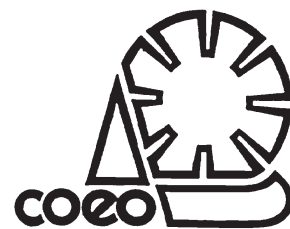


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Winter 2007, 19(2)



Pathways

Our mailing address:

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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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In his "Friends of COEO Newsletter" in June 2006, Grant Linney traced the history that led to the theme of the conference last fall. As Grant relays, in 2003 a plenary discussion at the COEO conference indicated that taking people to outdoor centres in rural settings

- a. is not financially sustainable for most school boards
- b. maintains accessibility barriers for most urban populations
- c. continues the myth that nature is "out there."

A major recommendation of that conference was to provide more outdoor education locally with community groups where activities could be more sustainable and have a greater effect on people's daily lives. A year later, at the 2004 conference, the attendees tasked the organization to work toward more cultural inclusion in COEO specifically and outdoor education (OE) in Ontario generally.

In 2006, the theme of the COEO conference was organized around these recommendations of the 2003 and 2004 gatherings. The theme this past year was "*Outdoor Education — With the Community, In the Community, For the Community . . . integrating outdoor, experiential and environmental education in urban communities to promote a sustainable future.*" The conference committee delivered on its goals and held the 2006 conference in an urban park in Ontario's most developed urban area — the GTA. The sites, the presentations, the organized tours, the food and entertainment were all beautifully selected to promote the theme. The attendance was the lowest in years.

Despite the dismal turnout, the attendees at this year's conference, in a rousing final debriefing session, voted their confidence in this new, more urban direction for COEO. We decided at that meeting that, if COEO and outdoor education are to survive and flourish, we must continue our efforts to become more culturally inclusive and supportive of those who are currently teaching OE in urban situations.

In keeping with this, the editorial board of *Pathways* decided it was important to continue

the dialogue begun in 2003. This issue of *Pathways*, then, has a mini-theme to encourage cultural inclusion and honour urban OE. You will find in this issue the essence of a panel discussion about how four dedicated Torontonians interpret outdoor environmental education (OEE) and environmental education (EE) in what they do along with suggestions for integrating OEE and EE in diverse urban communities.

Sommer Matriangelo presents a story she offers to schoolchildren at her library. Although she was born in Trinidad and claims she is not an environmental educator, her story is about the loss of green space in the urban environment.

Allan Crawford, who works in OE within an urban setting, and often with youth at risk, has written a response to Simon Beames' article in the last issue of *Pathways* (*Losing My Religion*). Allan shares his sense that, not only have outdoor educators lost their funding, but they have also lost their way.

I describe a workshop I presented at the 2006 conference about growing culturally significant plants in the classroom, and then describe how students might grow African violets from Tanzania to celebrate Kwanza.

Among the obstacles for cultural inclusion in OE are the barriers we throw up for new Canadians who already have environmental and outdoor expertise. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is attempting to help new Canadians achieve hands-on experience through a special volunteer program. Read a moving thank you note from one of this program's grateful participants.

To continue the critical dialogue begun in 2003, we invite all readers to send their comments, responses and ideas to help us understand these complex issues so we can continue to reshape OE in our province.

Yours truly, from the urban wilderness of Vaughan,

Allan Foster
Guest Editor

This issue of *Pathways* contains some articles reflecting on various aspects of Conference 2006, which I focused on in my last column. What I would like to do in these early months of 2007 is give you the first heads-up for this year's conference.

Over the past few years COEO has been reaching farther and farther outwards in a bid to expand our horizons. We have examined outdoor education "through a looking glass," we have sought to "create ripples" and we have tried to bring outdoor education "in, for and with the community." These conferences have, in my opinion, been timely and very important in our growth as an organization seeking to find its way in the 21st century.

This year's conference is still in the early stages of development but we are looking at incorporating a lot of the past year's efforts into the theme. We are planning to return to the retreat style conference at a remote site to make sure it also has that "getaway weekend with friends" feel to it. We still need folks to help out on the committee, since these events don't happen on their own. Please contact me if you are interested in giving a hand. Make sure you mark the conference in your books now — that traditional last weekend in September — September 28–30, 2007.

Our year-long Trillium Foundation grant has now come to an end. As promised, we are releasing a research brief that promotes the values of outdoor education — *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education*. While we had initially planned on launching the report in the late fall, to ensure the best-quality document possible we delayed that publication slightly. We will now release the report this March and the wait will have been worth it.

Having reviewed the document during its final stages of development I can only say that this will be a first-rate tool for convincing stakeholders to take action to ensure that outdoor education flourishes in Ontario. We intend to distribute this document freely to decision makers throughout the province and to make it available to other interested parties at a nominal cost. We are currently in the process of organizing an exciting media launch for this project. Andrea Foster and Grant Linney have done an amazing job of putting this brief together, and outside sources who have seen it concur. I hope you will feel the same.

