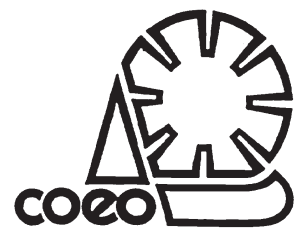


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Autumn 2006, 19(1)



Pathways

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COEO

Formed in 1972, The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. This is achieved through publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies.

Contributions Welcome

Pathways is always looking for contributions. If you are interested in making a submission, of either a written or illustrative nature, we would be happy to hear from you. For a copy of our submission guidelines, please contact Randee Holmes, Managing Editor.

If you are interested in being a guest editor of an issue of *Pathways*, please request a copy of our guidelines for guest editors from Randee Holmes, Managing Editor.

If you have any questions regarding *Pathways*, please direct them to Bob Henderson, Chair of the *Pathways* Editorial Board. If you'd like more information about COEO and joining the organization, please refer to the inside back cover of this issue or contact a Board of Directors member.

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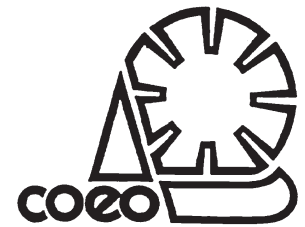
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Features

- Losing My Religion: The Quest for Applicable Theory in Outdoor Education** 4
Simon Beames
- Response to *Losing My Religion*** 12
Bryan Grimwood
- Response to *Losing My Religion*** 13
Scott Caspell
- Twenty-five Years of Environmental Education in Nova Scotia: Lessons, Challenges and Directions** 14
Alan Warner
- Projects on the Go: "Baywoods" Outdoor Classroom** 19
Diana Saunders
- Discover the Acadian Forest with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick** 19
Tracy Glynn
- Community-based Outdoor Leadership Training in Nova Scotia** .. 20
Jody Conrad
- Ecotourism in the Atlantic Provinces** 22
John Colton
- Mentoring in the Outdoors** 25
Kathleen Naylor
- Atlantic Canada's Adventure** 26
Glyn Bissix
- Outdoor Education Affects Your Health** 29
Amanda Cliff
- Where We Go From Here: Placing Outdoor Education in our Current Context** 32
Grant Linney

Columns

- Editors' Log Book** 2
Editorial Board
- President's View** 3
Shane Kramer
- Backpocket** 34
Nicole Tait

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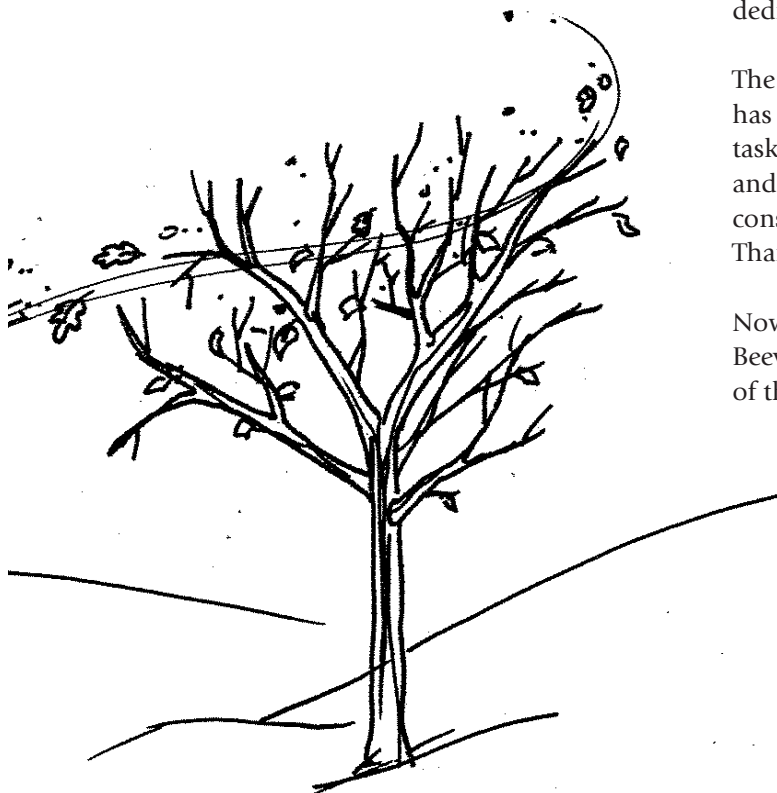
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It is a pleasure to introduce this Eastern Canada theme issue of *Pathways*. This issue evolved out of an inspired conversation with Acadia University professor Alan Warner. Alan was responsible for compiling this collection of "what's going on" in Eastern Canada outdoor education. In essence, this is a "Beyond Our Borders" column expanded into its own theme issue. Thanks Alan. We will ensure many copies of this issue travel to Eastern Canada.

Also within this issue, we are excited that Simon Beames has contributed a thoughtful critique of outdoor adventure education. We have high hopes that this submission will find a home in many university and college course-reading kits.



Finally, this issue marks the passing of an enjoyable time for Bob Henderson, Randee Holmes and Krista Friesen.

Bob has served as Chair of the Editorial Board of *Pathways* since 1991. He was a member of the founding committee of *Pathways* as it evolved from the 1980s ANEE.

Randee Holmes has served as editor, layout co-ordinator, computer whiz and attention-to-detail person (the only person) since 2000. She has been responsible for the quality of presentation and works behind the scenes at the tasks so important and so easily neglected. All involved in *Pathways* over the last many years as guest editors, writers and artists owe Randee a big collective thanks for her dedication to the journal and a task well done.

The same can be said for Krista Friesen, who has worked alongside Randee handling all tasks to do with art and layout. Her creativity and design expertise have ensured that we consistently produce a quality publication. Thanks!

Now we usher in a new era with Christine Beevis at the helm. Christine will gather each of these tasks into her own bailiwick. The Editorial Board will largely remain intact, as we help Christine ease into the job. We welcome the new energy and ideas coming to *Pathways* on all fronts and welcome Christine with open arms.

Editorial Board

Sketch Pad — Art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously provided by the following individuals: Heather Read (cover), Josh Gordon (page 2), Kate Prince (page 6), Dominique Dery (pages 13 and 20), Lindsey Daleo (page 17), Dawn McKay (pages 23 and 35) and Emily Robertson (page 27).

At the time of this writing the 2006 COEO conference has just wrapped up. This was an enjoyable conference for me in many ways but also showed me that COEO faces many challenges as an organization. While these challenges may require us to look at things through new eyes, the joys that COEO brings me, and many others, should make the effort worthwhile.

Of course the highlight for many of us at our conferences is the reconnection with old friends and colleagues, the joy we have in catching up with good people whose company we enjoy and may not see as often as we would like. Then there are the new people we are introduced to, new friends who inspire us and who we welcome into the extended COEO family. This year I had the pleasure of meeting a number of new folks who bring an enthusiasm and energy that is easy to latch on to.

We had some wonderful sessions, and there were several I would have enjoyed participating in if I could have been in two or more places at once. Andrea Foster organized an engaging panel for Saturday night that challenged us, inspired us and introduced us to a number of people on similar journeys to our own, people who are forging their own paths — paths that I hope will cross with ours again.

We had wonderful people selected as recipients of our annual awards, including the inaugural presentation of our newest award, the *COEO Amethyst Award in memory of Brent Dysart*, to its first recipient, Stacey Hislop. Thanks to Carolyn Dysart for attending the conference and presenting this award. Barb Weeden-Carmichael received the *Dorothy Walter Award for Leadership*, Zabe MacEachern the *President's Award*, and the Toronto Urban Studies Centre was recognized with the *Robin*

Dennis Award. Congratulations to all! We also got our first look at the COEO research brief that has been an important part of our work through the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant, and that will be fully presented this autumn.

What challenges us is the lower-than-hoped-for-and-expected attendance at this year's conference. We certainly knew this conference was a new direction for us and a bit of a risk, but we had hoped the COEO membership would welcome and support it with greater numbers. I hope those who attended will forward their thoughts and experiences to me. I would also like to hear from those who didn't attend in order to learn more from their perspectives. I am sure the fifty or so attendees came away with new insights into how outdoor education can adapt to the changing needs of society and find new ways to promote our values. This does not mean we should turn our backs on the strengths of traditional outdoor education experiences, but rather increase the arc of what we recognize as "outdoor education" to include those seeking the same outcomes we are — those who may have felt excluded from our field due to a variety of barriers, including location, culture and definition. If we can dismantle these barriers we will only strengthen the role that outdoor education can play in our education system and in our society at large.

If you attended the conference I hope you find ways to implement what you learned in your practice. If you did not attend, I hope you speak to those who did and gain from their sharing of the experience. I hope we all find ways to continue to contribute to and strengthen our organization and field for the future.

Shane Kramer

Losing My Religion: The Quest for Applicable Theory in Outdoor Education

by Simon Beames

There is a growing body of increasingly complex critical outdoor education theory. This paper seeks to extract and synthesize applicable points from this literature so that they may be put to the test of usefulness in the field. In an effort to consider how practice may be informed by current outdoor education theory, a model is presented that places outdoor education practice on three dimensions: journeys/ready-made sessions; instructor driven/learning negotiated; universal/place based.

The 1990s were good to me as an outdoor educator. They were good because I was sure of what I was doing. I was sure of what I was doing because I followed the gospel according to *Islands of Healing* (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988), *Adventure Education* (Miles & Priest, 1990), and, later, *Adventure Programming* (Priest & Gass, 1997). As a schoolteacher and outdoor education fundamentalist, I would eagerly stand on my soapbox and unashamedly try to convince parents and administrators that I would sort out their teenagers during a two-week canoe trip.

I learned how to funnel, frame, and frontload (Priest & Gass, 1997) and was good at it. The first 48 hours of my wilderness-based courses were carefully choreographed in order to steer the group to just where I wanted them to be. I wanted to be a top outdoor adventure education instructor, and, for a while, I actually believed I was. Now, when I look back at the nineties, I wonder, "Was that me?" This wonder stems from the growing body of critical writing in outdoor education that has come to the forefront in recent years. During this time, I have found myself more experienced, yet less certain about the kind of

outdoor education I want to practice. This confusion is a result of the incongruence between what I saw happening in the field and this emerging body of literature. I no longer knew what I believed in and, like a pop song from the early 1990s, I was "losing my religion."

What Does the Research Say?

The last few years have brought with them some critical writing that has made me question what I do as an educator. Examining one's professional purpose should be a good thing for anyone to do. Higgins and Nicol (2002), Lugg (2004), and Wurdinger (1997) suggest that outdoor educators should continually examine the educational rationale underpinning their activity choices. My own deeper questioning began when I read "Adventure in a Bun" (Loynes, 1998), which compared pre-fabricated, off-the-shelf adventure education programs to McDonald's hamburgers. Loynes argued that outdoor education courses were becoming predictable, packaged, and commodified.

My questioning continued when I read Hovelynck's (2001) "reconnaissance" of experiential learning, where he stated that "if the lessons to be learned from an experience can be listed before the experience has taken place, and thus independently of the learner's experience, it seems misleading to call the learning 'experiential'" (p.8). Perhaps my courses were less experiential than I thought. Had I been the kind of domineering instructor described by Brown (2002) — the kind of instructor that acts as "gatekeeper" to what is admitted as knowledge, thereby steering individuals (and the group) towards my own pre-determined outcomes?

Loynes' (2002) "The Generative Paradigm" outlined a number of defining features that ran contrary to the beliefs that seemed to underpin most of the residential-based outdoor education that I had encountered. The dominant American model of the instructor as clever, all-knowing master of 100 initiative tasks was now being challenged by a model with a participant-centred approach, where "meaning and value emerge through the experience rather than being represented or defined by the programme structure or facilitator" (p.122).

