its own half-filled basin of a different size. There is no other sound in this quiet place. I wonder how it affects our minds to hear this clatter all night as we sleep here. O wonder how it would sound if the stream flowed in mild. Or honey. Or whiskey. Or nothing at all.

Living like this, deep in a story maze and with one foot in the word-world, we find, as days turn into weeks and we have covered scores of miles, that the description of each new place we come to is as important as the place itself. In those where we do not have time to describe, we are keenly aware that we are only knowing a sort of beginner's version of the landscape, that there is a dimension missing now, that of a word-world which might underlie the face of what we see. The possibility is always teasing us to pause and describe. It seems that in speaking to the blind, we have discovered a way to speak to a part of ourselves that has no eyes, a part keenly interested in news of the world outside. We find it is an essential partner when the inner rooms are dark and unilluminated by imagination, the outer world remains flat and dull.

Wilderness is perhaps the best place to exercise our imaginations in this way, a place where no one will tell you that your poetic ideas are impractical, too dreamlike, unfounded, or nonsense. In the isolation of the backcountry, where you might not meet another party for days, these almost-indulgent personalizations of landscape have the time to remain unchallenged, become true, and be experienced as a persistent, magical potential dwelling naturally around you. As a result, it becomes second nature to look at things speculatively. Here's a description of what might otherwise pass for an uninteresting slope of soil:

To get up and out of the canyon I climb up a slope of pulverized rock. Not rock alone, but flakes of rock fallen down from the cliffs over the years on top of the golden dirt, as if, season by season, small, silent explosions keep happening up there. Special plants grow in this rain of rock and thrive upon it, yuccas, sagebrush, the occasional grass, dodging the large pieces coming down and feeding on the nutrients from the smaller bits.

Without reporting aloud our imaginative descriptions to each other, we would experience the same sensory input but not share anything of these possible interpretations. Consider the following, all of which is inherent in a single

pool of water which one could easily walk past and fail to notice at all:

The water surface is glassy, dominated by the reflection of the sunlit, glowing, yellow, sandstone wall across the canyon. There are tiny waves gliding back and forth across the pool, proceeding from the base of each of the little waterfalls that feed the pool, course after course of waves, moving in echelon, like colliding marching bands seen from high in the stadium. Although the waves from some waterfalls predominate, they all interfere, so everywhere the pool is a chaos of tiny waves heading in different directions. The sandstone reflected in these becomes little, colliding ovals of deep gold. Because of the blue sky and the shape of waves, some of these are gold rings filled with slate blue centers, running and bumping, joining together and pulling apart. At the lower edge of the pool the ovals and rings fall apart and float downstream.

There is a sign that poetic description has become firmly entrenched as habit among our group, and this is that there is an epidemic of *naming things*. It begins with similarities. "That shadow looks like a gargoyle," someone says, and shortly we find ourselves referring to "the Gargoyle" as a landmark, as in "Let's stop and have lunch when we get to the Gargoyle." "These trees look like bonsai," is an idle comment, but it is not long before someone confirms it as a *name*, saying, "I hung my socks out to dry on one of those bonsai trees."

Naming eventually proceeds to the automatic and unconscious labeling everything we deal with. There is an unknown species of flower which we name "Cheap Date" because you get so many blooms on one stalk. There is the constellation which is dubbed "The Tomato," a dome of sandstone which becomes "The Puma Place," a meal served on Thanksgiving Day which is presented as "the Modified B-Factor Casserole" and one of us who acquires the nickname of "Mr. Greased Lightning."

Rampant *naming* is a significant event in our transition to being able to travel with one foot in the word-world. It shows that we are always *looking* at the word-world, that we recognize it as rich and an essential part of our enchantment in this vast, pristine and natural setting. It also

shows that we are aware of our power in the word-world — a landscape which we can increase and enrich at our whim. A group in the wilderness which is fluently and unconsciously naming things has made the final step into living in poetic dreamtime.

But why do this? Why encourage on-the-fly poetic description on a wilderness trip? We could justify it as a way to “process” the trip, but “process” is a disturbingly mechanical word, as if the experience needed to be chopped up and made uniform. Instead, the result of making a habit out of sharing poetic description is to raise up the high points, and lower the dips, to exaggerate distinctions and to differentiate elements. It causes the landscape and one’s one actions to jump into high relief. Describe one pool in a stream and you can simply no longer entertain the simplifying fiction that each of the other pools is essentially the same. Their intricate and detailed differences stand ready to be described.

The other and final benefit of conducting a descriptive journey is the record we take home with us. If we do not write our descriptions down, we allow them to get away, with no

chance of their coming back to be for us, in some future day, the places we have been. But if we record them, in letters to friends or journals we ourselves will reread years in the future, they become the windows into the reality and fantasy of who we were, where we went, and what we thought we were doing. In the end, the “blind” to whom we spoke turns out to be ourselves, our memories dulled by time. If we wrote our descriptions down well, they continue to deliver all aspects of the experience: a sense of the place, a suggestion of its meaning, and how much love, outrage, fear, joy and exultation it took to be there.

-Youngs Canyon, Utah, November 1990
Smithers, BC, January 2000

*Morgan Hite is a thoughtful outdoor educator
living in Smithers, B.C*

The Canadian Ecology Centre

"The Canadian Ecology Centre — located within Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park— is a centre of excellence. Developed by communities, for people near and far, it offers opportunities in education, eco-tourism, research, and entrepreneurship.

The Canadian Ecology Centre builds a bridge between environmentally conscious people and the natural resource sectors."

How's that for a mission statement?

"Helping you see the trees... for the forest."

How's that for a slogan?

How does an active, thirty-nine member board with representatives from all appropriate commercial, institutional, and cultural stakeholders sound? How does an evolving set of year round programs of both a high tech. nature (G.P.S., parabolic microphones, night vision binoculars, personally made CDWrite follow-up data souvenir to outdoor sessions) and high touch nature (hands-on, outdoor, personal engagement) sound? How do youth clients for environmental/outdoor education and adult and family clients for eco-tourism (similar programs, different clients) sound? How do major financial partnerships with the forestry sector and branches of various levels of government sound for an ecology education centre?

You might think..

1. "...complex, but visionary"
2. "...now, I get the depth of the slogan"
3. "...Is it a dream, a plan, or a reality?"

4. "...Is it a new Toronto School Board initiative?"

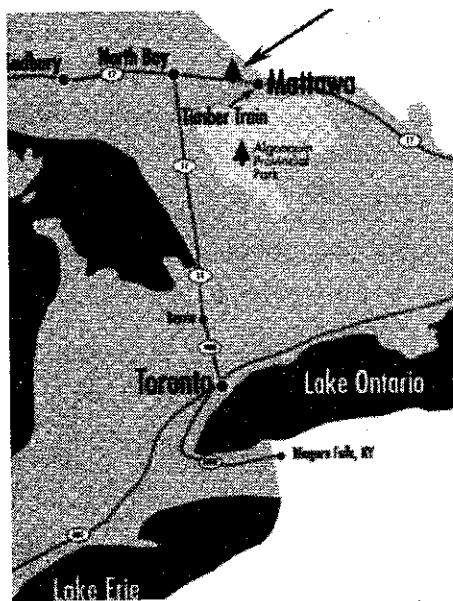
Let's deal with those thoughts in reverse order.

This is not the TSB. The Canadian Ecology Centre (CEC) is a true co-operative, community coup in Ontario's north on property in Champlain Provincial Park, near Mattawa. Highway #17, running along the north side of Algonquin Park, has the same potential to attract international tourists as the Highway #60 park corridor presently does. There is an abundance of natural, historical, and cultural attractions and a range of physical outdoor activity opportunities that exist in that locale.

This is a partially completed reality. At present, there are nineteen duplex cabins (thirty- eight units) carefully nestled around the existing mature trees. Each unit sleeps five with full washroom and a computer with high speed fibre optic connection. All are well insulated and face the forest instead of the main trail. Nipnet, an integrated northern community member network; Econet, the centre intranet; and Geonet, enabling Global Information System interaction and research are all functional and now based in a temporary computer lab. As the fibre optics arrived at the computer lab, a Bell Canada Manager said: "There is more fibre in this trench than there is going down Yonge Street in Toronto."

There are administrative, programming, telecommunications and hospitality staff totaling seventeen. The first user group was the Union of Ontario Indians. Residential school groups and residential and day eco-tourism clients are a reality. Internship and field placement students are being hosted. Subject and program connections with the local university and colleges have been established.

Phase Two is under construction. Aimed at completion this summer, it will be the forty thousand square foot main facility with classrooms, computer and other labs, store, cafeteria seating one hundred and fifty, administrative space, and two floors of dormitory accommodation. Whew!



"Helping you to see the forest...for the trees."

Successfully bringing together the resources sector (traditionally painted into one corner), together with other community stakeholders (of varying environmental mind-sets), together with ecologists and environmental educators (traditionally painted into an opposing corner), has been coined "consensus environmentalism". This initiative would not have happened without the benefit to the highly contributing forestry companies of having their story told in a balanced manner. It would not have happened without the spin-off benefit to the economy of the North Bay-Mattawa corridor of tourism visitors drawn by the CEC. Retailers, outfitters, guides, accommodation providers, ski hills...all will benefit.

It has happened. Consensus environmentalism has worked to create this new centre with significant potential in environmental/outdoor education. Will all programs have a resource extraction bias? Visiting schools and individuals are free to select from a wide range of programs, many having no connection to resource utilization.

This is a visionary and extremely complex undertaking. One strong seed of the vision was the success of the residential summer credit courses, conducted in Champlain Park, by then secondary teacher and now centre Education

and Ecology Coordinator, Bill Steer. With a core of community leaders, the vision was struck at a stakeholders meeting in the spring of 1997. With patience and inclusion, the vision was shared. Forest products companies, all levels of government (local to national), related business groups, all connected cultural groups, and a number of environmental organizations became part of the process. The human dynamics of thirty-nine board representatives with varied backgrounds and varying levels of initial trust or mistrust is staggering to consider. Local political powerbrokers became backers. Grants of \$2.3 million for the fibre optics, \$1.8 million for capital work, and several smaller ones are seen as seed money for the eventual economic benefits to be derived. An economic impact study projected that, when fully operating, forty on site jobs and six hundred and fifty additional jobs will be created in the region by 2005. The future tax benefits to the region are very significant.

The CEC came under intense scrutiny from organizers of the World's Fair, EXPO 2000, in Hanover Germany, and was accepted on an EXPO 2000 Project all over the world.

The writer has held back on descriptive detail so this piece doesn't become overly promotional. There is lots of descriptive information on the CEC web site. Beyond "here's information about the field", here are some potential connections for readers:

- personal and professional education from a visit
- employment opportunities for yourself or those you contact
- a residential trip for your students or your colleague's students
- field placement and intern opportunities for university or college students
- residential summer credit courses for secondary school students (*see Tracking*).