One of the final projects Andrea will be involved with is facilitating a strategic plan for COEO to carry us forward over the next few years. Members of the current board as well as some other COEO members will be gathering to share their thoughts via in-person meetings, e-mail and telephone. Ideas, actions and plans from those discussions will be made available as they are prepared. If you have strong thoughts or feelings on these matters please feel free to share them with me or other members of the Board of Directors. We will be looking at ways to engage the membership, utilize volunteer energy more effectively and promote our goals most efficiently. We will be putting strong thought into the future of the organization and looking for the best paths for us to take. We are going to ask some big questions without trying to find preconceived answers, but the best answers possible.

As this spring begins, it is time to say some goodbyes, and there is sadness in that, but satisfaction in the paths that lead to them. As I have already stated, our grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will be finishing soon. This means that the position of Program

Sketch Pad — Art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously provided by the following individuals: Josh Gordon (cover and pages 4, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 24, 26, 31, 32 and 35), David Beevis (pages 11, 28 and 36) and Dominique Dery (page 19).

Co-ordinator will be closing at this time as well, thus ending Andrea Foster's stay as the sole full-time, paid employee of COEO. It was just one year ago that Andrea rose to the top of a competition that started with over 120 applications to be sorted through. Shortly after she began operating in her new position we were quickly assured that we had made the right decision with Andrea. Her passion and commitment to the challenges that lay before her allowed her to speedily assimilate an understanding of COEO and of the field of outdoor education and what makes both special. Her pleasant character, keen insight and energy to always go that extra distance have made her a pleasure for me to work with over the past year. As this position closes we hope that this will not be the last we see of Andrea and that we will continue to have a connection to her. Though she and I will have this conversation in person as well, let me take this opportunity to thank Andrea for her work on behalf of all of COEO.

Finally, as many of you know, the end of 2006 saw the passing of Dorothy Walter, a long-time COEO member from its earliest days and a leading contributor to many of the successes that COEO, and outdoor education in the province in general, has had over the years. She is part of a distinguished list of individuals whose contributions have been so meaningful that COEO had seen fit to make her a lifetime member of our organization. Her impact was so far reaching that she has had *two* provincial awards named in her honour, one each presented annually by COEO and the Ontario Camping Association. At her memorial held at the Toronto Botanical Gardens in January I was moved by the line-



up of 23 recipients of these awards gathered at the front of the hall honouring the inspiration that she provided. There are those who knew her far better than I and have done a far better job at eulogizing the many accomplishments of her fruitful and well-lived life. However I will simply add that over the past four years since I first met her I found her to be one of the most positive, gracious and impressive people my career has introduced me to. To echo so many others, "thank you, Dorothy."

Board of Director meetings are scheduled throughout the year in person or as teleconference calls. Any member of COEO is welcome to attend an in-person meeting. The remaining meetings of the COEO Board of Directors are shown in the table below.

Shane Kramer

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
May 2, 2007	7:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Teleconference
June 2, 2007	9:30 am – 4:00 pm	TBD
September 15, 2007	9:30 am – 4:00 pm	TBD

Getting Practical Experience in a New Country

by Allan Foster and Pitson Dantanarayana

It is very difficult for new Canadians to find work that draws on and recognizes their experience and qualifications. We've all seen the shows on television about experienced mechanical engineers dispensing drinks at McDonalds and MBAs cleaning office towers at night.

The first question potential employers ask at job interviews is, "What sort of work experience do you have in Canada?" Too often, the answer is, "None."

About three years ago the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) established a policy to try to help new Canadians achieve hands-on experience in their field of expertise through a special volunteer program. Since then, 59 new Canadians have achieved work-related experience and have moved on to permanent jobs both within TRCA and with other employers.

At a multicultural celebration last June, Brian Denney, chief administrative officer of TRCA congratulated all the volunteers and their mentors and explained the motivation for the new policy:

- New Canadians are often highly educated and trained and can bring vast experience and new ideas that are very helpful to organizations.
- From the perspective of natural and cultural heritage, development and protection as part of the process of city building, we need the stories and experiences of people who have lived in other urban communities around the world where the cities are much older than ours. We have a lot to learn from their experience both good and bad.
- We want new Canadians to learn about Canadian natural heritage so that they can

become part of the process of protecting and enhancing it.

- This experience at TRCA will help us to prepare for more immigration that is inevitable given that Canada is such a great place to live.
- As world water issues and other climate change implications intensify, Canada will increasingly be a destination of choice for people from all over the world.
- We have made a good start at TRCA but it is only a beginning. We have to show continuous improvement in the successful integration and celebration of other cultures.
- From an economic point of view, our policy makes good sense because we need new Canadians to be successful; it is important for them to integrate quickly so they can pay taxes, buy homes, build companies, discover new technologies, contribute to international trade and contribute to our economy.
- This experience has the additional benefit of helping us to learn more about our own heritage even if our families have been in Canada for generations.