At the same time, the literature I had been reading on *friluftsliv*, the "Norwegian tradition for seeking the joy of identification with free Nature" (Faarlund, 2002, p.18), stimulated the romantic in me. What could be better than a way of living and learning that emphasised forming cultural connections to the land, valued joy from being outside with each other (Faarlund, 2002), and did not depend on expensive equipment (Dahle, 2002)? Henderson (2001) urges North American outdoor educators to learn from the *friluftsliv* tradition. He penned an essay adding "warm" and "green" elements to the North American preoccupation with instructors' hard and soft skill development. Warm skills consider how we meet nature (our "manners") and the ways in which the educator works to create an overall ambience within the group. This is a crucial antecedent to developing a reconceived "human-nature" relationship. Green skills pertain to an instructor's ability to ground the experience within stories, meanings, and contexts that are deeply relevant to local culture.

Warm and green skills address the limited attention given to "place" in outdoor education. This kind of universal program can take place anywhere — or in "Anywoods, USA" (Baker, 2005), and has been criticised by a number of writers (Baker, 2005; Brookes, 2002a, 2002b; Higgins & Nicol, 1998; Knapp, 2005; Stewart, 2004). Brookes (2002a) is particularly critical of "neo-colonialist"

understandings of the land, in which some locations are viewed as "empty sites on which to establish social or psychological projects" (p.2). As with Henderson's (2001) green skills, Brookes (2002b) believes that outdoor education programs need to incorporate "knowledge of local patterns of community relationships with nature" (p.7). Place-based education is more attuned to local phenomena as it unfolds.

Although by this point my thinking was shifting further away from universalised, commodified adventure education, more insight came in the form of the "Neo-Hahnian critique," where Brookes (2003) argued how someone's character cannot be changed in a week-long adventure education course. I wasn't sure if I should be disappointed ("pity we can't change his character, as it needs changing") or relieved ("there was no way in hell we were going to change his character — now we don't have to attempt the impossible"). It became clearer to me that I did not want to base my outdoor education practice on the dominant textbook literature of the 1990s.¹ There was too great an emphasis on the instructor manipulating variables in order to reach pre-determined participant outcomes, along with minimal attention given to developing cultural connections with the land. I was eager to embrace all of this important critical writing from the last years, but unsure about how I could extract relevant nuggets that I could directly apply to my day-to-day work. Hence this essay, which emerged from notes I scribbled with the hope of clarifying my thoughts.

No longer under pressure to change people's character by going camping, I found myself faced with some difficult questions. First, if I

¹ For a particularly scathing critique of Priest & Gass (1997) and other "cookbook" approaches to instructor training, see McDonald (2000).

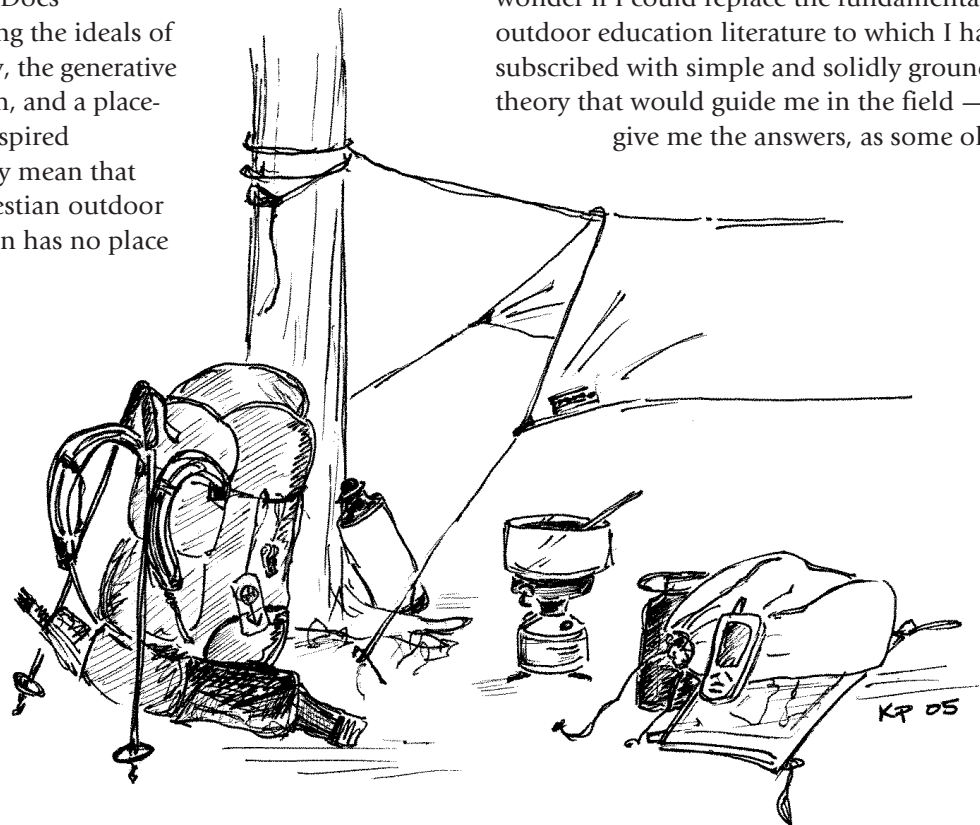
don't think that through an outdoor experience I lead someone will have a better understanding of their relationships with themselves, other humans, and the natural environment, just what learning outcomes do I hope to elicit through my practice? Is it acceptable for me to have some pre-determined outcomes for my courses or is that too domineering? I am left wondering if it is egotistical of me to hope that anyone will gain anything from the time they spend with me on an outdoor education course. If I don't exercise some influence over the group, what is the point of me being there in the first place?

Second, if carefully planning a course beforehand (along with some un-experiential, pre-determined outcomes) is frowned upon by theorists, why would an outdoor educator need anything more than minimal experience, training, or qualifications? I have spent a fair number of years accumulating field experience, instructor tickets, and university degrees. Does embracing the ideals of friluftsliv, the generative paradigm, and a place-based inspired pedagogy mean that post-Priestian outdoor education has no place for me?

My third question is, if organisations stop evaluating their programs because they are worried that theorists will criticize them for trying to measure what participants might gain, don't they risk losing funding from purse-string holders who demand evidence of success? While I've never been a fan of using scientific research designs as a means of gauging learner outcomes, government and corporate funders want proof that their money is raising self-esteem and reducing recidivism. Allison and Pomeroy's (2001) question of "How shall we know?" would probably elicit different answers from outdoor education researchers and from funding bodies. Despite an increasing trend of outdoor education research being naturalistic (watching and talking to people), the people giving out the money still want to know what percentage of participants are better leaders than they were at the beginning of the week.

Idealism in the Real World

Wrestling with my three questions made me wonder if I could replace the fundamentalist outdoor education literature to which I had subscribed with simple and solidly grounded theory that would guide me in the field — not give me the answers, as some old-



school theory did, but, rather, help me ask the right questions. As there are elements of the generative paradigm and *friluftsliv* that I believe in, I thought I might be able to create my own manifesto by combining their similar ethos' of espousing a less macho and adrenaline-dependent approach, emphasizing relationships, and not objectifying nature. Perfect.

The trouble is that *friluftsliv* doesn't sell and the generative paradigm does not bring in funding. My time working for a local education authority has shown me that schools, play centres, and youth clubs are crying out for commodified adventure. They want more than adventure in a bun — they want the entire adventure Happy Meal. For most outdoor education consumers, the main criteria seem to be trying something new, fun, safe, and close to home. In my experience, youth services and course directors want predictability and don't want to be lectured on why theorists are critical of off-the-shelf adventure programs.

If fundraising staff for youth development charities are applying for lottery money, it is not in their best interests to state that "meaning and value emerge within the experience rather than being represented or defined by the programme structure or the facilitator" (Loynes, 2002, p.122), and furthermore, that the course is mostly about seeking "a way home" through nature (Faarlund, 1993, p.158). If money is what you're after, then you'd better write "participants will learn leadership, problem-solving, and team-work skills" in bold face. In fact, some English government funding schemes have developed a code system for organizations who have received funds to operate activity programs for young people at risk of offending. One simply enters the code for the participant's ethnicity, followed by the numbers of the types of at-risk behaviour the participants have exhibited, and the code for the anticipated outcomes that will be the result of one of six types of intervention

(Positive Activities for Young People, 2005). This is an excellent example of what has been labelled the "algorithmic paradigm" (Ringer, 1999) in outdoor education, where specific interventions are used to elicit outcomes pre-determined by the instructor.

So, what's the alternative? Well, in the youth organisations and local government with which I have been affiliated there is little time to "educate" funders on the new outdoor education program that features "serendipitous learning" where "the individuals in learning communities discover and address issues within themselves" (Krouwel, 2005, p.28), and offers learning that is "goal free, the experience offered a step on the road rather than a solution" (Loynes, 2002, p.122). Funders want measurable outcomes and outdoor education organizations want money, which makes them, too, want measurable outcomes. But some outdoor education literature warns us that measurable is no good — that we cannot quantify something as personal and subjective as an outdoor education experience (Allison & Pomeroy, 2001). What's the answer? "Show me the money." In my experience, instrumental reasons win almost every time. In the world attracting funding, this means, "Show me the pre- and post-course questionnaires."

So, on one side, outdoor education theorists suggest that programs need to incorporate "broad adventure" where there is less emphasis on short, adrenaline-filled activities, and a greater focus on taking responsibility for more substantial outdoor challenges with uncertain outcomes (Loynes, 1998, 2002; Rubens, 1998), and all of this deeply rooted with a strong sense of place (Baker, 2005; Brookes, 2002a, 2002b; Henderson, 2001, 2005; Knapp, 2005; Martin, 2004; Nicol & Higgins, 1998; Preston, 2004; Stewart, 2004). On the other side are the funders who give money to those who play the game and include all the right buzzwords in their grant applications. Who loses? Well, the kids,

obviously, because they are stuck with conveyor belt style outdoor education. The other people who lose are those on the front line, the instructors who end up teaching three sessions of “team-building activities” to ten groups a week for 40 weeks. All of this points to a large chasm between theory and practice and not much learning for anyone.

I am an outdoor educator — that is part of who I am. From a pragmatic perspective, I need to make a living: I need shelter, food, and clothing. I’d love to be paid a decent salary to work at The Friluftsliv Centre or The Generative Paradigm Organisation, but there are not many of these places around. I need to make money, so I fall back on the skills I have spent 15 years accruing, and . . . provide adventure in a bun. What a shame.

Where to Now?

If I am to remain an outdoor educator, I need to decide what kind of outdoor education I want to practice. To do this means answering the three questions I posed earlier in the paper.

The first question concerned pre-determined outcomes. I do not support any programs that coerce participants into attending with the aim of eliciting specific, pre-determined intra-personal or inter-personal outcomes. I will happily run a course that seeks to yield personal growth in some form, but only if the participants are part of the process that decides what is learned and how it is learned. Only then will the learning have personal meaning for each individual. Most participants should not be left to figure this out for themselves, but should be helped by a facilitator.

While the generative paradigm sees relationships as egalitarian (Loynes, 2002), I take relationships to be hierarchical as well. There are times where participants will have tremendous power and freedom and other times when the instructor will assume total

control. Indeed, we use our power to provide our participants with a structure within which they may experience “the world in highly individual, unique, and variable ways” (Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1998, p.426). The notion of instructors retaining a fair amount of discretionary power may be regarded by some theorists as un-experiential (see Hovelynck, 2001), but I am hard-pressed to think of any experiential education programs that are so experiential they don’t need a facilitator. There would be no point in participating in an experiential learning program in that case. It is the instructor’s privilege to have control over the group and it requires tremendous judgment to know how and when to use it. This judgment cannot be learned from a book either. It comes from the experience of having run many courses as an apprentice and lead instructor.