"The human dynamic of thirty-nine board representatives with various backgrounds and varying levels of trust or mistrust is staggering to consider."

"...consensus environmentalism"

*Clare Magee compiled this, after two onsite visits to the cabins and the Phase 2 construction site, from information provided by the CEC.
Web site www.canadianecology.ca*

Mansfield: an enduring Outdoor Centre

"People must, as far as possible, be taught to become wise by studying the heavens, the earth, oaks and beeches, but not by studying books alone; that is to say, they must learn to know and investigate the things themselves, and not the observations that other people have made about the things."

Comenius, 1657

Outdoor Education programs have been offered at Mansfield Outdoor Centre since 1975. The Centre is a multi-faceted educational and recreational facility that operates year round. As well as school programs, we have thirty five kilometers of groomed cross-country ski trails, a children's summer camp, mountain bike trails, and weekend retreats for a wide variety of family, youth, and social groups. The combination of protected solitude and easy accessibility has been enjoyed by schools from dozens of public, separate and private Boards, for over twenty years. Over five thousand students from all kinds of schools - large and small, urban and rural, near by and far away - visit our centre each year. Resident Outdoor Education is our focus, with Grades five to eight as the main user group.

The centre takes pride in the excellence of staff, and the quality and relevance of the programming. Commitment to and enjoyment of children, education, and the natural environment are reflected in the enthusiasm, care, and concern demonstrated daily. As a privately owned and owner-operated centre, there is an ability to personalize each class visit. Scheduling and programs are adapted to any age or grade level.

The centre becomes a home-away-from-home and it is important to us that visitors enjoy their stay. Surveys completed by each visiting school, combined with over eighty five per cent repeat business, support our belief that we are succeeding in our goal to provide a meaningful and lasting educational and social experience for young people.

Mansfield Outdoor Centre is on Airport Road, one hour north of Toronto's Pearson International Airport. Nestled in the hills of Mulmur Township in Dufferin County, the property consists of three hundred private acres of meadows and forests, and a wide diversity of flora and fauna. The crystal clear Pine River runs across the southern boundary, and our neighbour to the north and east is thousands of acres of County forest. Through a long-term agreement with Dufferin County, we use this natural area as well as our own forest for programming.

Schools can choose from either of our two separate facilities. The Main Lodge and Cabin area house up to ninety students in sixteen cabins, whereas the Field Centre, for groups up to forty, is best suited for groups that prefer everything under one roof. In both facilities, there are washrooms, showers, informal classroom/meeting areas and separate teachers rooms/cabins. In 1990 we built the Field Centre for the Toronto District Catholic School Board. We offer them a complete/meal accommodation package with joint programming responsibilities. This has proven to be a very cost-effective method of providing outdoor education programs.

We believe that there can be no justification for a class leaving the regular school system unless the students are involved in *direct, hands-on* learning experiences that *relate to the school curriculum*. Our philosophy and vision, which shape our policies and programs, have always recognized the interdependence of human beings and the environment and the belief in the inherent value of all forms of life in nature. We believe that *learning-by-doing* is one of the best ways to learn; students learn by asking questions, by looking, listening, experimenting and connecting what they discover to what they already know. Our programs revolve around this principle. As well, Mansfield Outdoor Centre offers an integrated approach to learning. Our programs not only have specific objectives

*Students learn by
asking questions,
by looking,
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and connecting
what they discover
to what they
already know.*

from various curriculum areas but the residential outdoor education experience also involves the students in a *total living situation*; living and learning are inseparable and thereby become totally integrated.

Below are six specific ways of how our program both complements and supplements the school curriculum.

1. All our programs focus on both *the knowledge of basic concepts* as well as *broad-based skills*. For example, in a Pond/Small Creatures program, students investigate plant-animal relationships by catching, identifying, studying and classifying various small creatures (e.g. millipede, snail, slug, worm, beetles) while developing their skills in observation, investigation and exploration. In the same program, they also develop various language skills by describing their observations and presenting their discoveries both orally and in informal written reports.

2. Both small group and individual learning experiences are used and, more importantly, *learning-by-doing* is emphasized. For instance, in Orienteering, after a brief introduction by the instructor, the students, in groups of two, use their newly acquired skills of map and compass to travel across fields and forests to find markers. In Woodland Survival, students, in groups of four to five, will build a fire and a survival shelter with their own hands.

3. Students are solving problems and making responsible decisions *using critical and creative thinking*. This is occurring continually as students live, eat, sleep and learn together in a residential setting. It also occurs in all the academic programs. For example in The Settlers program, families of three students need to make a number of responsible decisions to function effectively together and survive in the year 1854.

4. Students have many opportunities to practice *valuable living skills*. For example, they are constantly working together on simple tasks like setting the table with their cabin group or complex ones like finding their way through the forest with a compass. Students are always learning to interact effectively with others, be it

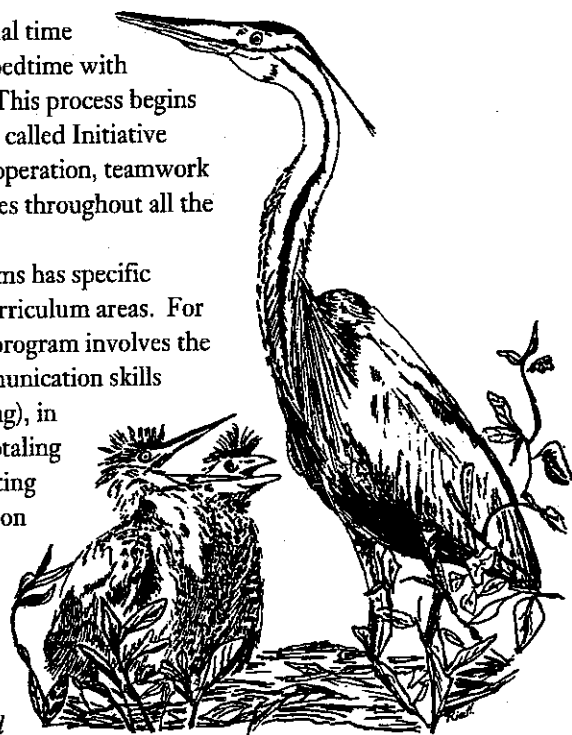
at a meal, or during personal time at the volleyball net or at bedtime with their fellow cabin mates. This process begins during their first program, called Initiative Tasks, that emphasizes cooperation, teamwork and initiative, and continues throughout all the programs.

5. Each of our programs has specific objectives from various curriculum areas. For example, The Fur Trade program involves the students in effective communication skills (speaking, writing, listening), in mathematics (bartering, totaling credits and debits, calculating ratios), in physical education (walking and/or running one to two kilometers), and in history (identifying, describing and role-playing the fur traders in the 1770's). *Combining and relating learning experiences* from various subject areas is common to all our programs.

6. Teachers use a *variety of methods* to accurately assess students. Seeing students in a total-living situation, like Mansfield, not only improves teacher/student rapport but it also gives the teacher the chance to observe, learn about and assess students in a very different yet natural setting other than the usual formal classroom situation.

In addition to the specific programs mentioned, there are many others all delivered with the same principles. All of our programs are taught by our full-time outdoor education instructors. We believe, though, that the students' experience is far more than these academic programs. It is also a mix of physical and recreational involvement as well as social and emotional growth and development. The total integration of all aspects of learning makes Mansfield Outdoor Centre a *community of living and learning*.

Bob Berti is totally integrated as co-owner and director of the Mansfield Outdoor Centre.



Volunteers and Frogs Pooling Together (A Monitoring Program for Toronto and the Region)

A Humble Little Name "frog." But my visits to their place on quiet evenings impart on me a deep respect for those who have come to these pools to sing.

Nature is full of complexities and intricacies, and frogs fit perfectly into their surroundings of forests and wetlands. They are very hardy.

They are wild. Not so long ago, they shared this space with moose, otter, barred owl, and water snake. They inhabited this space when it was an unbroken forest of towering canopy and endless patches of wildflowers and fallen logs, bountiful marshes and swamps.

Frogs come together usually to the same breeding pools every year. The timing, which varies between the species, is fine-tuned to air temperatures. Wood Frogs are rarely heard by most people because they sing on cool evenings in the very early spring. I often find them "just over the hill," barely audible, singing in low quacking voices. A human audience is clearly not a must for them. I think that is what entices me to stand still among them for long moments and just listen. It is that wildness.

Frogs in the Toronto Area

Eight species of frogs are found in the Toronto area. Unfortunately the Bullfrog is now rare, but the seven others remain in good to fair numbers (especially on the Oak Ridges Moraine). The most adaptable, which are American Toad, Northern Leopard Frog, and Green Frog, are found in most natural areas, including the city's ravines and waterfront. The other four, including Spring Peeper, Gray Treefrog, Striped Chorus Frog, and Wood Frog, are more sensitive and are generally found in forests and wetlands in the rural areas.

Why Frogs

Frogs are acutely sensitive to environmental conditions, and their habitat needs are very diverse, so their presence or absence can tell us a lot about ecosystems.

All frogs require high quality water much like we need fresh air to breathe; they attach their eggs on, or take cover in, wetland plants and debris; some hibernate in still water which must be deep enough not to freeze to the bottom; others hibernate only in mature, rich forests; and, all frog species require safe passage between summer, winter and breeding habitats. So, in all, frogs indicate the quality of water, wetland, forest, and connectivity in the landscape. Also, frogs are indicators of the hundreds of species of plants and animals which share their habitats and which are dependent on this same variety of conditions. In general, the larger the forest and wetland habitat, the larger and more resilient the frog population, and the better the habitat quality. In this case, bigger is better.

Frogs are convenient to survey because males advertise their presence during the breeding season (treefrogs and peepers even call after the breeding season). This makes it fun, and allows frogs to be recorded without disturbing them or trampling the vegetation.

Pooling Together

Volunteers have been monitoring frogs on the Don River Watershed since 1997, and on the Humber and Rouge River Watersheds since 1998. Every year, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) holds a training session in March. Participants can learn about frog ecology and identification through a slide presentation; can obtain the survey instructions and data forms; and, can choose a



Look down just below the surface...where not long ago I saw wood frogs chorusing in the midday sun, their throats expanding and glistening just above the water surface. And today these eggs float, just below the water surface.

site(s) to go to. We have found frogs to be very compelling to people. On one occasion we held a training session in a room which could hold 60 people, a sufficient size for the 35 who had called to RSVP. The media were present, as they had thought it a worthwhile topic and publicized the event. The room filled to more than a hundred people with standing in the isles and some at the doorway.