The following is an example of one of the "graduates" of the volunteer experience program. His name is Pitson Dantanarayana. He was born in India about 50 years ago. He has a master's degree in botany (genetics) as well as two bachelor degrees — one in botany and the other in chemistry. In addition to consulting on and managing various landscape projects and programs, he was a professor for over 20 years at three different universities. He has worked in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Kenya.

When he moved to Canada, he could not find a job in horticulture.

Here is his letter of gratitude:

Dear friends at TRCA:

It is winter in Canada. The newborn snow is like icing, glistening in the sunlight. I dash off to work. It is cold so I slide on my favourite dark blue jacket. On the left side, close to the heart, it bears the logo and inscription, "Toronto and Region Conservation for The Living City." This jacket was one of the gifts I received from TRCA when I left.

I remember the day I left. It was a day to remember. I was out in the native garden beside the office, busy doing my Co-Op placement volunteer service in garden maintenance. My co-supervisor came outside to tell me I was needed in the cafeteria.

I was aghast because the whole office staff was there. In the crowd of over 40 people there were directors, managers, supervisors and colleagues. They had organized a farewell party. What a surprise! It had never crossed my mind that such an event would take place. After all, my supervisor had already taken me out for a farewell lunch a few days earlier. It was all sad and happy at the same time. I wanted to cry.

I started as a total stranger at TRCA. I knew no one. I had opted to complete my Dufferin-Peel Adult Training Course at TRCA. Being a horticulturist, my course instructor had contacted TRCA's volunteer coordinator to set up my placement. What a rewarding tenure it turned out to be!

From day one, I never felt alone. There was always someone to help me in the office. I could use the stationery and take advantage of the photocopier. Then I attended BBQs, seminars and multicultural programs. I was treated like any TRCA staff member. I even took part in a pollution reduction raffle and won a mountain bike! All this and I was just a volunteer! Within a short time, I came to know several staff members who were very helpful with advice, giving me rides to and from home and lending me helpful books. I felt great.

I concentrated on my work, pounding at the grounds, pulling weeds, trimming and pruning. Canadian plants are different. Reading and studying about the native plants, trees and shrubs, I learned about conservation. This all contributed

to that "Canadian experience" that I needed so much as a new immigrant to Canada.

When I was working outside, it was hot; the mercury hit a record high and everyone called out from the office, "Take care." "Work in the shade." "Keep hydrated." It was nice that people cared about me.

It was rewarding to see that the native gardens appeared well-kept and many staff and clients passing by commented on it. I have collected signatories to that effect. This also helped me establish my Canadian experience. I kept a list and noted these valuable experiences in my resume. But that is not the end of the story.

Soon it was time to say "goodbye" to my "family" at the TRCA. As I was packing to leave, I was informed that I had been nominated "Volunteer of the Month." Today I cherish the certificate I received.

One year has already gone by since I volunteered at TRCA and I still remember my good friends, and even phone some of them once in a while . . . after all, family must keep in touch. And, by the way, I used all that experience to get a job and I am still gainfully employed today with an interiorscape company.

Thank you again.

Pitson Dantanarayana

Anyone wishing to learn more about the volunteer experience program can contact the TRCA by visiting www.trca.on.ca/events/volunteer/

Allan Foster is President of the Ontario Society for Environmental Education and a long-time educator at the Kortright Centre for Conservation. If you would like to read more of Allan's stories you can access them at the following link: www.trca.on.ca/parks_and_culture/locations/kortright_centre/about/default.asp?load=allanfoster.

Pitson Dantanarayana is originally from India. He now lives in Markham where he works with an interior landscaping company.

Opening Doors, Hearts and Minds

Compiled by Andrea Foster

Insightful, enlightening and eye-opening. This is what comes to mind when I reflect on the panel discussion, “Opening Doors, Hearts and Minds,” hosted at the 2006 annual COEO conference. We were fortunate to have four dedicated Torontonians share how they interpret outdoor environmental education and environmental education in what they do and offer suggestions as to how we might integrate their work in diverse urban communities.

Tafari Anyika is the founder of Umoja Learning Circle, a community-based African-centred school at Islington and Albion. Yuga Juma Onziga is the founder of the Environmental Centre for New Canadians (ECENECA) — a non-profit organization working to promote nature-based learning with indigenous peoples of the world. Eduardo Garay is a board member of FutureWatch — a non-profit organization devoted to providing support, training and hands-on experiential learning to build capacity and sustain community efforts. And finally, Alison Neilson is a professor of Education at OISE, University of Toronto, and Environmental Studies and Environmental Sociology at Queen’s University.