The idea of learning judgment leads to the second area of concern: Experience, training, and qualifications. I agree with Loynes’ (1998) inference that some adventure activity programs in the UK are so artificial they are practically devoid of adventure. Still, adventures in buns as well as adventures to be planned by participants still need competent staff to oversee them — competent in relation to activity, that is. Being outdoors with participants demands technical skills suited to the terrain and conditions. Wilderness-based programs, in particular, require instructors who are very comfortable living outdoors in remote settings and who can impart these outdoor living skills. Although I would argue that there is an over-emphasis on outdoor educators amassing qualifications (certainly in the UK), parents have a right to expect that their child will be paddling down a river or walking in the hills with a competent leader.

The third area I highlighted was research and funding, which appear to be inextricably intertwined. I believe in qualitative, naturalistic research that focuses on understanding people’s experiences. I am not a

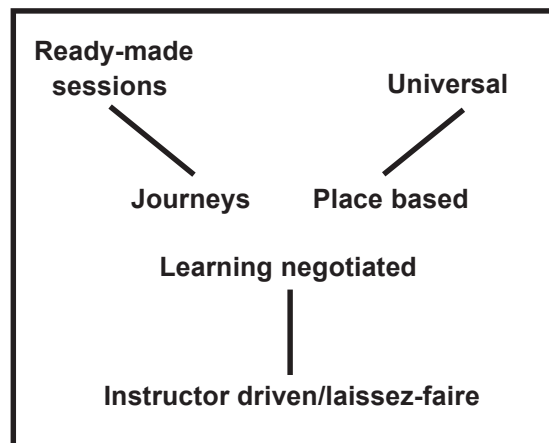
big fan of using scientific methods to establish whether someone has increased their “life effectiveness.” We need to observe people and hear their stories (Barrett & Greenaway, 1995). This can be incredibly valuable research, but for it to be trustworthy in the eyes of academics, it needs to be done with great rigour. This is what funders do not seem to understand: Rigorous, credible research in outdoor education does not have to rely on experimental research designs. On grant application forms, I have resolved to write almost anything that is needed to obtain money, which, in the past, has meant pulling out all of the clichés and buzzwords. I will not, however, use psychometric tests to justify the existence of my programs. If funders want “results” then I will offer to conduct naturalistic research to show how my courses may have influenced participants.

A Way of Considering Practice

The conceptual model presented below is offered as a tool for considering the nature of the outdoor education programs we are involved in, and, perhaps more importantly, would like to be involved in. It consists of three dimensions, the ends of which meet in the centre. The centre of the model is characterised by practice that I consider to be informed by current critical theory. There is some natural overlap between the three dimensions.

The first dimension (*ready-made sessions — journeys*) explores the extent to which outdoor education programs use self-sufficient journeys as a means to learn about self, others, and place. Why is it that so many outdoor education programs are packaged into three-hour sessions between meals prepared by someone else? All outdoor education programs are contrived to some degree, but journeys offer a high level of authentic adventure, as the outcomes are somewhat uncertain and there are very real consequences for actions and non-actions. The amount of

Figure 1.



lasting, transferred learning that a participant can take from a centre-based activity such as the “dangle duo” is questionable. We need to move away from fragmented courses that are made up from a series of adrenaline-filled sessions and move towards “broad adventures” that involve much longer time scales, varied challenges, and responsibilities devolved to students (Rubens, 1998). I should add that journeys do not have to be multi-week arctic canoe trips, but can take place in urban environments with minimal expense. A journey can take place over an academic year and focus on curiosity-driven explorations of one’s immediate surroundings.

The second dimension (*universal — place based*) considers the extent to which programs are grounded in a sense of place. The outside of the model is the domain of activities that can be done identically in thousands of different locations: Adventures in buns (Loynes, 1998) that can happen in Anywoods, USA (Baker, 2005). Outdoor education programs should be rooted in the history, ecology, culture, and stories of the place they are in (Baker, 2005; Brookes, 2002a, 2002b; Henderson, 2001, 2005; Knapp, 2005; Martin, 2004; Nicol & Higgins, 1998; Preston, 2004; Stewart, 2004). As outdoor educators, we must be able to interpret the land and bring it alive for participants.

The third dimension focuses on the level to which participants are able to negotiate what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. Educators in the centre of this model are different from manipulative instructors who hold all the power, and different from instructors who think they are being “experiential” by not getting involved at all (the laissez-faire approach). I believe that facilitators need to get to know the participants well enough to be able to help them determine just what they are after, and then help them get it (see Loynes, 2002). Only then will learning have personal meaning for each individual. Programs without specific, pre-determined outcomes may be a tough sell to those who are providing funding, but if the nature of the activities is to be experiential, then the “learning that really matters on experiential programmes is that which comes from the experience, not prescription” (Krouwel, 2005, p.31).

Until recently, I really felt as if I had lost my religion. I had read widely within the body of outdoor education literature and was bewildered by its volume, complexity, and contradictions. This confusion marginalises organisations whose practices are driven not by critical outdoor education theory, but by financial constraints or, simply, what has happened historically. Although I find that models tend to oversimplify complex relationships, this visual, three-dimensional way of considering outdoor education practice has helped to clarify my thoughts. This has proved to be particularly helpful in my conversations with program administrators, funding agencies, and field instructors. Ultimately, the test of usefulness for the discussion outlined in this paper is the degree to which it encourages instructors and administrators to develop their own set of guiding principles that are informed by critical perspectives.

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A Response to *Losing My Religion*

by Bryan Grimwood

The disparity between practice and theory seems characteristic of outdoor education, and bridging this gap is a regular struggle for both sides. With this in mind, I read *Losing My Religion* as a call for leadership. In this essay, the author takes a step out of the pack, peers back over his shoulder at the outdoor education community, and calls us forward with the wave of his arm. I recognize this call for leadership in a few ways.

First, the author encourages continued educator training and development. For the front line instructors, their experience is essential for effectively facilitating experiential learning for participants. We know that the 'tickets' (i.e., certifications and qualifications) are important elements — but not the entire scope — of instructor training. Instructor development must be unending. One avenue not often incorporated into training is how our practices can be influenced by critical theory. We need front line outdoor educators that are motivated to develop skills beyond the trendiest facilitation techniques or certification standards and that have a grasp of the deeper theoretical or philosophical understandings of their roles. These informed practitioners are the individuals most capable of and committed to promoting the individual transformations necessary for improving our environmental and social situations on Earth. Like the author does through his personally prompted essay, practitioners need to take responsibility for making connections with theoretical knowledge.

Second, the author's awareness of outdoor education's various faces demonstrates his commitment to outdoor education, captivating readers and followers (or so it did for me). For example, the author makes reference to the limitations of "adventure on a bun" sessions but understands that there is a place and a clientele for these safe, controlled, instructor-driven programs. Perhaps, this place is one in a progression or continuum of outdoor education experiences. Can we accept and support the variety in and evolution of

peoples' outdoor education needs? I believe that the author does; furthermore, he understands the discussion on which outdoor experiences offer the best bang for the buck but is willing to return his focus to getting people out experiencing nature. Ready-made sessions provide an introduction to the kinds of experiences nature can offer with a positive nature-based experience as the primary outcome. Extending lessons beyond these short-term packages and infusing curiosity-driven explorations in nature will ultimately be an individual choice of the participants, parents, or teachers.

Finally, *Losing My Religion* endorses an idea of leadership similar to one that James Raffan spoke of during his keynote address to the 2006 Risk Management Conference for Outdoor Educators in Canada. In reference to the boards, administrators, and lawyers that make decisions about the appropriate levels of risks in their sponsored programs, Raffan urged outdoor educators to, essentially, take off their Tevas and base layers, put on a suit, and get involved. Like Raffan, the author chooses not to separate himself from the issue. Rather, he immerses himself in it, strives to make sense of it for himself, and offers guidance for those ready to follow on his path. Don't separate, infiltrate. I like it.

And, as the author suggests, "Ultimately, the test of usefulness for the discussion outlined in this paper is the degree to which it encourages instructors and administrators to develop their own set of guiding principles that are informed by critical perspectives." That is the key. For outdoor education to infiltrate society and achieve the aims that it proposes it can, our practice will require the supportive, grounded foundations of critical theory. With *Losing My Religion*, the author takes strides towards this feat.

Bryan Grimwood is Director of Outdoor Education at Camp Kandelore.

Musings from the Backcountry: A Response to *Losing My Religion*

by Scott Caspell

While reading *Losing My Religion*, it occurred to me that I have recently spent a great deal of time musing over and discussing some of the issues that Beames wrestles with in his article. One of Beames' main discussion points focuses on his experience interpreting and applying outdoor education theory to his work as an educator. Although I believe that there is valuable information to be derived from outdoor education theory and research, I feel that educators should also critique, discuss, and continuously revise their educational philosophy. For the purpose of this paper, an educational philosophy will pertain to what one feels one should be educating towards, which will likely be in line with personal values and worldviews.

Perceptive educators should be able to discern whether their practice is compatible with their educational philosophy. Accordingly, if an educator finds that the program they are involved in is not in line with their educational philosophy (such as providing an "adventure on a bun" style of program, as noted by Beames) then perhaps it is time to transform the program (or funding structure) to ensure that their craft and philosophy are aligned. Of course, this objective can be difficult to accomplish, as described in detail by Beames, and may require moving to another organization/school, or creating a new educational centre.



I value how Beames encourages educators to critique their practice and note how their craft relates to the dimensions of the model presented in the article. I have, however, found that there is rarely an appropriate structure in place within educational organizations and outdoor education centres for educators to reflect upon these issues and transfer their learning towards improving future programs. I am a proponent of structured opportunities for educators to critically assess and provide constructive feedback on their own performance and the performance of their colleagues, as well as other facets of a program. Obviously, the scope and depth of such an assessment needs to take into account the length and focus of the program.

After co-instructing a 21-day Outward Bound course this past summer, our staff team explored how our philosophy and course goals affected our instructional approach and the course culture that emerged. This was one of the most beneficial and insightful course debriefs that I have experienced; it encouraged me to process my experiences, to express my thoughts, and to understand the diversity of instructor styles. Yes, some educators are able to process and transfer their learning with little or no assistance, while others benefit from a course debrief being facilitated in a more formal manner. I believe that outdoor education programs need to take into consideration critical theory and research. I also believe that what educators learn from their colleagues, students, and experiences — if given the energy to process them appropriately — can be equally applicable to the quality and influence of their programs.

Scott Caspell is currently enjoying the B.Ed. Program with the Outdoor, Ecological, and Experiential Education (OE3) specialization at Lakehead University.

Twenty-five Years of Environmental Education in Nova Scotia: Lessons, Challenges and Directions

by Alan Warner

A young, experienced environmental educator was complaining about all of the logistical problems, extra commitments and work hours required to deliver a range of environmental education programs to children in Nova Scotia compared to her past experiences working in Ontario and Western Canada. In a moment of frustration I asked her why she did not return out West if everything was so difficult here. With a smile she responded, "Because we did not work at the same high level of excellence out there."

This vignette captures some of the strengths and challenges facing environmental education in the Maritimes. There has been tremendous growth — 17 organizations were represented on the organizing committee for the 2006 Canadian Environmental Education and Interpretation Conference hosted in Nova Scotia (a small province), and approximately half the delegates were from the region. Twenty-five years ago there was one non-profit organization with one staff member doing environmental education in Nova Scotia, plus a smattering of interest among government departments. In contrast, the Halifax Regional Municipal (HRM) Adventure Earth Centre now provides 2,500 young people each year with day-long and residential Earth education programs that are integrated into school curriculums and local communities. Clean Nova Scotia, Sierra Club Atlantic, Ecology Action Centre, and the Resource Recovery Fund Board of Nova Scotia provide numerous classroom environmental education programs to students across the region. In New Brunswick, the Fallsbrook Centre and the Irving Centre provide a range of programs in their regions. There are numerous other organizations providing curriculum materials and resources such as Parks Canada Atlantic,

Environment Canada Atlantic Region, the Evergreen Foundation, and SEEDS.