Occasionally, school teachers attend the sessions. I have advertised this as suitable for high school and university students (and working or retired people, of course) but some elementary school teachers have attended as well. A boy scout group has also participated.

The training also includes field trips in April, May and August to natural areas to listen to (or experience) frog choruses, see some good habitats, and observe other kinds of animals. The intent is to add life to the indoor training session. The field trips give volunteers opportunities to hang out with frogs and get to know them, their behaviour. They practice identifying frog calls and filling data forms before they do the surveys on their own. They can also share their previous experiences with each other and with the naturalists. Usually, we all just lean up against the railings of a boardwalk and chat while the frogs sing. We usually have a frog or two to see up close.

Volunteers survey their own sites from April to October according to the set method. The sites are selected by both TRCA staff and volunteers.

Results are returned at the end of the spring, summer and fall. The results are input in databases and mapped. Each "dot on the map" represents something about the ecology of that area and about the enthusiasm of the observers. One couple provided me with photographs of dozens of toads breeding in their pond. An ambitious fellow digitized all of his maps. Another wrote, "my wee friend is singing again ... I will miss him in winter."

Some of the data forms show an appreciation by volunteers for the needs of the species. One mother-daughter team wrote on April 14, "perfect frog night!!". They also wrote me a

note saying "... it seems to be a stressed wetland. I hope one day we can focus on the ecological needs of these endangered areas." And so we agree.

Frogs have been singing under the moon of foggy April nights and in the lazy breeze of July afternoons for thousands of years. Besides helping to care for our shared environment, the field observers explore their own neighbourhood and learn how their little nook relates to the broader region, and maybe even how to make a difference.

Soon ...

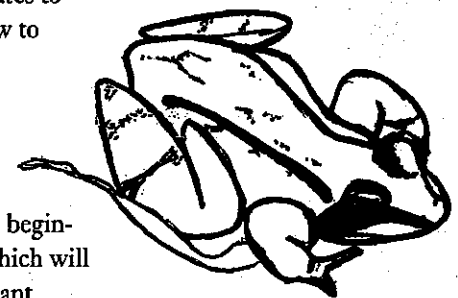
The frog monitoring is actually the beginnings of a larger monitoring program which will likely target 25 animal species and 25 plant species, as well as some vegetation community types. Sample sites will be chosen and monitored over the years, and reported on regularly, including in Watershed Report Cards.

I am personally looking forward to seeing the interest in the added species. It will mean a more rounded experience for the volunteers as it will encompass the identification and ecology of some mammals, birds, wildflowers, ferns, grasses, trees and shrubs. And, of course, our eight frogs will remain on the list!

How You Can Get Involved

It's easy ... to find out about our next event or to get more information, contact the TRCA's "Frogline" at (416) 661-6600 extension 5321

Lionel Normand has worked for 15 years as a biologist and naturalist interpreter throughout southern Ontario. He enjoys travel, camping, photography and music. In spring and fall, his woodland window wells keep him busy, checking for fallen efts and peepers. His own art accompanies this articles.



Up the hill, in September, a wood frog sits amongst dried, brown leaves which could pass for its "brothers and sisters". In November, it will slip under the leaves for the winter. April will find it emerge once again. It will make its way to breeding wetlands as wood frogs have done so gloriously for centuries in this forest.



Paddle carving was one of my highlights of teaching grades 6-8 in the north. I remember one student who having completed sanding her paddle was holding it fondly, turned to me and said "I just feel like dancing with my paddle." I smiled a response and then turned to help another student. When I turned back around this same student was dancing with her paddle down the path which led to the water. It was a spontaneously motivated, intrinsic form of expression - a true north woods paddle dance. Another significant moment was when I overheard a conversation between two boys, "Just think" one said as he nodded to the pile of unused lumber on the ground, "this paddle was once one of em boards." "Uh, uh," replied the other "these paddles where once one of them trees." Through the process of making a paddle with local wood, the students learned to recognize and value the original source of an item - a tree, a living system, a forest. To me this was an amazing outcome from this paddle making activity as our world seems saturated in an economic system which mostly encourages us to identify everything as a commodity with a price tag. By learning to make paddles with local resources and our own body skill we reestablished a relationship of direct dependency with the natural world.

I was fortunate in the north to have access to local trees and suitable decks to teach paddle carving. To do this I worked on a deck whose railings allowed students to clamp down their wood and sit abreast of it so that they could use their full upper body strength (with draw knives pulling towards themselves). In situations where I do not have access to the tools, good work environment or suitable wood (E.g. ~ 1.5m of straight grain, few knots, 3.5 cm thick, light wood with some flex), I have turned to carving small paddles for necklaces (similar to the ones used as name tags at the COEO-99 conference). I can still introduce carving skills by encouraging students to attend to the grain of wood whether they are carving paddles their own height or the length of their baby fingers. The advantages to carving small paddles also means you only need a knife and piece of wood and not an axe/ jig saw or the draw knives used for full size paddle construction.

The ideas of using knives with students may at first seem quite risky and definitely requires some precautions. I remember when at Lakehead's Outdoor Recreation Program one assignment was to make something while in the bush. The day all our projects were due, our professor asked everyone who had cut themselves while completing their project to raise their hand; almost everyone's hand went up. The skill of using a knife is fast decreasing, but I contend that a knife is to you in the bush as a pencil/pen is to school. Everyone should learn to use them both well. So, get out a bandage box, have students first wash their hands and always reinforce a few carving rules.

The following four guidelines I always post and have students read or quote before I hand them a knife. If students do cut themselves, as I bandage them, I always ask them which guideline they forgot to follow.



Concentrate, sit alone, don't joke or fool around, keep your focus on what the sharp edge of the knife is doing.



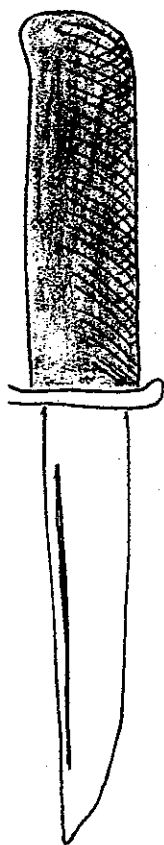
Remember to pay attention to the grain of the wood. Work with the flow, don't fight it.



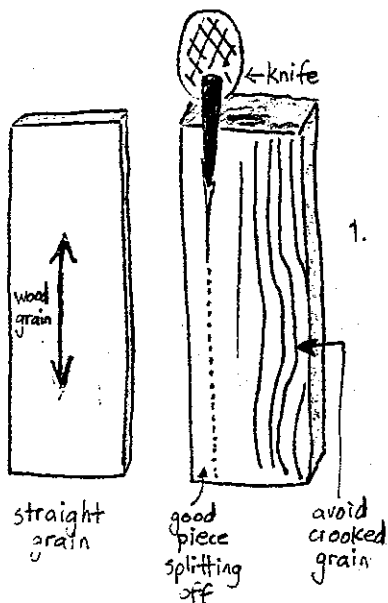
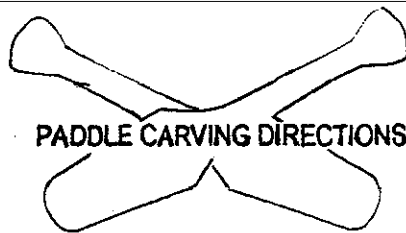
Carve away from yourself (unless you are using the crooked knife/draw knife) In other words, keep all body parts (skin) out of the path of the knife. (*Many excellent carvers do have a habit of carving towards themselves, but to explain the advantages of this technique it is best to learn from them directly.)



Think about carving many thin pieces instead of a few thick pieces in order to conserve your hand strength. Your hands are precious you don't want them to tire, slip or blister quickly. Long thin curly shavings are desirable in comparison to short thick chunks.

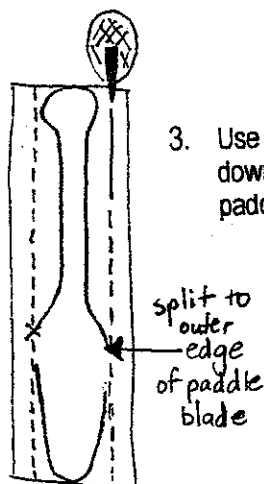
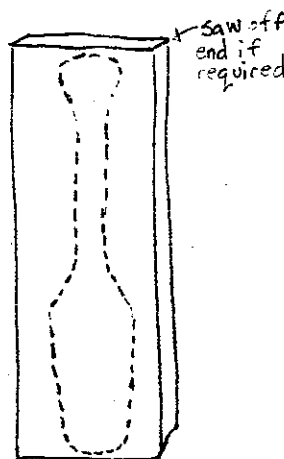


PADDLE CARVING DIRECTIONS

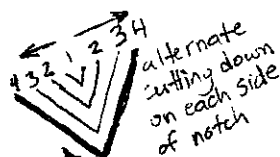


1. Find a piece of wood with a suitable straight grain and split it to an appropriate thickness for the small size you imagine making.

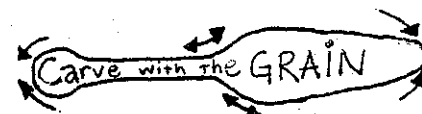
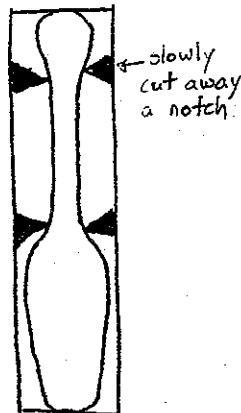
2. Draw on the wood the outline of the paddle (use a pencil as a marker can bleed into the wood). Here is an opportunity to discuss different paddle shapes and how they are a result of adaptations to local conditions and specific bioregion. Symmetry and estimation can also be introduced, as well as body math such as using body parts as measuring devices e.g. the hand span, the finger width. (note: I tend to draw the neck of the paddle a little thicker than needed as if this is too thin it makes the paddle fragile.