What follows is a summary of the panelists’ rich presentations. — *Andrea Foster*

Tafari Anyika, Umoja Learning Circle

Umoja Learning Circle is a private elementary school for 13 African-Canadian children, ages 4–11, and is open Monday–Friday, 10 am to 4 pm. We receive funding from various foundations and York University student volunteers are assisting in the grant writing process so we can keep afloat. The school — an old house — is divided into a classroom, kitchen, dining room, library, computer room, music room (every child has his/her own djembe drum), play/exercise room, dress-up room, and an impressive grow lab.

Food security and planting things are a priority — hyperactive kids calm down when they work with plants in the soil. It’s like there is a spiritual connection between children and soil.

Most of our science curriculum at Umoja Learning Circle is based on environmental studies. We believe a forest is more than “just a bunch of trees,” and is a community of magnificent complexity. Children are given hands-on experience in learning about ecosystems, respecting nature and wildlife, recycling and environmental conservation and preservation. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority granted Umoja Learning Circle access to an area of five square city blocks at Eglinton and Albion Roads in Toronto to restore and preserve the land and trees on this property right outside our school’s backyard.

Some of the ways in which we have become part of the solution are by proactively participating in reducing waste, reusing material, recycling items and restoring parts of the environment. We have created birdfeeders, bird houses, indoor vermicompost bins, a living machine for our guppies, and a terrarium. We have planted a total of 100 native species per year for the past five years. We maintain a recycling centre on the premises, practice urban agriculture by growing an intergenerational community vegetable garden, grow aquatic plants indoors to be planted in our backyard pond in the spring and water our indoor plants with water from a rain water barrel.

Through exploration, children develop an appreciation and love for working with the Earth. They investigate the interrelationships from field to table between people and the food they eat, and finally how they dispose of the waste. We stress “overstanding” the responsibility of working with the Earth so that the children can gain a sense of protecting the environment through the experience of gardening.

Yuga Juma Onziga, Environmental Centre for New Canadians (ECNECA)

For the most part, environmental education and educators tend to focus only on the physical environment: air, water and soil/land issues. These environmental education programs have largely failed to meet the needs of several communities, including visible minorities, new Canadians, new immigrants, urban communities, low income communities and Native American communities. It is important that environmental education begins to address these communities for several reasons.

Firstly, there is the fundamental ethical issue of equity and fairness. All people should have access to relevant and meaningful educational programs. By understanding demographic issues as social issues, the importance of informed and active citizens on every block underscores the need for environmental education to reach these communities. Wouldn't it be great if environmental education reflected the diversity of our population?

Secondly, these communities have much to teach us about our environmental education, science, cultural ways of knowing and traditional ways of teaching and learning. To believe that our environmental education programs, largely grounded in Western science, are the only ways to teach and learn, is to miss the richness of all of the other ways of knowing nature. Traditional ways of knowing, recounted to us by elders in cultural groups throughout the world, are just beginning to be appreciated. To solve our multi-dimensional ecological and social issues today, we are going to need multi-dimensional solutions, and those are at the heart of traditional knowledge and culture.

Nature is the ultimate balance or harmony, and crime presents an imbalance to society. Kids should learn in all sorts of environments and seasons to restore a balance to society. Wilderness or outdoor training is the activity that will reformat their minds. At the end of this reformatting, they will be ready for any challenges and will turn their minds away from crime or being victims of crime.

The ultimate goals of learning programs among youth should be

- to transform negative and destructive attitudes of high risk youth, and identify pathways for self-assessment and empowerment
- to implant employability skills (including exposure to computer use, tutoring on academic skills, mentoring, community services)
- to promote nature-based learning with indigenous people of the world
- to enhance life skills and rituals so that youth can become contributing members of society
- to implant critical skills among high risk youth
- to encourage healing of the spirit.

Eduardo Garay, FutureWatch

FutureWatch was founded in 1993 by two graduates of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto: Debra Kosemetzky and Philip Lucima. They envisioned the possibility of bringing community leaders together in partnerships to find solutions to complex social, environmental and economic problems.

FutureWatch partners with community leaders and groups, both domestically and abroad, to collaborate on grassroots-based projects focusing on sustainable environmental, cultural and economic development. It upholds the underlying principle that cross-cultural understanding and environmentally sustainable practices are needed to facilitate the growth and development of healthy communities.

FutureWatch achieves its mission by

- creating opportunities for people of all ages in cross-cultural settings to learn from one another
- coordinating projects to address complex environmental, social and economic issues
- researching practical, realistic and measurable options in communities in Canada and the developing world
- providing support, training and hands-on experiential learning to build capacity to sustain community efforts.