The dramatic growth has been accompanied by recognition of excellence as well. For example, the HRM Adventure Earth Centre received the 2003 Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Award for long-term excellence across two decades for its environmental education programs, as well as an award from the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM). Several Nova Scotia teachers have received national teaching awards for their work in environmental education, including Rhea Scrutton, Tracy Webb, and Rita Boyd.

Yet despite very creative and effective initiatives from individual teachers and schools, today there seems to be less institutional commitment from school systems to environmental education than there was 25 years ago. In short, there has been a lot of success and growth, but it has come with challenges and problems. This article will explore some of the lessons learned and suggest directions for the future. It focuses on work through the HRM Adventure Earth Centre, as that is what I know best, and I believe it exemplifies broader issues and trends in the region. I hope that others can benefit from our experiences.

Lessons Learned

Principle-based Learning and Program Design. Given the lack of institutional resources and infrastructure in the Maritimes, initiatives in environmental education have tended to come from passionate individuals committed to making social, educational and environmental changes. The work has been

bottom-up rather than implementing programs and mandates from large organizations and/or other jurisdictions. There has been much reflection and dialogue through informal networks (a Maritime specialty) as to the most effective approaches. The result has been a priority on principle-based program design and a focus on people and programs, rather than physical facilities and infrastructure.

The HRM Adventure Earth Centre has adhered to a clear set of principles drawn broadly from the philosophy of Earth education (Van Matre, 1999) to guide its programs over the past 25 years. The principles include a holistic approach, natural world experiences, community-based learning, experiential learning, integrated and thematic programming, magic and adventure, and a global perspective (see Table 1).

One program, Mysterious Encounters Earth, designed for grade five children including a day-long outdoor experience and four weeks of activities integrated into the classroom curriculum, has been running for approximately 1,000 children a year for 15 years. It continues to have a waiting list of classes because it engages students through a detective mystery storyline and gains teachers' respect by using outdoor experiential learning to teach important environmental education outcomes while connecting to other classroom activities.

Less is More. The hand-to-mouth Maritime tradition has carried through to environmental education. If there is no money to buy equipment, make it with what is on hand. If there is no accommodations allowance, billet with friends or acquaintances. If there is no appropriate facility, rent what is available and adapt the program to suit it. These processes encourage creativity, build staff commitment, develop community support and relationships, and reduce costs, all of which promote quality and longevity. For example, the Sierra Club's Atlantic environmental educator spent most of last spring moving from home to home across

Table 1: Environmental Learning Principles of the HRM Adventure Earth Centre

Holistic Approach: This type of approach develops

- feelings, environmental appreciation and values
- ecological understanding and conceptual knowledge
- environmental behaviour change and action

Natural World Experiences

- Essential to build a relationship with nature

Community-based Learning

- Healthy social relationships, critical to ecological relationships
- Develop and connect resources

Experiential Learning

- The experience does the teaching
- Active reflection is essential

Integrated and Thematic Programming

- Use of a storyline approach
- Provide a framework that transfers learning

Magic and Adventure

- Engages learners

A Global Perspective

New Brunswick while providing daily programs to a wide range of schools. Of course the down side of this approach are the feelings expressed in the opening paragraph — working too hard and too long with too few resources over an extended period.

Youth as a Resource. In the early years there was a constant search for low-cost leadership: How could we keep the leader-to-participant ratios low so as to promote quality education without sending budgets through the roof? Thus, we increasingly shifted to delivering experiential programs via high school student leaders. Initially it was a choice made in the interest of program delivery for the children. Yet it was not long before it became evident

that the youth leaders themselves and the broader environmental education community gained as much or more than the children from the youth leadership approach. Senior leaders put their time into providing quality training and leadership facilitation rather than burning out on program delivery. New cadres of young people brought fresh perspectives and new energy to the work, relishing the opportunity to be active leaders in the field rather than passive recipients of information in a high school classroom. The particularly keen and talented have continued their involvement and developed their skills, moving their expertise to a range of environmental education organizations across the Maritimes. The youth leadership approach has now evolved such that the focus is on how best to attract and support the young people as the essential resource for delivering a wide range of programs.

Don't Sit Still. Young people bring fresh perspectives to programs. They provide a tremendous resource for program development and improvement if there is open communication and a willingness to accept feedback, critique and new ideas. Frequently large organizations or centres develop a specified program that becomes entrenched and “canned” over time. Though it originally may have been sound, it deteriorates without innovation. On the other hand, reinventing the wheel each time may provide staff or educators with a challenge, but it is also a recipe for poor quality, scattered outcomes and a lack of a principle-based design process.

Vision 20/20, the HRM Adventure Earth Centre residential Earth education program for grade 8 students, has been an ongoing example of the challenges of balancing continuity and innovation over the past several years. Initially a number of young staff were critical of several elements of the program and there was ongoing debate over how much should be changed and what would be deleted. The dialogue has continued to the point that younger staff are now taking the lead in

bringing about important changes, but it is being done within the context of the principle-based approach. These staff in turn have come to appreciate the strengths and rationale for the original program, and the challenges and dilemmas in improving it. Ultimately, programs have to develop and evolve or they stagnate, and young people are a tremendous resource in the innovation process.

Create a Continuum of Opportunities.

Residential camps have long recognized the wisdom in creating a sequence of experiences across years so that children and youth return and grow each summer, with older youth leading younger children. This is much more difficult in community and school settings where environmental education programs have specific goals and target groups, and where the opportunities for residential experiences, and the special bonding that often accompanies them, are not readily available. One superb experience results in a very enthusiastic and mobilized young person, but the energy dissipates if there are not opportunities to get involved with ongoing activities. If there are a series of opportunities, the young people return, build strong peer relationships and gain skills. In turn they contribute knowledge and constructive criticism that improves programming.

One weekend, I coincidentally participated in two separate campfire programs, one led by fourth year university outdoor recreation majors and another by a pair of 15-year-old youth leaders. The university leaders had learned the format from an applied university course while the 15-year-olds had developed their skills over several years as participants and assistant leaders. The 15-year-olds provided a program that was far superior despite their lesser age and lack of formal training. There is no replacement for a series of well-designed experiences and opportunities that young people can opt into over years.

Reach Out. A principle-based design process with a focus on quality and powerful

experiences has the down side of requiring a lot of people resources and ultimately a limited number of participants. Several thousand a year in Nova Scotia is impressive, but, given the need to change environmental lifestyles and behaviours, present environmental realities demand that educators reach a much broader audience quickly. There is a need to reach out to develop partnerships and support others to develop programs without losing the power and effectiveness of the principle-based approach. Thus, the Adventure Earth Centre has developed a family-led program of environmental education experiences specifically developed for local parks and trails called "Earth Adventures" (Warner, Barlow & Taylor, 2006). Rather than youth leaders providing the experiences in local parks, parents are given all of the instructions and tools to provide the experiences for their own children and their friends through a detailed interpretive trail guide. In reaching out through this process, there is inevitably a loss in consistency and quality, but research indicates that if parents simply bring interest and enthusiasm to their time with the children, increased environmental appreciation results (Morse, 2004). Moreover, the experiences encourage families to pursue additional activities and learning.

Publishing and distributing the Earth Adventures book also alerted a wide range of new constituencies to the availability of environmental education resources and programs across the region. Reaching out



through partnerships is essential to maximizing effectiveness.

Challenges and Directions

The six lessons — principle-based design, less is more, youth as a resource, don't sit still, create an opportunities continuum, and reach out — have been essential to the development of environmental education across Nova Scotia. Work in the non-profit sector has flourished and a wide range of committed teachers, schools and community groups have developed skills and programs from which many young people have benefited. There has been much informal dialogue and collaboration that has borne fruit. Despite the growth and success, challenges and problems must be addressed, some of which are spin-

offs of the very principles that have enabled environmental education to flourish.

A major issue is the lack of infrastructure. Despite all of the environmental programs and services offered in Nova Scotia, there is no dedicated environmental education centre or facility that serves as an effective hub and role model. There are tremendous program resources, but no effective physical infrastructure. This speaks in part to the lack of funds in the region and in part to the focus over years on developing meaningful programs rather than on developing facilities.

Institutions and large organizations are more likely to have the resources to develop infrastructure, yet environmental education in Nova Scotia has grown up from the grassroots. It seems clear that environmental educators will have to work in a stronger partnership with government departments and provincial school systems to gain the support for resources needed to develop facilities. This process has been happening over the past several years. The private sector has an important role to play and partnerships in this realm are just beginning.

Another challenge is finding roles for the senior young people who have grown past the part-time, volunteer or summer work experiences that have developed their passion and skills for the field over years. Our youth of yesterday are looking for careers in environmental education today and the institutional roles and resources are not there in sufficient quantity to employ them. As a result, we risk losing them to other careers or to other parts of Canada — a traditional Maritime problem. The direction has to be to strengthen relationships and partnerships with institutions in government, educational and private sectors to find meaningful roles for these gifted young professionals.

Finally, there is a large challenge, not just in the Maritimes but across Canada, to effectively reach out to urban and inner city youth who do not have the resources or inclination based

on their childhood experiences to embrace environmental education opportunities and programs. Extensive research points to the importance of childhood experience in nature as an important precursor of the development of an environmental ethic (Chawla, 1999). This “nature” experience need not be in the “wilderness” — a vacant lot or park will do. Suburban and rural young people can reach these locales easily. Yet the combination of child safety concerns, less accessibility to nature, and the increased engagement with computers and technology make it particularly hard to reach inner city youth. This past summer several inner city youth struggled at a residential environmental education camp. They simply were not ready for and did not want to spend much of their week “in the woods.” Bearing in mind the lessons learned, possibly an approach based on working with inner city youth as leaders of inner city children can bear fruit.

Overall, the development of infrastructure, career opportunities, institutional resources, and programming for inner city youth are key challenges if we are to build on the lessons, growth and success of environmental education in Nova Scotia over the past 25 years.

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Projects on the Go: “Baywoods” Outdoor Classroom

by Diana Saunders

The Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation (BCAF) and Helping Nature Heal are partnering with a grade six class at Bayview Community School in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Together, they aim to teach the concept of stewardship to local youth through the development of a natural area on school grounds. The project involves a two-phased approach: a practical hands-on section and an in-class component. The objective of the project is to foster a healthy respect and appreciation for the natural environment in youth by offering them the experience of creating a small nature reserve at their school. This will include the planting of native trees and plants, developing interpretive signage for the area, and introducing the area to the rest of the school and community through guided tours.

The grade six students will be involved in a very hands-on way in all aspects of the project, including the design, development, and implementation of the entire natural area.

After its completion, all Bayview students and teachers will have the opportunity to use the “outdoor classroom” at all grade levels and subject areas.

This outdoor classroom will not only benefit the students and teachers, but the community as well. This nature area will become a place where families can go for adventure and learning. This area will provide valuable educational opportunities as well as greatly improve the aesthetics of the school grounds.

With the help of a volunteer landscaper the design of the area has been completed and planting work has begun. Many hardwood and softwood trees were transplanted to the site in the spring of 2006. In addition, students and volunteers planted approximately 500 small trees and a variety of wildflowers. Creation of the riparian zone has also begun and a variety of wildlife has already made the Baywoods outdoor classroom its home. There is a lot more to do and learn!