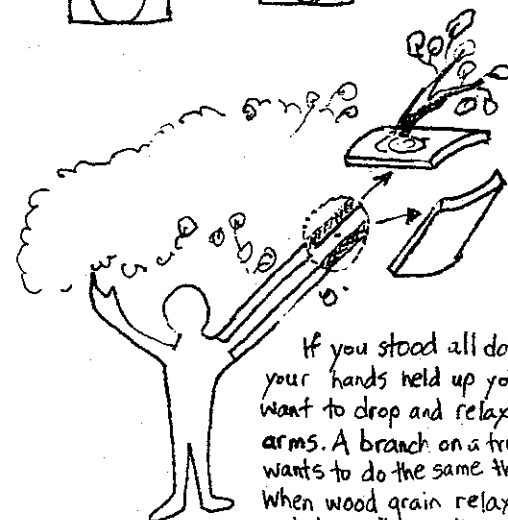
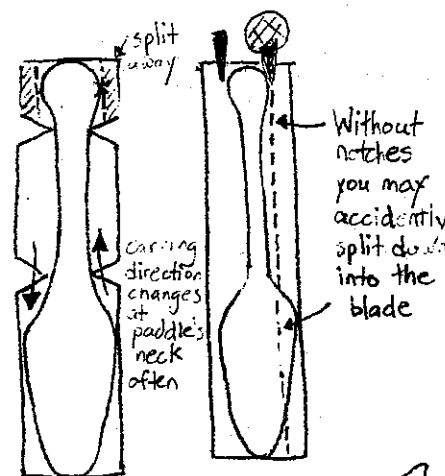
3. Use your knife as you would an axe and split down the length at the outer edge of the paddle markings.



4. The next step involves working with the grain of the wood so you do not accidentally split off the grip/handle or the paddle blade. I mark on the wood some V shapes and then colour them in and tell student these need to be cut away. As they must go against the grain this is when a sawing motion or slightly shaving off each side of the notched V until it becomes deeper and wider is best.

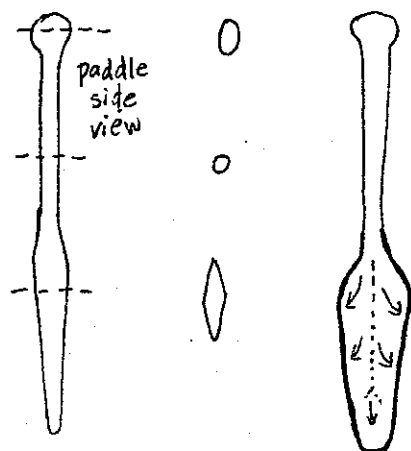


5. Split off the side wood until the top part just touches the grip markings. The v's should prevent you from accidentally splitting all the way down the wood. Keep encouraging students to notice the wood grain markings and to pay attention to which direction feels like you are biting into or going with the wood grain. Even a slight variation in the angle of the wood grain may make carving in one direction more appropriate than the other direction in slowly carving the wood away until it follows the outline of the paddle all over. This is where you can encourage the students to learn from the wood and let it teach them what to do next. Just like our body only likes to move in certain ways, the grain in wood will run in certain directions and a knife should be able to feel and work within the grain guidelines. This kind of knowledge is best learned when you compare your own body to that of a tree.

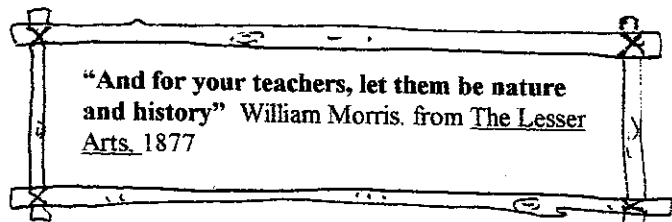


If you stood all day with your hands held up you would want to drop and relax your arms. A branch on a tree wants to do the same thing. When wood grain relaxes and dries it usually twists and warps due to releasing tension.

6. Now that the outline of the paddle is complete, next think about its thickness. Examine its side. Usually on a small paddle for a necklace all that is needed is to taper all the ends of the blades out from the middle. Taking thin shavings down the blade will work well to shape it.



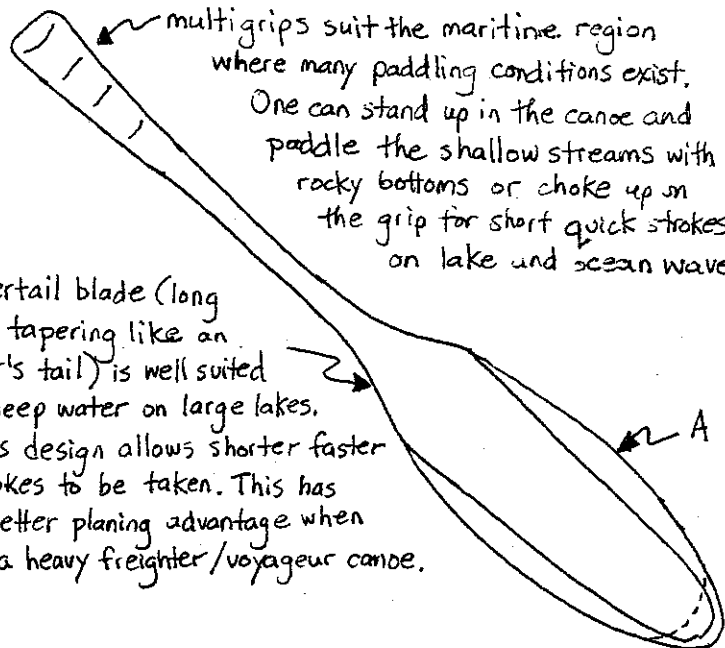
7. A little bit of fine sand paper will smooth out any rough spots and erase any pencil marks still remaining on the outline.



PADDLING SOME BIOREGIONAL FITS

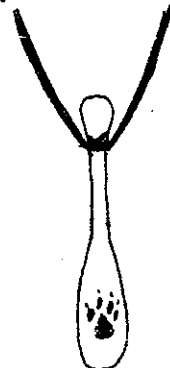
multigrips suit the maritime region where many paddling conditions exist. One can stand up in the canoe and paddle the shallow streams with rocky bottoms or choke up on the grip for short quick strokes on lake and ocean waves.

Ottertail blade (long and tapering like an otter's tail) is well suited to deep water on large lakes. This design allows shorter faster strokes to be taken. This has a better planing advantage when in a heavy freighter/voyageur canoe.



8. The last thing remaining is to burn in a design or use a fine marker. Be careful with a marker though as it will bleed into the grain, depending upon the type of wood used.

The final step is to attach a leather strap or cord to the grip to turn it into a necklace, and perhaps to think of an appropriate little ritual to accompany them before they are worn.



Paddle Club Game

This game works really well around a campfire as a riddle or thinking game. In order to join the paddle club, members must repeat and imitate the actions necessary to become an initiated member. For instance, an initiated member might...

Scratch their face and then start saying "The paddle journeys from the ground through the tree sap to the limbs. (Touch paddle to ground and raise it high) It is then kissed by the sun and wind. (Spin paddle around and then kiss it) Due to all this, I can dance upon the water (turn around with paddle) and I'm a member of the paddle club."

Initiated members do not necessarily have to get all the lines and actions right. The secret to becoming a member is to scratch yourself first. This game can be played every night by making a few passes around a campfire circle until all become members. Each pass allows a person to stand up and try to repeat the actions and words in order to become a member.

A rounder beaver tail blade is better suited for rivers and travelling in water with currents. The wider blade lets you pull more water with less chance of hitting the bottom.

THE GREAT SEED JOURNEY

There is a crunching sound coming from under the feet of your group as they hike through the woods. They stop to investigate the many pine cones littering the ground. A short distance away some have discovered maple helicopters and are attempting to throw them back into flight. With such an abundance of tree seeds in the forest it might be difficult for some to understand why the forest isn't brimming with a healthy variety of seedlings.

The tree seed is on a great journey filled with poor soil conditions, environmental hazards, and human intervention. At the end of the journey lies the promise of enough sun, water, air, shelter and space in which to grow. Of the vast number of seeds on the journey, how many make it and develop into a full tree?

With the Group:

1) Introduction

Ask "Why do trees produce so many seeds? If we followed 10 seeds, how many of them do you think would grow into trees?" (*The number given is usually pretty high and establishes a goal within the group.) "Okay, let's follow 10 seeds to see if we are right!"

2) Set-Up

- Designate four trees as "home bases" - they should be equal distances apart and not too close together.
- Hand each person a folded index card that they are not allowed to see. They become what their card says.
- The cards have printed on them one of the following:

Environmental Conditions

- Hungry deer
- Wind Storm
- Flooding
- Sunshine
- Average precipitation
- Poor precipitation

- Drought
- Crowding
- Space
- Poor/ Rich soil

Human Intervention

- Clear cutting
- Shelterbelt
- Landfill
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)
- Area slated for housing development

Tree Seeds

- Maple Tree
- Willow Tree
- Jack Pine
- Staghorn Sumac
- Yellow Birch
- Beech
- Black Cherry
- Red Pine
- Trembling Aspen
- Hemlock

3) Running the Activity

- Ask the group to run from tree base to tree base until you call "Stop!". Which ever base they are closest to is their home.
- At each base, have them unfold the cards to see if they have created a tree.
- A tree seed must have at least three favourable conditions in order to grow (such as good soil, sunshine and shelterbelt).
- Often the conditions are there but wait! They are missing a seed itself!
- Unfavourable conditions cancel out favourable ones (such as poor precipitation cancels out average precipitation).
- When a group manages to create a tree you'll hear lots of cheering. Have them return their cards and give them a new secret one. At the end of ten rounds they can see who had the closest estimate to the number of trees created.

Debrief of the Activity

What did they feel as they opened up their cards? (Nervousness, anticipation?)

Did they really want to succeed?

Which of the conditions can we control as people and which are left to nature?

cards that deal with specific soil type preferences and the tree's shade tolerance or intolerance. This activity can be incorporated into outdoor math programs by investigating variables and probabilities.

Carmen Schlamb currently sows environmental education seeds as part-time faculty at Seneca College.

Modifications to the Activity for Age Appropriateness

The above scenario is appropriate for intermediate age levels. Modify the activity for older groups by introducing more complex



Dandy Learning with Dandelions

Nearly every schoolyard and every field centre has common dandelions growing in easily observed locations. Spring is the peak blooming season for these wonderful teachers. Consider using or adapting some of these ideas for bloomin' good springtime learning. Adapt the complexity of method and content to your class group. Most of the ideas fit the flow of: indoor preparation (including task and behaviour prep.)-outdoor observation/recording-indoor follow up. Some include harvesting one or more plants. Your ethic on harvesting and limits to harvesting in your study area should be considered and discussed before starting to forage. My preference with these ideas would be to engage the class with an outdoor session using lots of "hands-on" (but controlled) collection and involvement selected from the first set of learning applications. You'll need trowels or some similar implements to collect the tap root. That round of engagement would lead into a long-term (several week) observation study applying appropriate curriculum content.