Dr. Alison Neilson, Professor of Education, University of Toronto, and Sociology and Environmental Studies, Queen's University

Rather than look externally for the reasons why outdoor education is losing support (e.g., outdoor education centres being closed, membership in outdoor education associations declining), perhaps it is time to look inward. If the people involved in outdoor education are not representative of the general public, i.e., they appear to be from a narrower racial and socio-economic range, perhaps this narrowness has affected the mainstream definition of outdoor education and who can actually be part of it. Who else is doing outdoor education under a different guise? Is there something about the way you or I define outdoor education that excludes more diverse participation?

I suggest that we ask these questions because the calls to get more people involved have been heard with little success for decades within mainstream environmental education communities. I also know that there are a myriad of organizations doing work that involves the outdoors and environmental concerns in important ways, but generally they identify themselves as doing social justice work and they are not coming to these meetings or joining outdoor education organizations. Community health organizations and community gardens/food security groups in particular seem to be good candidates for partnering with in outdoor education.

Exploring power. Living through a time when the provincial government removed environmental education from the formal school curriculum and when school boards continue to close outdoor education centres, outdoor educators can easily feel marginalized. It is understandable that outdoor educators would not automatically look toward their own power and privilege as part of the problem. But this is exactly what I am asking you to do.

I suggest that this power gets used throughout the world of outdoor education. This power determines who is identified as “founding

fathers” (gender reference is deliberate), what is outdoor education, where it happens and whose voices speak about outdoor education. Before we can expect any other community educators/activists to be open to partner with outdoor educators, we need to explore how we have created a system that excludes different perspectives on what could be considered outdoor education. This is a messy process with no concrete answers, but the goal is not to focus on blame or guilt. By exploring these processes and asking questions, we open the door to the members of the broader community who may not have felt welcome in the past.

Becoming an ally. Rather than seeking other people to become supporters of outdoor education as we define it, or to become members of our organizations, I suggest that the process of exploring power and our own privilege calls for us to become allies. I believe that this reflection suggests listening and learning about the work that gets done in our urban centres. This questioning and listening is key for us to be able to see and hear those people and groups whose work complements ours, but who we have not been open to seeing or hearing before.

The term “allies” suggests an equal partnership working together to meet the goals of each, but if we’ve dominated and excluded in the past, the first part of creating an equal partnership is for us to stop pushing for our specific goals. If we truly become part of a larger community, won’t we also get more support for our goals? Maybe our goals will change as we work in a broader community. Can we afford to shift our time and energy to focus on broader environmental health concerns when outdoor education centres are being closed? Can we afford not to?

For more information on ECENECA, visit www.eceneca.ca. For more information on FutureWatch, visit www.futurewatch.org.

Andrea Foster mediated the above panel discussion at the fall conference. She is COEO's former Project Coordinator.

A Sacred Presence: Bear Encounters in Outdoor Education

by Julian Norris

There are moments in outdoor education that can only be described as magical. These are times when the wider world mirrors our human stories with an uncanny synchronicity, as if choreographed by an unseen hand. Often the only thing we can really do is try and stay out of the way. In my own work, the footsteps moving through such magical moments have very often belonged to the bear.

It is early evening in the Rockies. It has been a long day. Sam, a street-hardened and emotionally inaccessible teen from Vancouver, is missing. Following his tracks out of the valley, I catch up to him around sunset. Wordlessly, I sit down by the side of the trail, and to my surprise he joins me. We watch the sun descend in silence, and as the darkness falls, we see the form of a grizzly bear emerge onto the trail. It glances at us, turns, and disappears noiselessly into the forest. We sit in heightened silence, a little more awake, a little more aware and a little more alive. "Well, I'm heading back to camp," I say, rising and speaking for the first time. "Me too," says Sam, shouldering his pack. And as we walk back, Sam speaks about the teen that had been jibing him mercilessly for two days. "I was ready to lay into him," says Sam, "but I'm still on probation and it would just make things worse. So I figured I'd just walk away from it." We discussed the challenges of the 1,000-kilometre walk home, the motivating wisdom behind his decision, and the viability of options other than fight or flight. He began to open his heart, and my heart opened in response. And I gave thanks to the bear, whose wild presence had opened a door to deep dialogue and transformation, and touched the life of a wild young man forever.

I live in the territory of the Nakoda people, where the words for "bear" translate as "the Great One," "all-knowing Grandfather," "the Great Mother" — honorific terms revealing a deep respect and reverence. Such respect is echoed in the traditional lifeways of Original

Peoples around the world and throughout history. From the Paleolithic cave bear burial sites in Europe that may be the earliest archeological evidence of the human spiritual impulse, to the newly designated Great Bear Rainforest protected area in British Columbia, the bear has deeply impacted and perhaps even shaped the consciousness of every culture that has encountered her.