Discover the Acadian Forest with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick

by Tracy Glynn

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick hosts guided tours for youth of Odell Park, a fine example of Acadian forest situated in the city of Fredericton. The Acadian forest is a meeting place where the northern boreal forest blends with the southern hardwood forests creating a remarkable variety of forest ecosystems. There are 32 species of trees found in New Brunswick's Acadian forest. The Acadian forest has been designated by the

World Wildlife Fund as one of the most endangered forest types in North America. Tours offered by wildlife biologists and nature interpreters introduce students to key concepts such as habitat, species, diversity, ecology and the importance of the Acadian forest. Tours last approximately 1.5 hours. Contact Tracy Glynn at forest@conservationcouncil.ca or 506-458-8747 to arrange a tour.

Community-based Outdoor Leadership Training in Nova Scotia

by Jody Conrad

In 1999, Nancy MacDonald (pseudonym), having always been interested in outdoor pursuits, began seeking training opportunities in Nova Scotia with a goal to begin leading outdoor trips with her Girl Guide group. She wanted to develop both the technical and leadership skills to lead her group safely in Nova Scotia's wilderness, sharing the experience with others. A quick search brought her to the Nova Scotia Outdoor Leadership Development (NSOLD) Program and the Wilderness Navigation module. After signing up and having a great weekend of learning new and exciting skills, she committed to taking more of the NSOLD program offerings, continuing her development. With the skills learned through NSOLD, and through connections to other local programs, Nancy developed into one of Nova Scotia's shining outdoor leaders. Today, she continues to share the outdoors with her family, her Girl Guide troop, and numerous other groups throughout the province, spreading the joy of the outdoors to others — and loving it.

Founded in 1979, The Nova Scotia Outdoor Leadership Development (NSOLD) Program has been working to improve the quality of outdoor leadership in the province, whether that leadership is for an organized group, a family outing, or simply leadership of self. Traditionally, the program has been offered to those 17 years of age or older. NSOLD participants acquire knowledge, skills, and experience that ensure safer, environmentally sound and more enjoyable outdoor experiences.

The NSOLD Basic Leadership Course (BLC) consists of seven weekend modules plus a multi-day *Leadership School*. New to the NSOLD portfolio are the *Woman's Outdoor Leadership Program* and *Mentoring in the Outdoors* offered in partnership with HeartWood Center for Community Youth

Development. All NSOLD programs use an experiential, hands-on approach to learning and are facilitated by some of Nova Scotia's best outdoor specialists and educators. NSOLD also offers custom programs to interested groups or organizations through the *Resource Leadership Service* and promotes other outdoor skill training opportunities available in the province.

Beyond the traditional program delivery structure, a new approach for NSOLD delivery is being explored in three different pilot areas across the province. In each case, short programs (typically one day) are being marketed to families interested in or currently spending time in the outdoors. The short program opens up the opportunity to those with families and corresponding time constraints. While these short programs do not go into the same depth as the full weekend courses, they do maintain an experiential approach to learning. If participants



in the short courses desire additional training, they are encouraged to further their learning by attending the corresponding, full-length BLC courses offered throughout the province. In this way, the short, local NSOLD programs act as a promotional tool for the larger weekend courses traditionally offered, while still providing quality, stand-alone training.

All three pilot sites are relying on partnerships with local recreation departments and other local organizations to coordinate promotion of the course offerings and participant registration. This reduces the administration demands for NSOLD and allows for a more effective “place” to be set for the program within the communities.

Another significant benefit to be gained from this approach is the development of a local leadership base of new NSOLD instructors within the pilot areas. Participants who have taken the shorter course (in any of the course topics) and gone on to take the full-length weekend courses can then intern on existing NSOLD courses in their home communities. This process streamlines the progression and removes some of the geographic barriers to becoming an instructor. Candidate instructors are even more excited to participate if they know that they can contribute within their own communities and don’t have to travel hundreds of kilometres to deliver a program outside of their area.

For more information on the NSOLD program, visit the website at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/physicalActivity/nsold.asp, or contact the Coordinator of Outdoor Recreation at the N.S. Department of Health Promotion and Protection at 902-424-7512.

NSOLD Program Offerings

Outdoor Camping Skills
Wilderness Navigation
Leave No Trace
Environmental Interpretation — Sharing
Nature with Others
Wilderness Survival

Emergency Procedures
Leadership School
Women’s Outdoor Leadership
Mentoring in the Outdoors

NSOLD Affiliated Training Opportunities

Red Cross Wilderness and Remote First Aid:

This is an experiential three-day course designed for individuals who will be participating in wilderness activities within hours or days of advanced medical care. The course will enable participants to have an appreciation of the realities of providing First Aid in a wilderness and remote environment. Emphasis will be on practical skills, decision making, and management of the outdoor environment. www.wrfa.ca

Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW):

The Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) program invites women 18 years of age or older to learn and enhance outdoor skills through the guidance of enthusiastic instructors. BOW weekends and events are held across Nova Scotia and offer a relaxed and friendly learning environment.

Lost! and Found: Lost! and Found: An Outdoor Survival Program for Children is designed to prepare children to help themselves if they become lost in the woods, even if they have nothing but the clothes on their back. Activity booklets, posters and information brochures are available from the N.S. Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Coordinator of Outdoor Recreation for those wishing to teach Lost! and Found.

Jody Conrad is the Go for Green Consultant with the N.S. Department of Health Promotion and Protection where he does his best to support Active Transportation initiatives, and promote outdoor, winter physical activity within the province. He is a founding board member of Leave No Trace Canada and has been a coordinator and instructor with the N.S. Outdoor Leadership Development (NSOLD) program for 10 years.

Ecotourism in the Atlantic Provinces

by John Colton

Although there is vast potential for ecotourism growth and development in the Maritime Provinces and examples exist of its success in every Atlantic Province, significant work remains to develop ecotourism as an integral part of the Atlantic experience. My reflections on the potential for ecotourism growth and development in the Atlantic Provinces are based, in part, on my experience as an educator, an ecotourism guide, and an advocate for the tourism industry in Nova Scotia.

Ecotourism is both an activity and an industry. As an activity it typically entails low risk, soft adventure such as seakayaking, whale watching, biking, hiking, canoeing and rafting. Both cognitive and affective functions are essential elements of the ecotourism experience and it is these aspects that provide the ethical foundation for ecotourism. Discovered knowledge of the flora and fauna of an area and its people and their culture builds emotional bridges for individuals to become inspired to act as stewards and to contribute money and, in some cases, time, to the region and its host community. As an industry, ecotourism is a collection of businesses and services directly related to the provision of ecotourism activities, the federal and provincial tourism organizations and educational institutes that provide relevant knowledge and training.

The Maritime Provinces have a rich maritime heritage based on their connection to the sea. Fiddle music, lobsters, whales, majestic coastlines, cod fish, and music drawn from Celtic roots are the stereotypes. These are often the images that come to mind to would-be travellers to the region and these are the images that have traditionally been used to market this region across Canada, the United States and Europe. It is only recently that seakayaking, for instance, has appeared in tourist promotional material and that the Atlantic Provinces have actively sought the

ecotourism market. When people are looking to invest in adventurous holidays, western Canada and the territories have been their primary destinations, especially for extended day wilderness trips. It is not that the Atlantic Provinces do not boast spectacular scenery and tracts of wilderness capable of supporting ecotourism; it is just that we have not been entirely successful in marketing the opportunities to potential visitors.

Compounding this problem is that many young people from the Maritimes interested in ecotourism guiding and business development are often drawn westward first for both their education and initial professional experiences. Luckily, roots run deep in the Maritimes, and many of these individuals eventually return home and establish new nature-based tourism businesses.

Opportunities for ecotourism growth and development in the Atlantic Provinces are significant given the rugged coastlines, forests, rivers and coastal mountains. Ecotourism activities like whale watching, seakayaking, hiking, biking, canoeing, and rafting abound, yet the industry as a whole is still relatively new and continues to struggle with a decline in overall visitation to the region. This is largely due to the continued fallout of 9/11 and the fact that the Canadian dollar is rising; many Americans are opting to either stay home or travel domestically. Yet, opportunities for encouraging Canadians to experience ecotourism adventures in the Maritime Provinces continue to exist.

Another major hurdle for the industry is the rising cost of liability insurance. Where operators of sea kayak companies, for example, could previously cover their liability costs with \$2,500, liability insurance has risen as high as \$25,000. These challenges are slowly being overcome through greater marketing efforts to draw visitors to the region and through work

of industry associations to reduce insurance premiums through group/volume purchases. More problematic for the development of ecotourism is the level of commitment each province is willing to make toward its growth.

Each of the Atlantic Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador) offers similar yet distinctive ecotourism adventures. New Brunswick has vast forests, waterways, the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Prince Edward Island is gentler, with red sweeping beaches, pastoral countryside, rolling hills and potato fields. Nova Scotia, Canada's "Ocean Playground," offers the ruggedness of Cape Breton with its beaches and precipitous coastlines, while mainland Nova Scotia faces both the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Fundy. Newfoundland and Labrador embrace the sea like no other province. Wild coastlines and the

jewel of Gros Morne National Park offer significant opportunities for all types of ecotourism activities.

New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador have developed provincial-wide ecotourism development strategies that seek to develop and enhance ecotourism products, the natural resources base on which these products depend and the industry as a whole. New Brunswick has been phenomenally successful at marketing the Bay of Fundy as an ecotourism destination, and some sea kayak companies, like River Valley Adventures based in St. Martins, have received well-deserved attention for setting high standards for their business operations and ethical practices. Newfoundland and Labrador offer unparalleled nature-based tourism opportunities and have significant governmental resources to contribute to development. In addition, many nature-based tour companies work diligently to instil the principles of ecotourism into their operating guidelines. Coastal Connections

Ltd., an award-winning tour company, has fundamental operating principles that include ecology, research and learning. The interrelationship of these elements during a nature-based excursion, coupled with a core set of ethical guidelines, enables their clients to meaningfully explore their natural surroundings and to develop personal values in keeping with the principles. The Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST), based in Rocky Harbour within Gros Morne National Park, provides numerous workshops on sustainable tourism practices for ecotourism and adventure tourism operators. A widely respected institute, the GMIST also delivers workshops for ecotourism operators throughout the Atlantic Provinces.



Aboriginal ecotourism is growing in the Maritime Provinces as well. On Prince Edward Island, for example, visitors to the Mi'kmaq community of Lennox Island can visit the ecotourism centre, which houses a sea kayak company, a boat charter operation, a native foods café, a hostel, and an interpretive centre. Adjacent to this building is a cultural centre where visitors can learn regional and local Mi'kmaq history and cultural practices. Cross-cultural workshops are provided to those who plan ahead and close by is a ten-kilometre trail with interpretive signage. The Bear River First Nation in Nova Scotia has recently completed a cultural and interpretive centre. Visitors can tour the centre, walk the medicinal trail, and participate in birch bark canoe-making demonstrations. Other aboriginal nature-based tourism experiences exist throughout the Maritime Provinces as well.

Supporting the development of these tourism experiences are the educational institutions that deliver programs and courses related to ecotourism. Acadia University's School of Recreation Management and Kinesiology concentration in Outdoor Recreation and Sustainable Tourism offers courses in ecotourism, sustainable tourism management and environmental education. Students can also elect to take practical courses such as sea kayaking, orienteering and navigation, and, a favourite among many, a wilderness skills and safety course that takes students into the wilderness for an extended duration. Nova Scotia Community College has developed a two-year *hands-on* ecotourism program that balances academic and practical skills and has students applying these skills with ecotourism companies in the region. The College of the North Atlantic in Corner Brook, Newfoundland offers a two-year adventure tourism program with courses that relate directly to ecotourism. Students in this program have the opportunity to apply their skills in the magnificent Gros Morne National Park through sea kayaking, hiking and whale watching.