Ecological concepts: ...photosynthesis, competition, distribution, dependence, adaptation (Why the taproot? Why the seed parachutes? Why the # of seeds? (Also see observations))

English and creative expression: ...parts of the plant, written recording, sketching, labeling, cartooning, metaphor and simile, writing or dramatically acting out "A Day in My Life as a Dandelion", "My Life (cycle) as a Dandelion"

Mathematics: ...measurement, averages (average length of 10 stems), addition, subtraction, per cent, probability, graphing (see observations)

Culture: ...Why, in North America, is this plant considered a weed? Why, in countries in central Europe, is it considered a vegetable? (See edibility.) Why lawns? How are dandelions controlled ("influenced") on lawns? The origin

of the name..."dents de lion"(French)...lion's teeth... after the teeth-like margins of the leaf.

Edibility: ...leaves... When first developed, they are light green and tender. After washing thoroughly, they are good as a raw salad ingredient or good as a cooked vegetable. The leaves are high in Vitamins A and C.

Also...dandelion wine anyone?

...crown... This is the part where the root joins the leaves. Thoroughly cleaned and boiled, it is a cooked vegetable.

...root... Getting to that taproot can be difficult. It can be cleaned, oven dried or sun dried, ground and used as a coffee substitute.

...flower... Battered and deep-fried, these are excellent crispy potato chip alternatives.

Crafts: ...Use the flower heads smushed across the paper to colour an image yellow. Long stems can be fashioned into a "daisy chain" necklace by carefully inserting the small end into the large hollow end to make inter-locked loops. Long stems can be woven to create a mat-like coaster.

Long Term Observation Studies:

1. Each student observes their 1-5 plants daily for 2 weeks. Measure leaf growth and stem growth daily as the plants cycle to seedhood and beyond.
2. Even through a classroom window, an observation of blooming can be done. Visually define a definite study area (~10m. x10m. for an observation done from the indoors). If done outside, a class can be divided into study teams of 2/3/4 and adopt one 2m. square in a larger class grid as their observation responsibility. Once or twice a day, record these observations:
-date and time - # of dandelions in bloom
-weather at present -significant weather since last observation - major disturbances

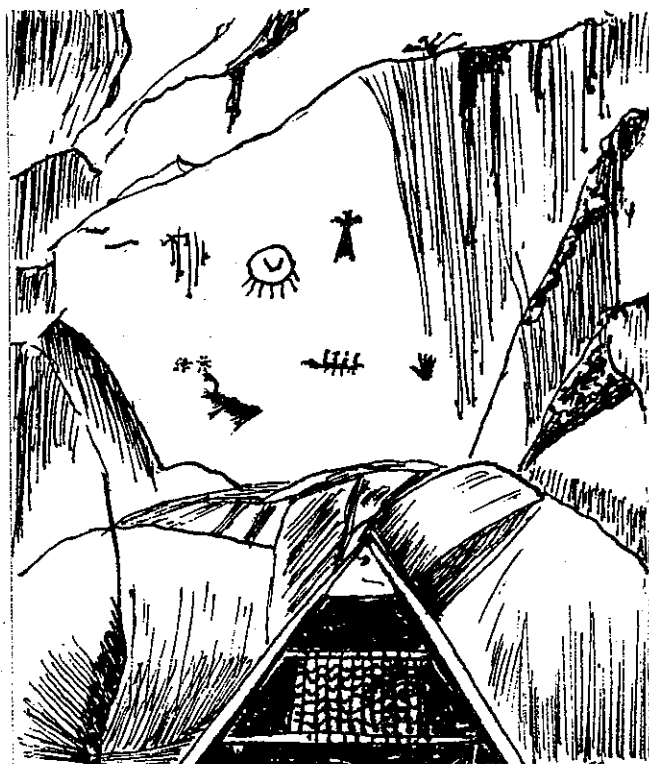
to the area (mowing, 5th graders out grazing). At one point try to count the total # of dandelion plants in the study area.

As the weeks of observation tick by, take time to analyze how few plants bloom on overcast days and how the most blooming happens on sunny days, one and two days after a rain. Note how, after repetitive mowing, the whole plant adapts. Leaves will form a horizontal, ground-hugging spread. Stems will become short and lie horizontally until the bud is developed and about to bloom. Take a short walk and contrast this adaptation with dandelions growing in tall grass areas. Here they are vertically elongated.

Graph the results of your observations. Do some analysis and draw some conclusions. Before starting the study, hypotheses can be created.

Several articles in this issue remind us of the "hands-on" personal relevance that outdoor learning affords. Dandelions spring to mind as being an almost universal seed for this principle.

Clare Magee always looks seedy before 9 am.



Maple Leaf Outdoor Centre: a treasure island

The development

There is much to be treasured about the island on Pigeon Lake in the Kawarthas on which those at the Maple Leaf Outdoor Centre are the sole human residents. The natural habitat is special. Some of the buildings and the high ropes course lie in the shade of towering oak trees over two hundred years old. Part of the southwest end of the island is maintained in open field patches as play and activity areas. Other parts of that area are being allowed to naturalize and to receive transplanted small trees from other parts of the island. The northeast part of the elongated island (about 2/3 of the island's 103 acre property) is covered with second growth mixed forest and patches of shrubs and pioneer trees. Although the island is in a Kawartha lake that is busy in the summer, the one kilometre water or ice trip from mainland to the island creates a sense of isolation. This creates a sense of separation from the rest of society and acceptance into a self-contained learning community.

The Canadian Council of War Veterans Associations opened Camp Maple Leaf as a summer camp in 1957. Their purpose was to provide quality summer camp experiences for children in Ontario who would otherwise not have the opportunity. In 1995, Hamilton East Community Services were given Camp Maple Leaf to carry on that mission. After leaving college in the early 1990s, we both felt that the outdoor education/recreation centre movement was waning in Ontario. This was disheartening as our dream was to have careers in year-round camping and outdoor education. Our dream started to come true when we were hired in 1996 to run the summer operation of Camp Maple Leaf and to develop it into a year-round outdoor centre.

Developing a plan for such expansion, that a non-profit agency Board of Directors could support, took some time. The challenge to find the money to winterize facilities and expand programming was a big obstacle. So was building a consistent clientele who would come to an island site and who were not already using established outdoor centres in the area. After spending a year and a half appealing to community groups for funding, developing the facility and programs, organizing year-round transportation, preparing promotional materials, and corresponding with potential clients, we began our first outdoor centre session in the fall of 1997. The Canadian Council of War Veterans Association continues to support Maple Leaf for major facility improvements. Maple Leaf now provides winter accommodation and meals for up to forty people in four heated cabins and a main lodge. In spring and fall up to one hundred and fifty can be accommodated in additional unheated cabins, dormitories, a main lodge, and four program buildings.

There is planned interdependence of the outdoor centre operation and the summer camp. Revenue generated from the outdoor centre goes to providing subsidies for summer campers. The agencies that refer children to the summer camp include: Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, Childrens' Aid Societies, Child Welfare Group Homes, and Community Service Organizations. The camp is also open to families not associated with an agency either requiring subsidy or able to pay full fees.

Since the first year of outdoor centre operation, bookings have increased to fill 70% of the annual capacity. Outdoor centre groups may have a program largely provided by Maple Leaf staff, be partners in the program instruction, or conduct a largely independent program with support from on-site staff. Outdoor centre

*"The one kilometre
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learning
community."*

groups can be categorized into school groups, group homes and youth centres, religious groups, and athletic teams for team building. Groups have come from the surrounding Kawartha area and the Hamilton area where Hamilton East Community Services relates to many segments of that community.

The summer camp has a strong adventure education and personal/group growth flavour.



Not surprisingly, many of the outdoor centre users want a program with that same emphasis. School groups blend in environmental and curriculum related learning. Some adult and family groups have a more social and recreational program experience. The most selected activities include: group initiatives, high ropes, climbing wall, nature study, canoeing, archery, hiking, orien-

teering, camping overnights, crafts and art, and full winter programming.

"Our biggest problem with kicksledding is getting people off them."

Winter programming: some things traditional and something different

The Ontario Trillium Foundation has helped purchase clothing and equipment to outfit participants who do not own the attire needed for winter outdoor activities and winter camping. We have constructed Adirondack shelters at three of the base camp sites established on the fifteen kilometre trail system on the island. These low, three-sided, wooden shelters, with a canvas flap covering the open side, become the destination for fully outfitted overnight winter camping adventures. This is one example of winter adventure learning the centre provides. The island bird and mammal

life leave lots of winter signs. They are a focus for winter nature and environmental learning.

In 1998, we investigated the requirements for a cross-country ski program. From our experience, we were familiar with the joys of cross-country skiing and with the problems, such as: lack of snow, waxed vs non-waxed skis, the need for multiple boot/ski/pole sizes, the binding-to-boot match, the time required to outfit a group and be on snow. Of course financing such a big program was a problem.

Then we came across an advertisement for Crossleds, a brand of nordic kicksled. They look like dogsleds without the dog. They have a seat on the front with handles on the back for a person to hold on and kick/propel the sled on its two metal runners. These simple devices have evolved into a standard form of winter transportation and recreation in Norway. Clear advantages of kicksleds are that one size fits all and they are ready to use at a moment's notice. When our first seventeen sleds were delivered we had less than one centimetre of snow. Off came the plastic snow runners, on went the ice cleats we purchased to strap on participant boots, and off we went on the metal ice runners to give our first group their kicksledding experience on the lake. The island shoreline gives us many kilometres to explore in no-snow conditions.

Our typical kicksled program includes a thirty-minute lesson followed by an instructional tour on the trail system. There is some definite technique to learn for propelling oneself and especially for turning on a downhill. During free time they're used on the toboggan hill. For winter camping, the sleds are loaded with gear. Once at the campsite, the seats on the sleds make excellent campfire chairs. Another approach is to do a winter nature hike in tandem. One student sits in front with notebook and other study equipment while the other kicks. Students switch places at the halfway point. Although a snowmobile trailer carries most of a group's gear from the mainland to the island, some enjoy transporting some of their bags themselves...on a kicksled. The sleds are

used regularly by facility staff for transporting housekeeping and maintenance supplies.