Andy was a young man who came to live with me after a desperate home situation left him living on the streets. Quick to anger and understandably defensive, he found silence disturbing. Even a short pause in a conversation would leave him trying to fill it. The natural world, already an alien place, seemed empty, and his efforts to fill it with sound and action only made it more so. We began to work on meditation and, as it has for many angry young men, the practice of martial arts offered a doorway to the interior world. He worked hard, determined to become an invincible warrior. One practice involved sitting still by a lake for a period of time and letting his mind become as still as the lake. One day, some 40 minutes after he had departed for his place, he came running back. His hair literally standing up in the air, he gasped, "There's a . . . a . . . a . . .". "A bear?" I asked. He nodded wide-eyed. And so there was. The largest black bear I had ever seen in the area.

Later he shared his story. For the first time, he said, the practice had actually worked. Instead of being tormented by his thoughts, he found himself slipping into a place of stillness. He opened his eyes what seemed to him moments later to see the bear lying down calmly not six feet away from him. For a moment it seemed perfectly normal. Then he bolted . . .

Somehow this encounter changed Andy. Some of his fear and anger left him, to be filled with a calm patience. His fierce sense of protectiveness began to mature into a deeper compassion,

eventually extending even to those who had violated his trust. It was as if in encountering the bear, he had encountered his own wild self, and to his surprise, it was gentle, wise and powerful. A decade on he lives a good life, increasingly embodying those qualities. Once again I found myself giving thanks to the bear.

Our encounters with bears are shaped by a deep ancestral and cultural patterning. We have projected some of our deepest feelings onto the bear. It has variously been idealized as the most powerful warrior, the perfect mother, the wisest being, the most skilful healer, the guardian of the generative source of nature's very abundance. And at the same time one need only look at any newspaper after a bear attack to see how we continue to project some of our deepest fears. This archetypal quality is unlikely to go away any time soon, and it can work a special magic on young people who have yet to discover their genuinely wild souls and who remain stuck in the destructive behaviours of an immature expression of wildness. The living presence of bears — especially when we are alone in wild places — can undermine the fragile bravado of our everyday personality, and in some precious cases, crack open the doorway to transformation. Such encounters have an almost initiatory quality; they can profoundly alter our very way of being in the world.

But just as the bear stalks the fearful reaches of our imaginations, so too can she bring growth and healing — especially if we as educators are willing to walk into the spaces that her presence can open, whether literally in the wilderness or in the world of dreams and imagination.

I was in a circle with 50 Tamil children from a fishing village in southern India. This particular village, like so many others, had been recently devastated by the Asian tsunami. The ocean — the source of life and abundance and a mother to the people — had become a source of death, destruction and terror. As we sat together in the grounds of the village temple, I invited the



children to go on a journey, traveling on the sound of my flute, to a land under the sea. Here it might even be possible, I suggested, to encounter and converse with the powers of the natural world.

The children loved the activity, with many describing fantastic journeys through magical landscapes and wondrous encounters with all manner of beings. One little girl caught my attention with the serious look on her face as she patiently waited to share her experience. Yes, she had been to a wonderful land under the sea she said. And did she meet anyone there I asked. "Karadi" she replied. The bear. And the bear had spoken to her. He told her to be strong and not to be afraid. And he had given her a dance. And then she stood, and swaying back and forth, paws held before her, she danced a dance of power, strength and determination that stunned and humbled all of us watching. It was as if we were momentarily in the living presence of the Sacred Other, of all that the bear embodied and more. The activity was transformed into a genuine healing encounter, and once again, I found myself giving thanks to the bear as her footsteps danced through the hearts of the children.

Julian Norris is an independent consultant living in Canmore, Alberta. Founder of Ghost River Rediscovery, a culturally based outdoor education program, he is currently completing a PhD at the University of Calgary. He is married to Saundi, a grizzly bear biologist, and welcomes correspondence at kapamutit@gmail.com.

Rock and Plant

by Sommer Matriangelo

Sommer Matriangelo was a presenter at the Fall COEO conference. Although she apologized for not being an environmental or outdoor educator, she kept us spellbound around a campfire for almost an hour telling us environmental tales. In spite of the cold, she warmed us with engaging African and Trinidadian stories about stars, family, animals and trickster spiders. Sommer is a librarian and tells stories to children to connect them with the natural environment. She is exactly the kind of environmental educator we were trying to discover at the conference, and she kindly consented to share a favourite story with the readers of Pathways. — Allan Foster

Last fall, I was fortunate enough to be asked to tell stories at the COEO conference in Toronto. Several participants and I gathered by the Claireville Reservoir at Indian Line Campground, while I told stories on a very cool evening around a campfire. One of the stories I told was "Rock and Plant," a fable written by Margaret Read MacDonald, which can be found in her book, *Three Minute Tales*.

The story is about the fight between Rock and Plant for dominance on the Earth. I chose it because it's an environmental story that reflects the fight between rock and plant that I see in Toronto, where condominiums and townhouses are being built everyday. I am concerned that, as a result, the greenery that once existed is being routinely destroyed.