Investment in ecotourism development, including building the capacity of those involved in the industry, is occurring throughout the Atlantic Provinces. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA) Tourism Atlantic group has funded and provided expertise to communities interested in pursuing ecotourism. Provincial tourism and industry associations are working to develop the market as well. But to date, ecotourism continues to be a niche market for most Atlantic Provinces, unlike their western counterparts that have invested heavily in developing the market and industry. To grow into a significant industry throughout the Atlantic Provinces, leadership from within the industry and government is essential. As tourism is becoming increasingly important to counter the economic impacts of the collapsed fishery and the closure and reduction of the mining and forest industries throughout the Maritime Provinces, it is critical that the provincial governments take steps to protect the natural resource base upon which this industry depends.

Opportunities for experiencing world-class ecotourism in the Maritime Provinces exist. From sea kayaking along the shores of Nova Scotia and canoeing the rivers of New Brunswick to hiking the trails of Gros Morne in Newfoundland Labrador and walking the red beaches of Prince Edward Island, there are opportunities for everyone. With every opportunity the potential to connect with nature, history and tradition can be realized, and the lessons learned from these experiences can be transferred to the participants' homes and communities. Although nascent in development in many respects, ecotourism in the Maritime Provinces promises to bring significant returns to individuals and communities committed to realizing its potential.

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Mentoring in the Outdoors

by Kathleen Naylor

Memories of outdoor adventures as a child or youth almost always include a positive connection with other people — often adults who created those opportunities for us. An initiative in Nova Scotia called Mentoring in the Outdoors (MO) is working to encourage more of that kind of mentorship.

Coordinated by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, MO's purpose is to offer professional development and support to senior youth and adults who are creating and leading outdoor experiences for and with youth. Its goal is to encourage more adults to share their love of the outdoors with young people, so that they too might form positive connections with the wilderness, recognize our place in the Earth's natural cycles, make outdoor pursuits a regular part of a healthy lifestyle, and, in the long run, advocate and act for the protection of wild places.

As a small non-profit organization, HeartWood has for years embraced the natural world as a prime learning ground for personal growth and group development. It works in partnership with the Nova Scotia Outdoor Leadership Development (NSOLD) Program, supported by the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, to coordinate and deliver the MO programs.

MO participants are diverse in their experience: some have been working and playing in the outdoors for many years, some are parents who want to become more comfortable taking their own children on adventures, and some are staff or volunteers of community organizations looking to connect with other outdoor leaders.

Each year, HeartWood hosts one or two weekend programs in an outdoor location or residential camp. Learning is based on the individual's own participation and the shared experiences of all group members. The focus is

on re-connecting with nature, reflecting on early experiences outdoors, and examining the key factors that made those adventures magical, safe and fun. The program explores what true mentorship is, based on group members' personal experiences, and debunks the myths that mentorship is a one-way street, or that the role of a mentor in a young person's life can be ascribed instead of earned.

Other related activities have emerged over the years, such as one-day "mini-MO" programs for communities who want a shorter exposure to the concepts. Based on participant feedback, HeartWood has now developed and hosted two one-day programs that focus solely on group dynamics, and new games and activities. It also offers programs for senior youth leading activities for younger children in their communities or schools. New for 2006 will be a one-day module for organizations using outdoor adventure as a therapeutic tool for "at-risk" youth.

The success of MO is largely due to the commitment of the province in supporting outdoor leaders through the NSOLD Program. The small group size in this program reflects the importance of the group dynamic in creating good learning experiences. Finally, simply making time in our increasingly busy schedules to focus on the value of time spent outdoors is essential. The pause is always a great reminder, a chance to revisit our passions and priorities. Inevitably, we emerge with renewed commitment to making more time for ourselves to be in the wilderness, and, most importantly, to sharing that passion with children and youth.

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Atlantic Canada's Adventure

by Glyn Bissix

Adventure recreation in Atlantic Canada has a long history, dating back to the earliest European settlers. It has been argued that the "Order of Good Cheer" instituted in 1605 at the Habitation in Nova Scotia was the first western style outdoor recreation in North America. To alleviate winter boredom in the new world, Samuel de Champlain devised weekly banquets requiring hunting parties to provide needed provisions. Later, in 1855, Captain Campbell Hardy, stationed with the Royal Artillery in Halifax, chronicled his backwoods travels in "Sporting Adventures in the New World." And later in that century, Atlantic Canada, notably New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, became a haven for well-to-do travelers, especially hunters and fishers from New England, thus spawning a cadre of outfitters to service such robust travellers. Their experiences have been expertly recounted by Mike Parker in such widely appealing books as *Guides of the North Woods* (1990). Since the 1900s and the advent of the railway and then the automobile, the outdoors has become increasingly utilized by tourists and residents alike; primarily at first for hunting and fishing but more recently by a broad range of adventurers from canoeists, sailors, hikers and cross-country skiers to cyclists, mountain bikers, kayakers and year-round surfers.

Non-consumptive adventure tourism is by no means a large industry in Atlantic Canada but over the last two decades it has undergone considerable growth and development. For example, Scott Cunningham of Coastal Adventures, operating out of Tangiers on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, is a pioneer in sea-kayak touring in Atlantic Canada, and several kayaking companies operate in New Brunswick, such as River Valley Adventure in St. Martins on the Bay of Fundy. Recently both the adventure tourism and ecotourism industry

have been bolstered by a wilderness act introduced in 1999 that formally designated 33 wilderness areas throughout Nova Scotia.

The development of outdoor recreation education has been uneven. On the down side the now amalgamated Halifax School Board was once a leader in adventure education under the administrative leadership of Steve Cook and the backcountry leadership of the late Freda Wales in the seventies. Freda was a skilled and impassioned leader who moved to the Maritimes from the Montreal region. There remain sprinkles of dedicated adventure leadership in the public school system in Atlantic Canada, but there appears to be no systematic presence. This is largely because physical education has been essentially decimated in the public schools system over the past 20 years contributing to woefully high levels of "inactivity" disease among our youth. It is hoped that, given the overwhelming evidence of our unfit youth, that is about to change.

Outdoor Leadership Development

Two significant initiatives in formalized outdoor leadership development outside the college/university structure have been attempted in Atlantic Canada. The one in Nova Scotia has endured for over 25 years while the other, in New Brunswick, had only a fleeting presence. The Nova Scotia Outdoor Leadership Development Program (NSOLD) is aimed at developing community outdoor leaders and has been led substantially by volunteer governance, instructed by expertise drawn from throughout the province, remunerated with little more than basic expenses and supported modestly by the Nova Scotia government. NSOLD is a modular program that can take from one to several years to complete depending on the

participant's goal, and significantly provides no certification of competence, only recognition of participation.

The New Brunswick Adventure Leadership Training Program (NBALP) was created to provide a fundamental level of training and leader certification for its emerging soft adventure tourism industry. In general, the program's objectives were valid; however, the application of these was less functional. It succumbed to the tourism industry's appetite for certification but, unfortunately, lacked sufficient instructional and maturation time to build necessary competencies. Its inherent pedagogical weakness led to the program's swift demise.

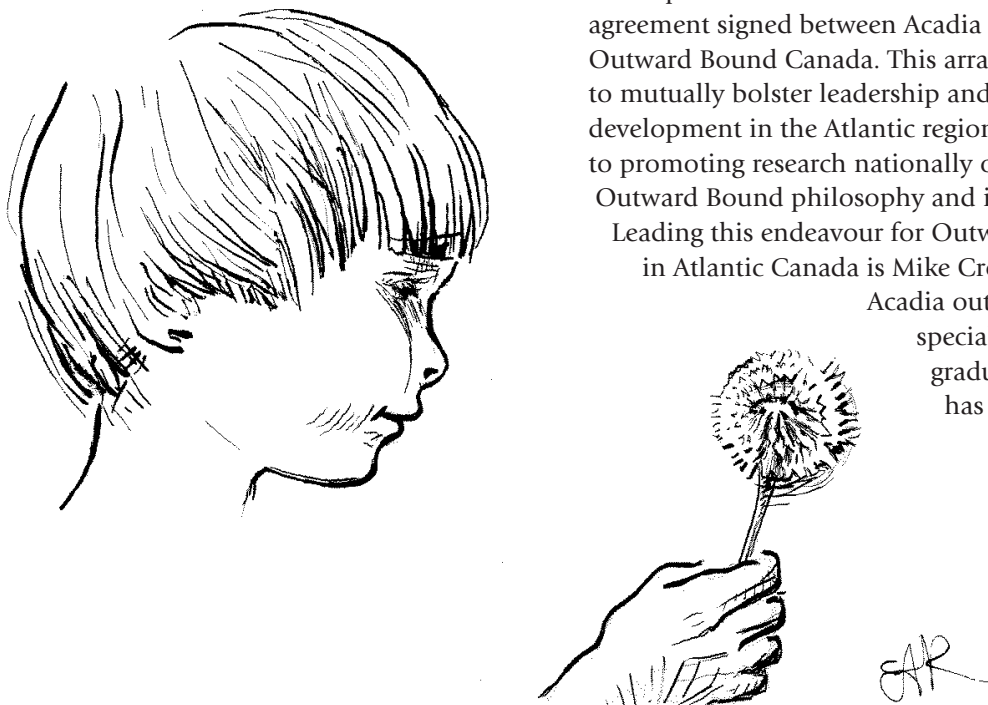
Service quality control has recently become a top consideration for the outfitting industry in Newfoundland and Labrador in an effort to ensure that hunting and fishing clients have competent guides and high-quality hospitality in an increasingly competitive tourism environment. Coopers' Minipi, for example, situated in a road-less, trail-less wilderness and accessible only by float plane in Central

Labrador, is one of a number of "wilderness" lodges that provide outstanding fishing with high-quality accommodation. A joint initiative by industry and government has recently assessed what this industry needs, and is presently formulating strategies to ensure its future.

Professional Outdoor and Adventure Leadership Development in Higher Education

Higher education in the outdoor field developed at Dalhousie and Acadia universities in the early 1970s under the leadership of Dr. Tony Richards (retired) at Dalhousie and Dr. Glyn Bissix at Acadia. While adventure education has all but disappeared from Dalhousie, a small enrolment program continues at Acadia under the leadership of Dr. John Colton with support from Drs. Bissix and Alan Warner, and Scott Hennigar who leads most of the experiential components including the Acadia Adventure Leadership Course. Much of the honours and masters research has focused on outdoor leadership development with some interest in participant development and environmental impact as well as environmental education. An interesting new development at Acadia is a memorandum of agreement signed between Acadia and Outward Bound Canada. This arrangement is to mutually bolster leadership and program development in the Atlantic region in addition to promoting research nationally on the Outward Bound philosophy and its impact.

Leading this endeavour for Outward Bound in Atlantic Canada is Mike Crowtz, an Acadia outdoor specialization graduate who has been



contracted to integrate adventure programming in the school curriculum at Rothesay Netherwood School, a private residential school near St. John, New Brunswick.

Dr. Cindy Stacey has long taken the lead in bridging resource recreation and leadership development at the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick where, in addition to her research, she coordinates the Adventure Challenge Program. At Memorial University in Newfoundland, Dr. Antony Card has, as one of several foci, an interest in outdoor education. There is also a curriculum presence in outdoor recreation at l'Université de Moncton in New Brunswick. The School of Resource and Environmental Education (SRES) at Dalhousie University has taken the lead in Resource Management research in Atlantic Canada with work in outdoor centre administration, ecological impacts of adventure tourism, and parks and protected areas management. Its leadership includes Drs. Karen Beazley, Ray Côté, and Peter Duinker. Among two-year college programs in Atlantic Canada the most developed adventure tourism-outdoor recreation program is at the College of the North Atlantic with campuses in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland and Goose Bay-Happy Valley, Labrador. With a mandate to train adventure tourism leaders to operate in the harsh climate and rugged terrain of Newfoundland and Labrador, the emphasis is on challenging and stretching its students to lead within tough physical environments as well as service demanding and discerning international clients. Other outdoor programs exist at the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro; at Holland College in Charlottetown, PEI; and in St. Andrews, New Brunswick.