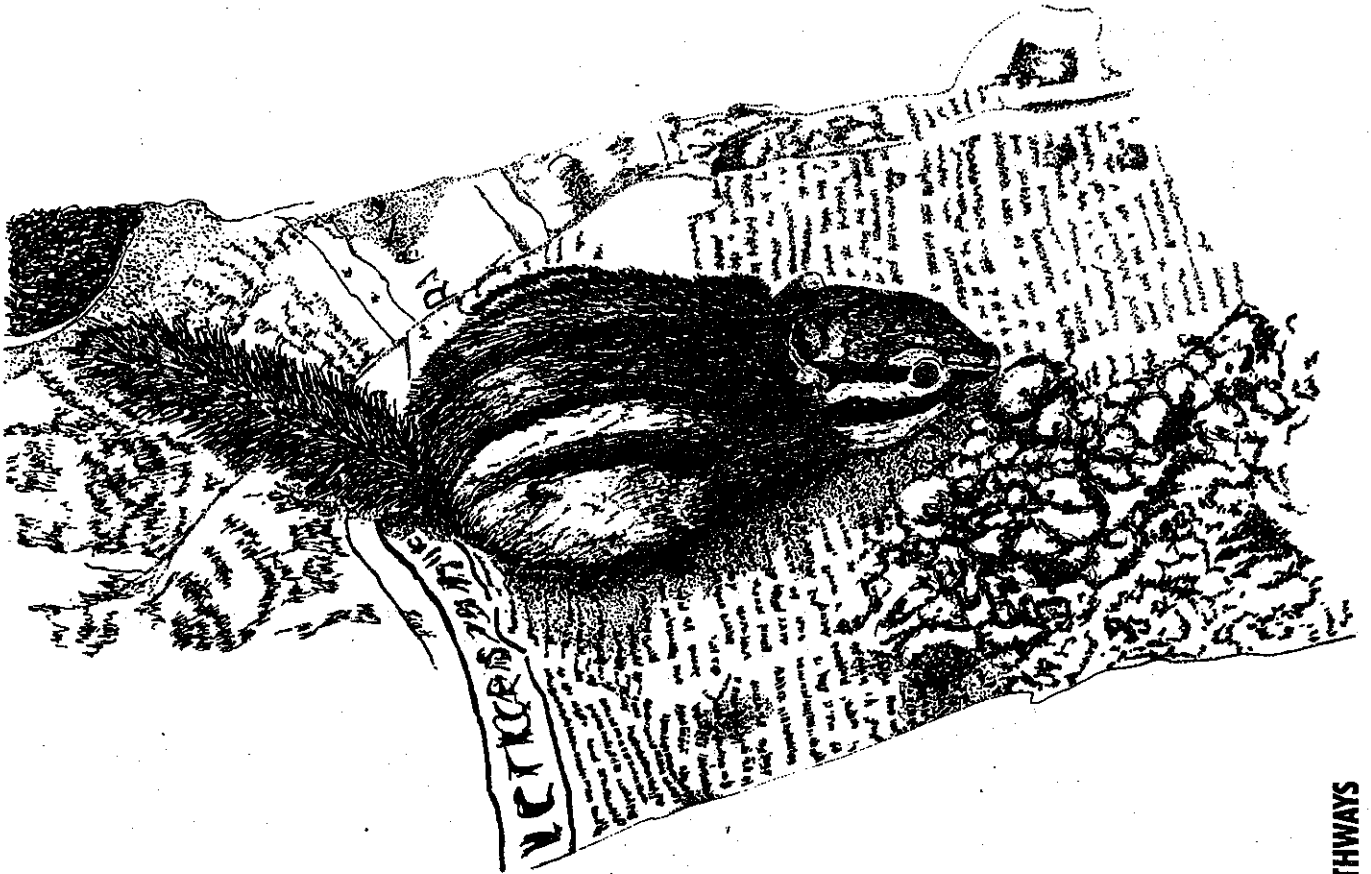
Our biggest problem with kicksledding is getting people off them. People want them to trail ride, track animals, get to the skating rink, go star-gazing, and use for winter cookouts and campouts. Despite ephemeral southern Ontario snow, they can be used all winter. Maintenance costs have been minimal. Here's an excerpt from a feedback request.

"The kicksleds gave our kids a new recreational experience as well as giving them a tool to further enjoy outdoor education in winter. Having the kicksleds allowed us to have sitting circles for discussions on our nature hike and debrief circles for our group initiatives. The kids were fascinated with finding ways to make their kicksleds go faster. Kicksledding provided us with lots of exercise."

- Dan Yamasaki, Grade 5 teacher

The challenge of developing and running an outdoor centre and running a summer camp is ongoing. Maple Leaf outdoor centre is the result of a lot of hard work, generous support from sponsors, and tireless efforts of staff and volunteers. They are a part of the rich treasure of this "treasure island."

Molly Maguire and Ric Gunton are Directors of Camp Maple Leaf and Maple Leaf Outdoor Centre. They met at Seneca College's Outdoor Recreation program and married shortly after.



CORE: Canadian Outdoor Recreation Educators Program

The Canadian Outdoor Recreation Educators Program is an educational summer semester program that is designed to prepare people for a career in outdoor recreation education. The program is modeled after the world famous Plas-y-Breinein ninety day outdoor education course in North Wales. The main difference between this program and other outdoor pursuit or outdoor adventure leadership training programs in North America is that professional third party accreditation instructor courses are offered within the semester curriculum. Training and development for each skill discipline is provided and it's up to the participant to pass the evaluation components. Accreditation bodies include: Ontario Rock Climbing Association, Eastern Canadian Sea Kayak Guides Association, Ontario Wild Water Affiliation, Advanced Rescue Techniques School of Canada, and the Canadian Rivers Council (Raft Guide). This is a very time-efficient way to attain this set of instructor/guide certifications and to jump-start a career in outdoor recreation/outdoor pursuits education.

Equinox Adventures is the parent body for the CORE program. The one hundred and forty acre Equinox base camp is on the Ottawa River near the world famous "Rocher Fendu" stretch of white water. Rock-climbing and high angle rescue programs are conducted on the Niagara Escarpment, near Milton and in the Gatineau, north of Ottawa. Sea kayaking is on Georgian Bay from a Bruce Peninsula base.

The foundation competencies threaded through the whole CORE semester are competencies that success as an outdoor professional demands: -empathy and leadership ability with diverse client groups, -outdoor risk management, -first aid, -interpreting the natural environment and minimizing environmental impact, -transferable outdoor skills such as: group forming, instructing in the outdoors, camping skills, etc. These foundation competencies are both taught on their own and are woven into the training for specific outdoor skill certification. We have found that the larger the skill base, the more marketable a person will be in the outdoor industry. Instruction in skills varies with the specialization and the season. The developmental flow of attaining the skills, practice teaching with instructor support and feedback, and finally, testing for the certification, has proven very successful. The low student to instructor ratio, the residential settings, and the variety of instructors working with the group allow lots of "tricks-of-the trade" type of learning. There is an L.I.T. (leader in training) program with a later start date and a shorter duration specifically designed for high school age students. In addition to the summer semester program, there is now a part time separate water specialization or ropes specialization program conducted mostly on evenings and weekends. Paul Sevcik, the director of Equinox Adventures, has a rich, international, twenty five year background as an outdoor skills instructor-trainer. He oversees the overall program. The group has a chief instructor with them always. This person helps tie together the techniques and styles, leads discussions and theory sessions, helps with the logistics of the program, and is the group and individual mentor.

A career in the outdoors can offer challenge, enjoyment, satisfaction, and a chance to have a positive influence on the world. Each year the demands for technical outdoor qualifications get more obvious and the minimum requirements increase. There are many post-secondary training programs in outdoor adventure education. CORE's strength is in fully certifying the technical outdoor skills that outdoor education institutions and outdoor recreation programs now require of their staff.

Kurt Bohme has attained a number of outdoor certifications and is the "core" instructor of the CORE program. www.equinoxadventures.com for more information

Nature: My Meaning and Mission

This is a summary statement of meaning derived from nature and mission to return something to nature at the end of a year of outdoor college study.

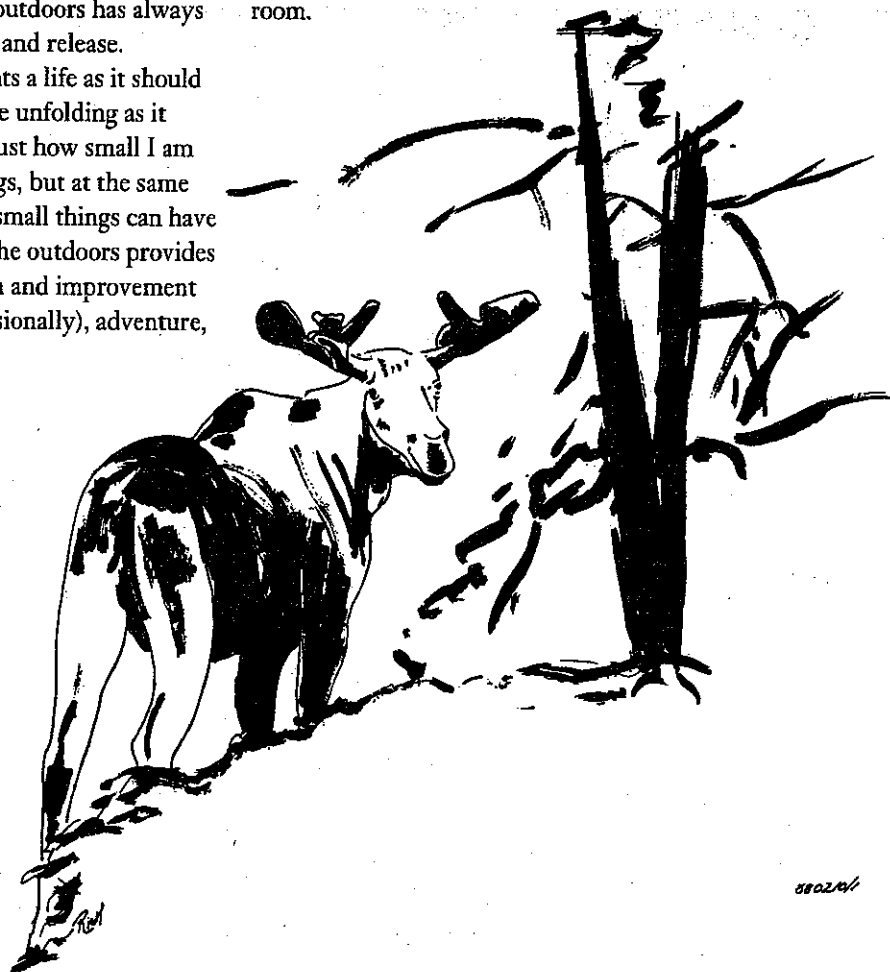
I have always been a woman of words and so I find it hard to express my emotions any other way. As a result, my creation is composed of phrases, that speak to me and my relation to nature, on both a personal and professional level. I don't feel that I have a lot to add or explain with regards to my creation, most of it explains itself. I will, however, give a short elaboration.

Having grown up in the city, wilderness was something that I never took for granted. I lived for the Sunday afternoon car trips up north and elsewhere. I spent my afternoons travelling different sections of the Bruce Trail. I loved to sit in parks, watch sunsets, feel the sun and wind on my skin. The outdoors has always been a source of inspiration and release.

To me, nature represents a life as it should be; it represents the universe unfolding as it should. It illustrates to me just how small I am in the grand scheme of things, but at the same time, how much an impact small things can have on what surrounds them. The outdoors provides me opportunities for growth and improvement (both personally and professionally), adventure, and challenge.