Rock by itself is no threat to us. It sits, it waits. But when man that finds he can use rock to build houses, streets, highrises and condominiums, then the trouble begins. As Margaret Read Macdonald says, "Man sees in me (rock) a means to change the world and shape it to his will." Man uses Rock to cover over the Earth, stifling it and preventing Plant from growing. In the end, man dies out. We are again left with two things: Rock and Plant. Plant grows freely and thrives, while and Rock sits and waits for man to come again.

Rock and Plant

When Rock and Plant were set upon the Earth, Rock sneered:

"You puny plant. I could crush you with a single blow.

Soon you will be no more. I'll dominate this place."

But Plant smiled sweetly and said,

"We'll see. You, Rock, can never re-create.

I have the gift of growth. While you sit and wait . . . I'll creep and cover you."

"Just wait until I smash those tender tentacles!" Rock laughed.

But Plant stretched out in confidence. "You forget one thing, Rock.

You are inanimate. Rock cannot move."

Rock sat and sulked and sulked.

Until Man came along.

Man picked up Rock. He held Rock in his hand.

He raised Rock high and whacked a branch from Plant!

Rock laughed and called to Plant,

"Your end . . . inevitable!

Man sees in me a means to change the world and shape it to his will.

He'll never stop until the last green thing is dead.

He sees in me a tool to master all!"

To this day, Rock watches while man digs him out.

He uses Rock to make pavement, cement, asphalt . . . and force out Plant.

Of course as soon as Man has gone away . . .

Plant extends a tendril . . . then another . . .

and soon begins to cover Rock again.

But who will win? Which is inevitable?

Sommer Matriangelo has worked for the Toronto Public Library for over ten years. She has told stories in the library to children of all ages. She has also told stories at the Toronto Storytelling Festival, the St. Mary's Storytelling Festival and at public schools. She uses drums, songs and dance to enhance her stories.

A Death on the Barrens

Reviewed by Moira Hare

Grinnell, George. (1996). *A Death on the Barrens*. Toronto, ON: Northern Books.

When I was a little girl, outdoor adventure novels held little appeal. Well-worn copies of *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* still sit on my sister's bookshelf, yet as a child and teenager reading stories about what I assumed would be vast, open spaces detached from the comforts and comforting rules of civilization, they seemed dreary, depressing and devoid of genuine character development. However, although one's taste palate becomes less discriminating with age, one's intellectual palate tends to broaden in scope. Thus, it pleases me to say that George Grinnell's *A Death on the Barrens* is primarily an absorbing page-turner, regardless of which section it is shelved under in your local bookstore.

Part adventure novel, part soliloquy on the redemptive power of nature, all genuine autobiography, Grinnell's book is the searing and intense story of his long ago ill-fated canoe trip across the barrens. Grinnell successfully intertwines concise anecdotes of other expeditions to give some historical context to his journey, but he even more effectively posits the Moffat expedition in the midst of his young adulthood and then outlines the resulting shifts in his philosophy that inform the rest of his adult life.

A Death on the Barrens pulls the reader in by starting at the end of the expedition with the promise of a plot more complicated than the simple outlining of Grinnell's chronological journey log. I was well reeled in by the time the novel made a delicious shift from simply canoe expedition going bad, to a more profound examination of the hungers and appetites, both literal and spiritual, of humans on the edge of an abyss, during their time in the sub-arctic, and pre- and post-expedition in civilization.

Grinnell's true story is a recounting of a pilgrimage that becomes increasingly

intoxicating as the original goal of the expedition becomes obscured. The constant gnawing hunger felt by the travelers as their food supply dwindles seems to numb the cold edge of reality, removing the panic and replacing it with ample space to pontificate on the constraints placed on humans by civilization, parking lots, income taxes and mini-vans. When it comes down to mere survival, frequently the minute details of life fall away to reveal the "big picture," an image of which Grinnell provides enough detail to chew on.

Although this is a true story, and the realness of the events can be felt on every page, Grinnell's writing provides enough literary devices to make it difficult to put down the novel at the end of any chapter. There are foreshadowing, dreams to be interpreted, well-painted characters, alliances and hurt feelings. We know within the first two pages of the book that Arthur Moffatt will perish; yet when his death actually happens it is shocking, it is raw and it is unsettling. That's probably one of the greatest strengths of Grinnell's novel — it is as surprising as it is insightful. All those years ago in English I was taught that one of the three types of conflict humans encounter is against nature. As Grinnell's writing reveals, that may be one of our greatest problems.

Moira Hare is a graduate of the Arts and Science program at McMaster University. Her honours thesis involved interviewing outdoor travellers and overseas workers regarding re-entry tension.