A decade ago, one measure of the growth of the outdoor industry was the publication *Shunpikings*, a free tabloid circulated through outdoor stores, coffee shops and gift stores. Today, *Shunpikings* is found only online and has shifted away from outdoor recreation to focus on alternative lifestyles. Perhaps the best measure of the growth of the adventure industry today is the proliferation and stability

of specialist retail outlets, especially the relatively recent appearance of Mountain Equipment Coop in Halifax. Fears that this would drive established outlets out of business have proven unfounded; the industry seems more than capable of supporting healthy competition.

Atlantic Canada is home to Canada's best-kept adventure recreation secrets. While the Torngat Mountains of Labrador are not as high as the Rockies or the Cascades, they are equally impressive and isolated. A mishap in the Torngats definitely means serious adventure! Interestingly, when hurricanes track near the Atlantic Coast, most residents tie down their homes and cottages, but serious surfers head to Nova Scotia's Lawrencetown Beach. Increasingly Lawrencetown also attracts hardy surfers in January and February when the water is cold, the air is frigid, but the surf is high. When kayaking in "Iceberg Alley" off Newfoundland's Atlantic Coast in the summertime one can never be quite sure the gentle rolling of icebergs won't escalate to a full tipover. If this form of adventure seems too foolhardy, one can find beauty and isolation on Newfoundland's East Coast Trail, one of the most spectacular trails in Canada. For "soft adventurers," including this writer, Prince Edward Island is a haven; the Confederation Trail is a great way to explore the island at a relaxing pace on a bike or on foot.

While Atlantic Canada offers a wide array of outdoor recreation experiences and possibilities, much of its full potential remains untapped, simply waiting for new adventurers to explore its possibilities and reinvent its story.

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Outdoor Education Affects Your Health

by Amanda Cliff

Most of us would agree that outdoor education with its focus on fresh air and plenty of exercise is good for us. But, is there hard, scientific evidence to suggest that a person's health is affected by outdoor education? While we all know that eating well and living a healthy lifestyle is important, most people think that they are healthy primarily because of our health care system. This belief is reflected in the current health policy and health-related spending in Canada. While health care is important, especially for people who are ill, other factors have a more powerful role to play in generating and maintaining the health of Canadians.

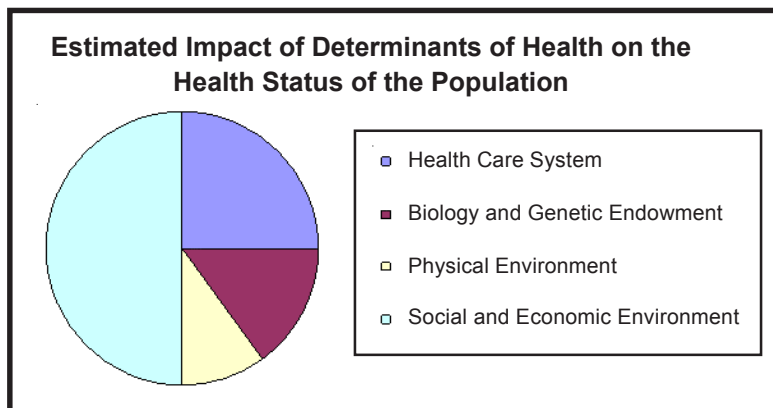
Going Beyond Health Care

Research reported by Health Canada shows that, while the health care system accounts for 25% of health outcomes, and 10% is due to people's biological makeup, the physical, social and economic environment that people live in accounts for the remaining 60% (Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2001). In other words, statistically speaking, for 60% of Canadians the environment they live in is *more* important to their health than their genetics or the health care they receive.

In considering these numbers, it becomes clear that health policy that focuses solely on providing health care for people who are already sick, without addressing the environmental factors that affect illness and disease prevention and promote health, will fall short of its goal. In fact, most health determinants, or factors that influence people's health and well-being, fall outside of the influence of the health care sector. Therefore, if we are considering long-term health, we need a multi-sectoral approach that recognizes that many health determinants fall outside the influence of the health care sector.

Outdoor Education: A New Health Strategy?

We are starting to recognize that health is impacted in multiple ways and that there are powerful links between social issues and health. Education has been found to be not only a critical determinant of health in its own right, but when we consider the broader educational model used in outdoor and experiential education, it becomes clear that outdoor education has a positive influence on other, seemingly unrelated determinants of health.



Outdoor education can be linked to health promotion in three main areas: increase in physical activity; personal development of self-esteem and social skills; and community-wide social and economic benefits.

Increased physical activity is so clearly linked with increased health and well-being that there is hardly any debate about its positive effects. A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* demonstrated that increasing physical activity by an hour a day adds on an average of two years to the lifespan of men (Paffenbarger, Hyde, Wing & Hsieh, 1986). While many traditional education systems have been critiqued for the lack of physical activity incorporated into a school day, this criticism is not often levelled at outdoor education programs. These programs often involve significant amounts of physical activity through sport or through education models that are hands-on, requiring participants to move through a landscape in order to learn about it.

The links between outdoor education, sport and recreation and positive self-esteem and self-image have also been well documented. Positive self-esteem has been strongly correlated with positive life and emotional adjustment, and is associated with regular participation in physical activity through sport and recreation (Sonstroem, 1986). Outdoor and experiential education programs often include elements of challenge and problem solving and are designed to promote teamwork and group cohesion, rather than individual success. Many expedition-based education programs focus heavily on the benefits that participants derive as a result of this challenge model. Increased self-confidence, self-esteem, problem solving ability and resilience are felt to enhance a participant's belief in their own ability to affect change in their lives. Further, the ability to overcome adversity and challenge in an educational setting may be transferred to other areas of life.

In addition, participation in recreation reduces the incidence of self-destructive behaviour and negative social activity in youth. Smoking, substance abuse, suicide, and depression are all reduced in youth participating in sport and recreation (Weiss, 1987). Social workers and educators agree: our belief in ourselves and our abilities may be the biggest single determining factor of our future success.

Participating in sport and recreation is linked with people's ability to develop healthy relationships. In particular, leisure time activities have been shown to be an important force in developing cohesive, healthy relationships between parents and their children (Couchman, 1988). The ability to develop supportive social networks is important for a healthy social life but is particularly important in times of crisis; people who have strong social networks fair much better during stressful and difficult periods in their life than people without.

There are broad social benefits associated with recreation, sport and fitness. They are thought to improve work performance through increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and reduced on-the-job accidents. A study by the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation (1994) showed that a 25% point increase in the 1995 physical activity participation rate would increase labour productivity in the whole economy between 0.25 and 1.5%. Fitness and well-being reduces both the incidence and severity of illness and disability, thus lowering healthcare costs (Keeler, Manning, Newhouse, Sloss & Wasserman, 1989).

Generating Health: The Future in the Hands of Educators?

Leading Canadian research has identified 12 critical determinants of health: income and social status, social support networks, education, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices,

healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender, and culture (Senate Standing Committee, 2001). These factors have been determined to be the most significant in preventing illness and disease and generating health and well-being in Canadians.

If some of the factors in this list sound a little familiar, this is for good reason — there is significant overlap between these and the benefits derived from outdoor education. In other words, outdoor education can have positive long-term impacts on the health and well-being of Canadians. There is an obvious connection between education and health, but there is also a strong correlation between outdoor education and the development of social support networks and positive social environments. Developing the knowledge and skills for problem solving and the ability to access and understand information is important in maintaining health. Support from family, friends and community allows people to deal with stress and adversity and helps them to maintain a sense of mastery and control over life circumstances, which is a 'buffer' against health problems. The benefits derived from social networks on a smaller scale can extend to a community or region and affect residents in a similar way. Organizational support networks play an important role in helping people overcome adversity.

The collective state of wellness in our society determines in large part the happiness, wealth and productivity of our society. Issues of health and well-being affect our ability to interact and be successful in our world. Recognizing the influence of non-health care sectors on health and well-being is important not only in influencing the ongoing national debate around health and health care but in providing the best opportunities for young people to grow up happy and healthy.

Good health is the bedrock on which social progress is built. A nation of

healthy people can do those things that make life worthwhile, and as the level of health increases so does the potential for happiness (Lalonde, 1981, p.5).

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Where We Go From Here: Placing Outdoor Education in our Current Context

by Grant Linney

The Canadian wilderness has long been a part of our mental and cultural landscape. It was only a generation ago that most of us grew up playing outside, in local woodlots and fields, in patches of untended nature that engaged our senses and curiosity for countless hours. But now, our society has also turned indoors and inwards, as we spend more and more time in darkened rooms staring at electronic screens and monitors. We are entranced by the lure of television, the Internet, video games, iPods, cell phones and Blackberries.

For a variety of reasons, we have also become increasingly fearful of outdoor landscapes that were once such a formative part of our Canadian psyche. We are warned about diseases we might contract, be it West Nile virus, avian influenza virus, Lyme disease, or raccoon roundworm. We are increasingly confronted with what American author Richard Louv refers to as “the criminalization of natural play.” This is exemplified by the proliferation of “No Trespassing” signs as well as new regulations and procedures and liability waivers for all manner of outdoor activities. Finally, our modern media’s headline coverage of isolated instances of pedophilia and other “stranger dangers” makes parents constantly fearful of allowing their children to play or to travel outdoors unaccompanied. No doubt, the allegation that the 11 recently accused terrorists in the Toronto area were trained in outdoor camps does not help the image of natural settings either.

But people are also starting to realize that there is a cost to such loss of contact with our natural surroundings. In his recent book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv coins the startling term “nature-deficit disorder.” He

describes it as resulting in widespread “human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and high rates of physical and emotional illness.” Researchers for a recent study published in the *Journal of Environmental Management* contend that we are now victims of “videophilia . . . the new human tendency to focus on sedentary activities involving electronic media.” They conclude that this new propensity “would not bode well for the future of biodiversity conservation.” For David Suzuki, we (children in particular) have become so plugged in to virtual versions of reality provided by electronic media that we have lost all connection to the real world, that is, “the natural world upon which we depend for our food, our energy, our natural resources — our very lives.” We have become aliens in our only true homes and, given the massive — and constantly growing — impact of our numbers and our technologies, this is a connection we simply cannot afford to sever.

There appear to be obvious solutions to these problems: Recognize our negative tendencies. Make a concerted effort to let go of our multiple and magnified fears. Encourage our children to reclaim outdoor play as a natural part of their growing up. Spend time outdoors with our kids, modeling the curiosity and connection with natural surroundings that we supposedly once had. These are the steps that Richard Louv would have us follow. And, it would be easy to tack on a convincing argument about the need for outdoor education programs for all students.

But this is clearly not good enough. We have to look deeper. We have to heed the words of noted authors like Jared Diamond in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* and

Ronald Wright in *A Short History of Progress*. They both describe how it has long been human habit to move to a certain location and to remain there until we have exhausted its resources and laid waste its landscape. And they both note how we have now reached this absolutely critical point where we can no longer move to some other unspoiled part of the world. We are on the verge of an ecological bankruptcy from which there will be no return. We can't pass this on to our children. Either we fundamentally and drastically change our ways — now — or we perish.

It is very easy to feel overwhelmed by the myriad of pressing concerns we currently face. Physicist Stephen Hawking considers it so serious that he has written off life on Earth; he now advocates the colonization of outer space as our only salvation. For the rest of us, we must squarely face today's challenges if we hope to preserve a tomorrow for our children.