Wilderness makes me feel close...close to who I am, who I want to be; close to others; close to God...however I perceive him to be. The change that time spent in the outdoors has on my mind and body, especially my soul, is indescribable.

When it comes to wanting more from nature, there is really nothing more that I can ask. I am truly a latent valuer of the outdoors; just knowing that it is there makes me smile. Planning for future trips provides almost as much entertainment as actually going. The only thing that I could want more of is time...to spend taking in the days and nights, the wind and sun, the sunsets and sounds. I want to spend the rest of my life continuing to appreciate all of the things that make me smile, especially all the living that can be found outside of the living room.



I hope to incorporate many of the aspects of environmental living that we have learned this year in my personal life. I now think twice about driving anywhere that I can walk. I am looking forward to introducing my ever-so-conservative parents to the concept of composting. I have learned not only to reduce, reuse, and recycle, but also to refuse. I use my money as a means of making my voice heard, and choose to purchase greener options whenever possible. I want to become one of the people that I have always admired...one who considers the environmental ramifications of my actions.

From a professional perspective, the outdoors provides me an opportunity to assist others in their personal growth and fulfillment. I get the chance to instill in others a love and respect not only for the natural environment, but also for themselves and their place in it. The outdoors acts as an incredible classroom and I plan to use it extensively and effectively.

I also want to spend the rest of my life further developing the base of knowledge that I have gained this year. One of my goals once I start teaching full-time is to begin doing my Bachelor of Science part-time in Geography and

Environmental Science. This year has just served to whet my appetite for this type of knowledge.

This year has surely been one of the best decisions of my life. I will leave here with a much stronger connection to wilderness and the issues that surround it. I leave with more skills and knowledge that can be used to appreciate the outdoors on a level that I was incapable of before. I now look at everything around me with a far different perspective and I am looking forward to cherishing and expanding this new perspective for the rest of my life.

Each of the words or phrases below evoke a direct connection to some insightful experience I have had in nature.

Cheryl Murray completed the Seneca College Outdoor Recreation program and is about to complete the Queen's University B.Ed. program

Dedication - Determination

Accomplishment Summer rainstorm A wild amazing ride

Refreshing Fragility - strength - endurance Motivation

New beginnings change childlike wonder Being your own hero

rainbows celebrate Full moons

barnack sunrises Challenge

play smiles Leadership Peace at heart, mind, soul

sunsets

Growth - personal development
- personal improvement Renewal of the spirit

reflection Enjoying the silence Discover Latent value

Autumn leaves Adventure

Escape

Renewal of The glow and warmth of an evening fire Conquering Fear

Northern Lights "tugging the monster"

Editor's Note: This column in Pathways is an effort to advance our language from an Outdoor Education perspective

haragei (Japanese): Visceral, indirect, largely nonverbal communication.[noun]

In the West, where we come from a variety of different cultural backgrounds but share the same language, communication is equated with clear, concise, logical, explicit, direct verbalization. Generally, we "speak what is on our minds." On occasion, we "speak from the heart." In Japan, where the culture is racially, socially, and culturally homogenous and people share so many different unspoken values, direct verbal communication, the way we use it in the West, is generally shunned. Words are mistrusted. Nuances, silences, gestures, facial expressions are much more important. To a surprising degree, the Japanese rely on a kind of visceral communication known as haragei (ha-ra-GUY, where the "r" is a pronounced something like a "d"). One Japanese can understand what another is trying to communicate by closely observing posture, facial expressions, the length and timing of silences, and the various "meaningless" sounds uttered by the other person.

Indeed, "meaningless" sounds play a large part in haragei. Just as Westerners mutter "yes" or "uh-huh" from time to time to indicate intent listening, Japanese tend to say hai (hi!). The surface meaning is simply "Yes, I am listening and I hear what you are saying." On a deeper level, haragei draws indirect attention to certain nuances of the speaker's words.

Robert C. Christopher, tells a story of haragei:

Just how addictive haragei can be was fully driven home to me a few years ago when a friend of mine, an American journalist and long resident in Tokyo, reported on an interview he had just had with one of the elder statesmen of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Toward the end of the conversation, my friend asked how many months the politician thought it would be until the then prime minister of Japan would be forced to resign. For his own reasons, the politician apparently wanted my friend to have the right answer to that question and to publish it. But that posed a problem: The old man clearly felt that with a foreigner, even a knowledgeable foreigner, he could not rely on haragei, and yet a lifetime of habit prevented him from giving the answer straight out. In the end, what he did was mutter repeatedly, "Musasashiine" ("a difficult question"), meanwhile using his forefinger to trace very conspicuously on his desktop the number seven.

Although the Japanese raise it to a high art, haragei is part of every culture's communication system. In the West, we understand that a sharply raised eyebrow can indicate disapproval, that crossed arms and a grin can indicate aggressive skepticism, that a wink means there are hidden meanings in the speaker's words. But we practice haragei far more than we acknowledge it or try to understand it, which means that we sometimes end up with ambiguous understandings.

i Rbeingold, Howard. They Have a Word for it: A Lexicon of Untranslatable Words and Phrases. Jeremy P. Tarchor. Los Angeles, 1998

"Indeed, meaningless sounds play a large part in haragei."

EECOM Conference 2000

The Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication are hosting EECOM Conference 2000: Great Plains Ecosystem Education, in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba on Aug. 17-20. There will be lots of ecosystem, naturalization, First Nations culture sessions and much, much more. Phone: 1-204-848-7284
Fax: 1-204-848-2596
Email: Friends_RMNP@pch.gc.ca
Web site: www.escape.ca/parkplus

Haliburton Outdoor Centre Internship Program

Haliburton Outdoor Centre Internship Program has interns rotate through four, year-round outdoor centres. The April to April year provides practical work experience in all aspects of outdoor centre instruction and operation. Contact: Lynda Shadbolt, c/o Kinark Outdoor Centre
Tel: 1-800-805-8252
Fax: 705-286-6184
Email: jimmchardy@koc.on.ca
Web site: www.koc.on.ca

The Canadian Ecology Centre

The Canadian Ecology Centre conducts a range of day programs on a variety of ecology, natural history and cultural history topics of interest to outdoor educators. Of interest to secondary students is their Eco-Camp (July 15-20) and Outdoor Physical Education Camp (July 16-30). Both are residential, for credit, courses taught in a highly experiential manner. Contact: Bill Steer
Tel: 1-888-747-7577
Web site: www.canadianecology.ca

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists offer day long outings on various nature topics aimed at adults. They conduct "work camps", where physical work on habitat improvement is blended with some ecology learning. Their Young Naturalist Summer Camps are: Juniors (10-12), July 22-30; Seniors (13-15), July 26-Aug. 6. These are based at the Leslie M. Frost Centre and immerse the campers in active, enjoyable learning about nature.

The Frost Centre hosts a number of short residential outdoor learning experiences for youth and for adults throughout the summer. F.O.N. Tel. 1-800-440-2366
Email: heleng@ontarionature.org
Frost Centre: Tel. 1-705-766-0567
Web site: <http://come.to/frostcentre>

Ontario Colleges of Education

In response to planned cancellation of Environmental Science as a teachable subject at Ontario Colleges of Education, a group of concerned people met to strategize. Hosted at the F.O.N. offices, and chaired by Tim Grant of Green Teacher magazine, discussion went beyond immediate response to consider more long term strategies to politically promote environmental education both provincially and nationally. C.O.E.O. is represented. A second meeting was held April 5 focusing toward long term environmental education strategies. A mandate and goals are being drafted and a sense of purpose and forward movement is present. If interested, contact Helen Gault at F.O.N. Email: heleng@ontarionature.org

Get a credit in life!

Outward Bound offers High School Credit for courses in adventure

If you are 14 years or older you are eligible for an Ontario high school senior level credit if you successfully complete a 21-day Adventure course, or the 22-day Voyageur course. Enroll in our 42-day Educational Leadership Semester program and receive two senior level credits in Personal Life Management upon course completion. Credits may also be available for Leadership, Instructor Development Program and White Water Quest courses – call our course advisor for details. All credits need to be approved by your principal before the course starts.

Educational Leadership Semester

This is a unique opportunity for high school students to earn two high school credits in Personal Life Management while participating in a challenging multi-element Outward Bound experience. This six week summer program uses wilderness adventure to develop leadership, life management and communication skills. Experience wilderness and community living during a series of back-to-back expeditions in the magnificent and rugged country around Georgian Bay. Students will canoe, sea kayak backpack, and develop the technical skills needed to paddle large waterways and negotiate rapids while learning how to be effective leaders and valuable and responsible members of a community. Decision-making, conflict resolution, goal setting and time management are stressed.

Rock climbing, high ropes elements, a solo experience, Wilderness First Aid certification and up to ten hours of community service will round out the the course. At our base near Burk's Falls, Ontario students work to fulfill the academic requirements for the two credits.

About the Credits

Personal Life Management is a grade 12 Social Science course under the OSIS curriculum. Students can acquire up to four credits from Personal Life Management. Students who are not yet in grade 12 can reach ahead to take the credits. As well, students working under the new OSS curriculum, which was implemented at the grade nine level in September 1999, will be able to take these credits with permission from their principal.

Ask about financial assistance for course tuition.



Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School

Chances are you already know a lot about Outward Bound – the outstanding adventures in spectacular wilderness settings, the unparalleled training in outdoor skills, the fun and challenge of hands-on learning. You expect to leave Outward Bound with a solid foundation of skills that will help make your future wilderness endeavours safe and enjoyable.

But you're sure to return home with much more – a heightened sense of self, the courage to overcome fear and to chart your own course.

Your Outward Bound experience may also give you a greater appreciation for others and the world around us. At Outward Bound, we believe that the actions of a single person can change the world for the better.

Outward Bound is a non-profit charitable, educational organization.

Outward Bound

We're ready when you are.



1-888-OUTWARD (1-888-688-9273) or visit www.outwardbound.ca

Reflections on Bark Lake as a private Outdoor Centre

By Aaron Shedy

I was working for the Kingston Family YMCA when the call came. Up until that time I had spent years working for not-for-profit and non-profit organizations. I was used to the struggle. I was used to good ideas being challenged by the all mighty dollar. I watched good ideas fizzle away because a grant didn't come through or the idea was eroded in committee until there was nothing left of the original spark.

In my time in the non-profit sector I had some great experiences! I got to work with all walks of life and really make a difference in some people's lives. I don't regret my time in non-profit, but when the call came I didn't hesitate, for long.

So Bark Lake, the newly privatized summer camp flagship wanted me to run their high ropes program. I was 21 years old and felt like I just got called up to play centre for the Maple Leafs. I arrived at Bark Lake in the middle of a raging August thunder storm, I remember my first night vividly. I pulled on my rain boots and Gor-tex and walked to flag pole point to say hello to the huge guardian pine tree. I suspect many of you know it well. As the thunder gently rumbled on the north side of the lake and the breeze picked up I thought to myself, "if there ever was a wind of change, this is it."

Bark Lake was private now. We were charged with the responsibility to "put heads in beds". One of our earliest challenges was that everyone working in the "new Bark Lake" was from non-profit or public industries...we quickly learned.

Think of this article as a "snap shot" of how Bark Lake has blazed our own path into the Outdoor Ed arena as a private company.

Two years passed and there was growth. Different people filtered in and out, owners filtered in and out and with some trial and error Bark Lake hammered out a program that our new sales manager, Brent Gordon, could start to market. This is when things really started to take off!

This year in our school program we expect to see about 1500 students from schools all over

Ontario. Add to that more than 700 international students through the summer and several adult groups through the year as well! Bark Lake is a growing and thriving outdoor centre.

More and more we discovered we had to deal with "that word", the word that drives the ownership, that drives the world economy, that paradoxical word: profit.

Once we got used to working within a profit formula I found it more liberating than dealing with not-for-profit. It is clear what Bark Lake needs to get out of a group financially. If a group meets that criteria, they are a viable client.

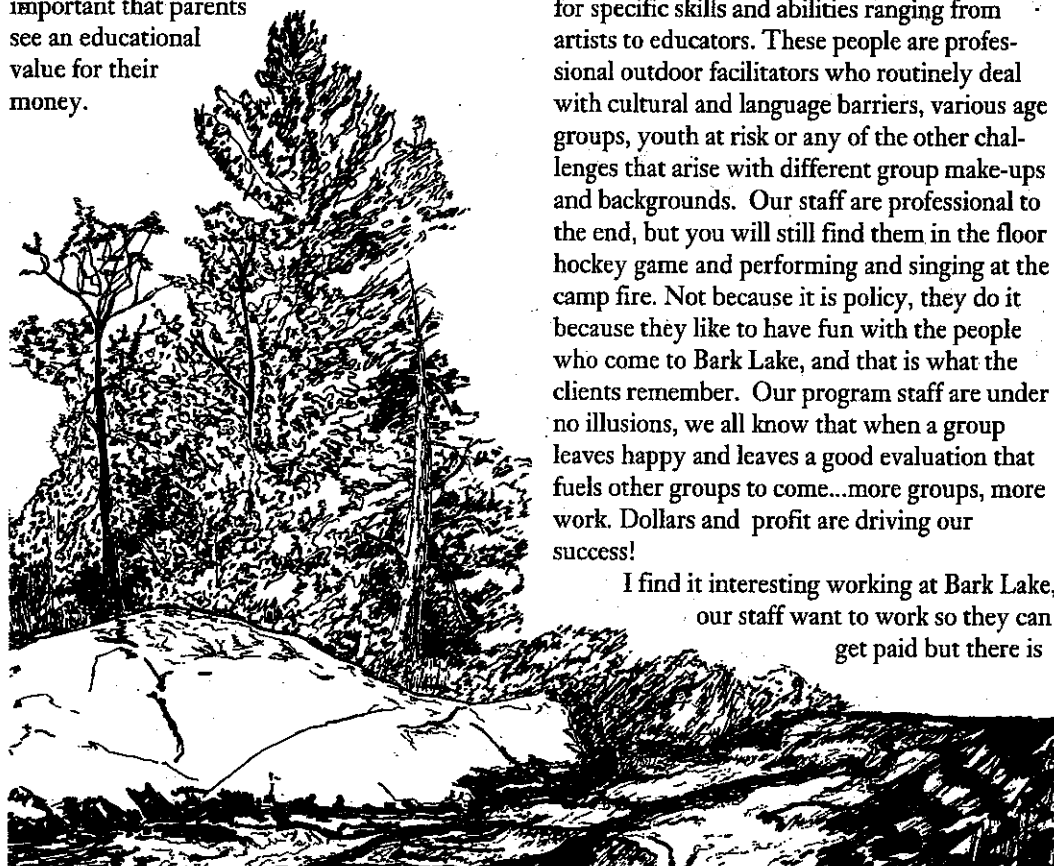
We have had some learning experiences: take snowmobile groups and school groups for instance. Both are totally viable Bark Lake clients. Both respect and enjoy what Bark Lake has to offer. But they don't mix well, so we avoid booking them together. Weddings are another client group that we never expected to arise at Bark Lake, but weddings fill many of our weekends in the spring. It comes down to the simple principle; they meet the criteria. We don't, however, just blindly book groups because they can pay. Groups who want more than we can offer or would be too wild during their stay are kindly asked to look into alternative accommodations.

Within almost any group of adults at Bark Lake someone from the group will see an opportunity for their church group or Lions Club, company staff, or school group to utilize what Bark Lake offers. Knowing this, we are quick to offer site tours to any adult group that rolls down the road. We are getting to the point where our bookings are tight enough that we are starting to be selective, from a profit standpoint, as to who we book. Furthermore, several of our staff have learned to work in this profit formula and routinely book their own groups at Bark Lake, making additional money for themselves and for Bark Lake. It is an arrangement that we encourage.

I don't believe that Bark Lake really has very much competition. We don't chase after

"I was 21 years old and felt like I just got called up to play centre for the Maple Leafs."

other outdoor centre's groups and if they are getting what they need and expect from the other centre we would be wasting our time trying to pry them away. We are mostly group based year round, so our camper recruitment is limited to our one or two leadership weeks in the summer for youth 11 and up. We actively chase after the educational tour business. Why go to Ottawa when you can come to Bark Lake (or another outdoor centre for that matter)? When we sell to the students, we stress that they will still get to spend time with their friends, still eat food they like and we drive it home with slides of the ropes course, camp fire and other outdoor activities. In my experience, the students don't really want to go the Parliament Buildings in the first place. Often when students are asked 'what was their favourite part of their Ottawa experiences', they report it was the Hotel. Parents aren't much harder to convince. Coming to an outdoor centre is safe, contained and as educational as a museum tour. When we say that we are going to teach leadership and teamwork skills, it becomes even easier to get them to part with their hard earned dollars. It is important that parents see an educational value for their money.



Is Bark Lake only for the rich? Not at all. We work with several agency based groups that, through fund-raising, are able to meet our minimum requirements. Also our school group programs are very affordable. A student can come to Bark Lake for \$167.00 for two nights, including meals and program. If you compare that to other outdoor centres it could be considered expensive. However, if you compare it to a class trip to Ottawa it is cheap, plus the students don't need spending money, plus the teachers and parents know where the kids are the entire time, plus they get the value of a leadership program.

A discussion about Bark Lake's program would be incomplete without discussing our Program Staff. They really are the key. It always amazes me how important our staffs' "personal touches" are to our success. There is no faking it. Our staff love to lead, love working with younger learners and they give 110% to the group. A typical day is 10 - 12 hours long sometimes 5 - 8 days in a row, and they keep going. The make-up of our staff is as diversified as is our client base; everyone of them chosen for specific skills and abilities ranging from artists to educators. These people are professional outdoor facilitators who routinely deal with cultural and language barriers, various age groups, youth at risk or any of the other challenges that arise with different group make-ups and backgrounds. Our staff are professional to the end, but you will still find them in the floor hockey game and performing and singing at the camp fire. Not because it is policy, they do it because they like to have fun with the people who come to Bark Lake, and that is what the clients remember. Our program staff are under no illusions, we all know that when a group leaves happy and leaves a good evaluation that fuels other groups to come...more groups, more work. Dollars and profit are driving our success!

I find it interesting working at Bark Lake, our staff want to work so they can get paid but there is

"Dollars and profit are driving our success. But profit is a paradox."

still that non-profit feeling where the quality of the work being done is paramount and our clients, mostly from the Public sector (schools), know that they are being taken care of at Bark Lake.

But, profit is a paradox. Although we have a free-flowing mandate and are able to make use of Bark Lake's resources in continually creative ways, there are also challenges that come with being a for-profit entity.

There is a corporate culture in any for profit business. This culture can create some stressful situations such as: decisions are made for the perceived good of the company that aren't always fully understood by those who are asked to carry them out; decisions are often made with out considering the human impact of those decisions; it is common within a corporate culture for there to be subliminal alliances where good ideas are never given a chance or are sabotaged covertly, and there is often a dual allegiance, the workers must appease both the client and the owners, because they work for both; and with the faster decision making process not all angles are considered before the go-ahead is given. Bark Lake has experienced

some of these problems, but we're always working to provide the best program possible and remain fiscally accountable.

I am often asked how our current programs compare to the programs that ran at Bark Lake during the public years. Neither myself or any of Bark Lake's program staff, to my knowledge, worked in the Government's program, so I don't really know. But, I meet adults every week that tell me that their experiences at Bark Lake were a high point in their youth. I also regularly receive letters and emails filled with accolades about our program, staff and facilities from youth and teachers who have participated in our program. I see a comparison there.

Bark Lake is private. Being private we enjoy many freedoms including the ability to "self-initiate" when it comes to new policies, programs and markets. Of course, every organization has their challenges but once the rules are clear and a little creativity is employed, an organization can work beyond their challenges. That is what we are doing at Bark Lake.

Aaron Sheedy draws on his connection to nature and his black belt karate depth to help him manage the program at Bark Lake.

The Gathering

CONFERENCE 2000: 30 Years of Outdoor Education Leadership

This year's annual conference will be held at the Bark Lake Leadership Centre, in the Haliburton Highlands. It will be on the weekend of September 29 - October 1 and has a leadership theme. Bark Lake has a long historical connection to outdoor education dating to 1948. During the years that it was operated by the province, it offered outdoor education, outdoor leadership, and outdoor skill development programs to youth and adults. Many COEO members were introduced (seduced?) to the concepts of outdoor education at Bark Lake. The site and natural surroundings are rich with outdoor education history and rich with present day outdoor learning opportunity. In the decade of the 1990's, the facility and programs went

through considerable expansion and change. Then, it was sold to private owners. After rebirth pains, it is reaffirming a position in providing outdoor leadership to youth and adults.

For three decades, COEO conferences have engaged members in informative, educational sessions within a warm social atmosphere. This conference will continue that tradition. Presenters are being asked to inform, involve, challenge, nurture, and free participants in their session leadership. A blend of curriculum oriented sessions and professional growth sessions are being planned. Mark your calendars and organizers now and look to receiving full details on specific content and on registration in the near future. For up to date conference information, contact Glen Hester or Mary Gyemi-Schulze (*Pathways* front cover).