Outdoor educators need to regard themselves as part of an education system that must teach new ways of thinking and seeing and valuing. We are ideally positioned to provide children with the sort of powerful and lasting experiences that will help them to see life in dramatically new ways.

A key part of this will be an all-grades progression of carefully planned and educator-led outdoor experiences. We must repeatedly bring our children into the experiential midst of their natural surroundings, and we must do so in new and dynamic ways. We must provide them with hands-on experiences that activate their curiosity and sense of wonder about their natural surroundings. We must provide them with compelling encounters with the complexities of natural systems so that their critical thinking skills are developed and they acquire firsthand knowledge of the intricacies and interrelationships of ecosystems. Along with other educators, we must enable them to see and celebrate their natural surroundings from the multiple

perspectives of scientist and geographer, artist and poet. We must enable them to see as Apollo 9 astronaut Russell Schweickart did when he looked back at our planet from the perch of outer space, when the perceptions of a highly trained scientist yielded to the wonder of a poet:

Up there you go around every hour and a half, time after time after time. . . . You look down there and you can't imagine how many borders and boundaries you cross, again and again and again, and you don't even see them. . . . When you go around the Earth in an hour and a half, you begin to recognize that your identity is with that whole thing. And that makes a change. . . . And, from where you see it, the thing is a whole, and it's so beautiful. . . . It is so small and so fragile, and such a precious little spot in the universe, that you can block it out with your thumb, and you realize that on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you — all of history and music and poetry and art and war and death and birth and love, tears, joy, games, all of it is on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb.

Perhaps, then, our children will be freed from repeating the same destructive mistakes of countless preceding generations, and they will achieve the ecological literacy that will ensure a healthy and sustainable future. Perhaps, then, we really can boldly go where no one has gone before, and do so within the rapturous confines of this one-of-a-kind planet.

Grant Linney teaches at the Upper Canada College Norval Outdoor School. He is past president of COEO.

CSI and Experiential Education: A Culminating Initiative for High School Physics

by Nicole Tait

The ALTITUDE Program

Running through McMaster University's Department of Athletics and Recreation, ALTITUDE is a leadership and team development program dedicated to producing constructive changes in individuals and groups in order to optimize group performance. Through the innovative use of the Team Development Course, Alpine Tower II, and field initiatives, ALTITUDE programs help participants to develop respect for themselves and other team members, while fostering a greater understanding of effective communication strategies, leadership styles, conflict resolution techniques, creative problem solving skills, and group dynamics.

The ALTITUDE program was initiated in the spring of 2001 primarily as a leadership course specifically designed for youth high school classes. Over the past five years, with the addition of the Alpine Tower in October of 2003, the program has exploded into what it is today and continues to grow and expand at a phenomenal rate. ALTITUDE now encompasses a variety of clientele including university students, community groups, youth athletics, varsity sports teams, corporate organizations, and many other high performance networks.

The program continues to expand its horizons to accommodate the smaller groups within each organization. For example, many of the youth programs ALTITUDE runs are directly marketed to high school physical education classes. By combining teambuilding and leadership training with educational ties to the curriculum, the Alpine Tower and Team Development Course offer students the perfect chance to bond while learning the ins and

outs of teamwork, trust, communication, goal setting, and problem solving in a safe, adventurous environment.

So what is the Alpine Tower you may ask? The Alpine Tower is a 50-foot-tall climbing structure specifically designed for groups of any and all abilities. Built by Alpine Towers Inc., the facility is universally accessible and can accommodate as many as six climbers at one time. It offers a unique learning experience and is the perfect way to bring any group together to develop lasting bonds.

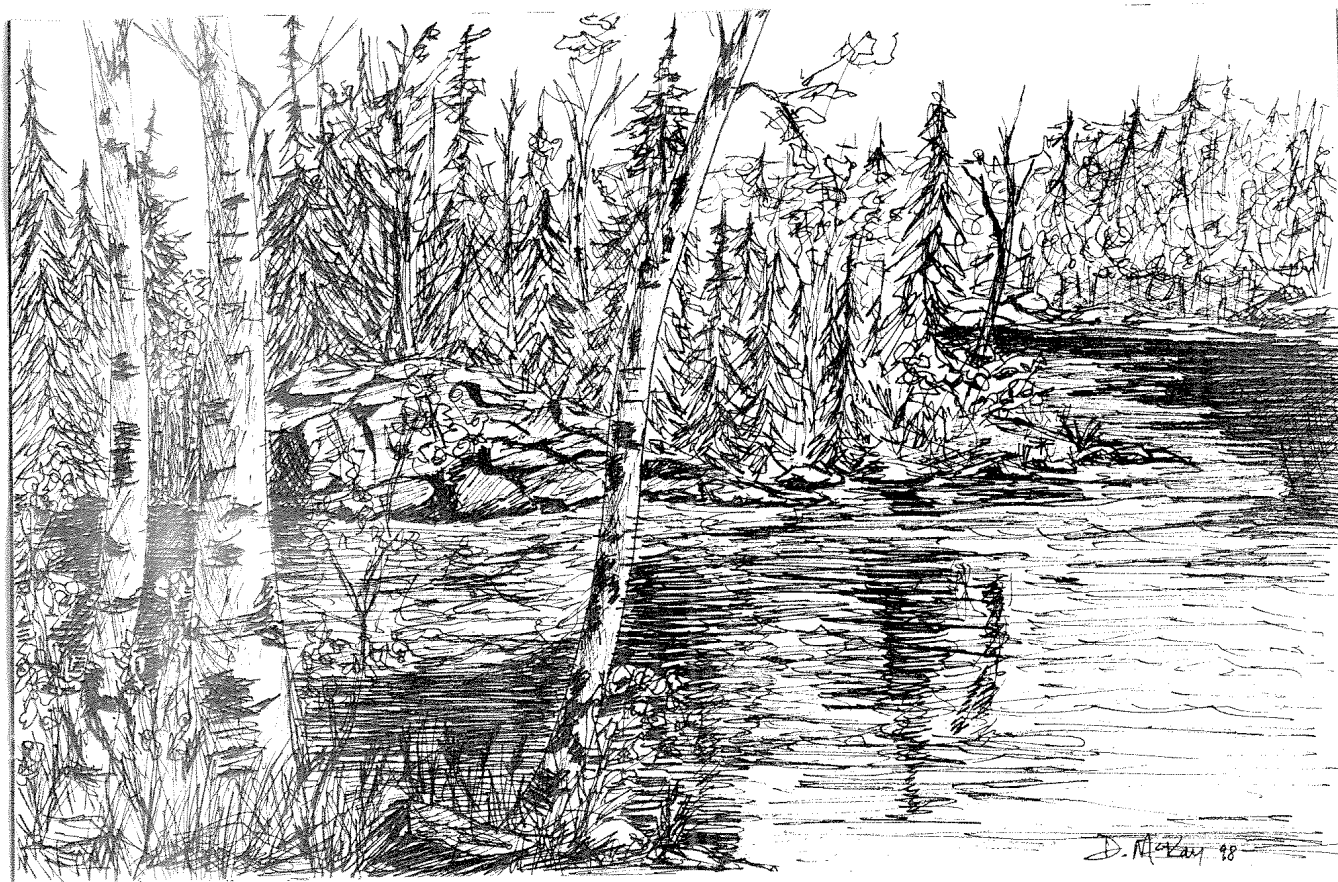
But why stop at physical education classes? Certainly other classes can benefit from ALTITUDE's experiential education programs.

Pilot Program: CSI McMaster

New this year (2006), ALTITUDE has proposed a pilot program specifically designed to meet the requirements of the Ontario curriculum for students taking Grade 10 Academic/Applied Science. The proposed program is structured as a culminating task for linear motion which is the central theme for the grade 10 physics unit. The program is presented as a three-part initiative with a Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) theme maintained throughout.

In March of 2006, a grade 10 academic science class from Parkside High School in Dundas participated in the pilot program. Eighteen students embarked on a unique adventure while learning the key concepts of linear motion, including displacement, velocity, and acceleration.

With a CSI theme in mind, students were "invited" to attend the training facility for the



Hamilton Wentworth CSI Task Force located on McMaster University's campus. However, to be invited to the training, the students first had to pass the preliminary entrance exam. This fun activity was done in class in small groups the day before arriving at McMaster University. It was meant to prepare students for the calculations and activities they would be encountering the following day.

Once at the ALTITUDE program at McMaster University, students rotated in small groups through three CSI training activities where they were asked to determine the distance, velocity, and acceleration of dropping objects from the 50-foot-tall Alpine Tower, observing and assessing the physics involved in the 40-foot giant swing, and constructing their own experiments to test many of the concepts learned throughout the unit. Students were also given activity sheets to record their calculations. All of the paperwork was given to

the teacher at the end of the day for evaluation.

The program was a success. The students really enjoyed the wide range of activities that tested various aspects of their knowledge. It was exciting for them to be learning outside of the classroom. Many didn't realize how much they learned until they sat down at the end of the day and talked about it. One student commented, "It's one thing to see it in a text book or on a chalkboard, but to be out here and actually do it, that's pretty cool. I actually get it now!"

As a culminating task, teachers have the option of assessing their students on three separate sections of the program, all which have direct ties to the curriculum: the preliminary testing or "entrance exam," the activity worksheets from the training day, and a follow-up report on their experience.

Throughout the program, students also become skilled at climbing and belaying with their classmates while learning the value of trust and support. This unique experiential learning adventure is a fun and exciting experience for all individuals involved.

Experiential Learning

For education to be at its best, the learner must be the one who processes the information from educational experiences. As defined by the Association for Experiential Education, experiential education includes a number of principles that encourage and focus on the importance of student-centered learning. For example, throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning. Similarly, the design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes. In addition, it has been noted that small group experiences can be critical for adolescents because of the increasingly important role peers play in their lives and the powerful impact of the peer group on adolescent behaviour (Glass & Benshoff, 2002). Providing a safe and nurturing environment for cohesion among students to develop is also essential in mediating positive group formation, maintenance, and productivity. Lastly, experiential learning helps students create knowledge through critical encounters with reality and ideas. By encouraging and allowing students to have a role in facilitating their own experiences, they can benefit from developing self-facilitation skills as well as discovering how to become more self-reliant learners (Estes, 2004).

An old Chinese proverb sums it up quite nicely: "Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand."

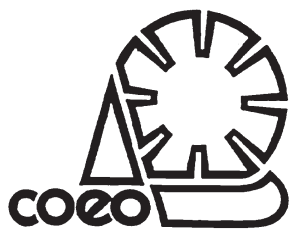
ALTITUDE is dedicated to providing quality learning opportunities to a wide range of clientele. By instilling experiential learning concepts and values in young adolescents, it can help to better prepare them for their future.

For more information regarding ALTITUDE, visit the website at www.athrec.mcmaster.ca/altitude, or contact the Outdoor Recreation Office in the Department of Athletics and Recreation at 905-525-9140 ext. 23879 or via e-mail at altitude@mcmaster.ca.

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Nicole Tait is a graduate of McMaster University and is one of the co-founders of the ALTITUDE program. She has worked for four years as ALTITUDE's Youth Coordinator and has been a key part of the ALTITUDE team. She is currently attending teachers' college at Brock University and is excited to share her outdoor education experiences through experiential education to help instill in youth a sense of value and lifelong learning.



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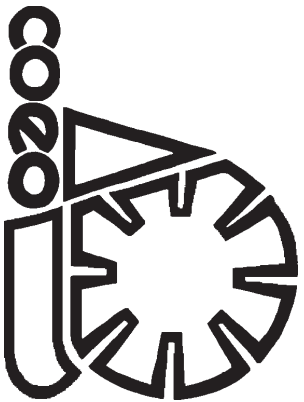
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