Expert Opinions on Postsecondary Outdoor Adventure Risk Management Curriculum Design: A Research Note

by Nevin Harper

Abstract

A study of outdoor adventure risk management education was conducted in the fall of 2003 following the devastating avalanche season of winter 2002–2003, which took close to 50 lives in North America. The study was guided by the desire to better understand effective risk management training of outdoor adventure leaders in postsecondary institutions. Interviews with six industry-recognized outdoor adventure experts were conducted, yielding guidelines for postsecondary curriculum design. Although specifically addressing risk management curriculum, the resulting *Principles of Curriculum Design* are deemed applicable to other facets of outdoor adventure education. It was not the intent of this study to identify or articulate specific curricular content, but rather to highlight the means by which postsecondary programs can most effectively prepare future outdoor adventure leaders to assess and manage risk professionals. This research note provides a brief synopsis of the study and its findings, while full results have been published in the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* (Harper & Robinson, 2005).

Introduction

Outdoor adventure leaders are faced with making critical decisions in assessing and managing risk to keep students, clients or customers safe, while still enabling them to benefit from risk-related experiences (Priest & Gass, 1997). The knowledge and competency necessary to prevent accidents is essential for those who provide outdoor adventure programs or services. Risk management decisions made in the field tend to reflect an individual's character, experience, training and

interpersonal skills, as well as organizational practices and beliefs. Considering the multiple variables that affect each individual's decisions, qualifying or quantifying risk management competency is a difficult task (Galloway, 2002). For this reason, risk management education has often remained closely aligned with policies and guidelines and not ventured too far into the intrapersonal skill development of individual students. This also explains why judgment and intuition have long been acknowledged as skills associated with experienced and effective outdoor adventure leaders, but remain difficult to incorporate into outdoor adventure education. Still, risk management curriculum that includes the development of personal skills such as judgment is reasoned to improve the decision-making process of students, while reducing their reliance on static rules.

Rationale for Study

Negative public opinion following avalanche fatalities — namely seven Alberta high school students — during the 2002–2003 winter season in British Columbia inspired considerable discussion within the outdoor adventure industry. At the time of these events, the author was directing a wilderness program for adjudicated youth in British Columbia that had been negatively affected by a provincial government decision to restrict winter programming. The outdoor adventure industry reacted with concern to the government's proposal, which the industry believed was an inflated depiction of the level of risk of all outdoor adventure activities by government officials and in mainstream media (Frankel, 2003). These events were the catalysts for this study.

In a time of growth in the outdoor adventure industry in Canada (Cloutier & Valade, 2003), the relationship between academic preparation and the outdoor adventure industry was determined to be an ideal starting point for this inquiry. Originally designed to investigate how risk management might ideally be taught at the postsecondary level, early discussions with practitioners and academics identified a lack of consistency in how outdoor adventure curriculum was being designed and delivered. A further review of the literature found this to be a consistent issue in higher education — a lack of continuity between postsecondary outdoor adventure programs and the industry.

While it can be argued that key competencies and experiences of effective leaders can be developed without academic training, academic programs can deliver grounding in theory and interdisciplinary education. They are also crucial for the industry to remain current in a changing world and to train effective outdoor leaders. It should also be noted that many postsecondary programs exist and are training outdoor adventure leaders through multiple formats, ranging from certification programs of a few months to university degrees of four years.

Methods

Qualitative methods were employed; primary data came from interviews of six industry-recognized outdoor adventure professionals. These individuals were chosen purposefully for their experience and reputations in the field, specifically in the area of risk assessment and safety management. Three faculty members, one from each of the three largest outdoor adventure postsecondary programs in British Columbia, were chosen, who collectively at the time of the study had almost 50 years' experience in the outdoor adventure business and 2,800+ field days, and had trained over 600 guides and instructors. The directors of three prominent outdoor adventure programs/businesses were also selected for interviews; these directors had a combined 60+ years' experience in the

outdoor adventure business and 4,500+ field days, and had trained close to 1,000

guides and instructors. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that these six individuals have had a significant impact on the training and development of outdoor adventure leaders throughout Canada (although primarily in Western Canada) over the last 20+ years and were therefore able to provide an "expert opinion" that was sought for this study. Research participant selection did not, however, attend to gender, age, or cultural or geographic representation, thereby limiting generalization.

In an effort to explore the full range of participant understanding, interviews included predetermined questions, while also allowing for emergent dialogue on related issues and topics (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Interviews were each one hour in length, tape-recorded by the researcher, transcribed, reviewed numerous times, coded and interpreted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Results were compared and contrasted with related literature and, recognizing bias, interpreted by the researcher.

Results

Interestingly, the findings of the study emerged and developed in a way that did not completely align with the original intent of the research. The nature of the inquiry to understand how to teach risk management in postsecondary education (i.e., curriculum)



consistently trended toward programmatic and organizational issues related to teaching risk management (i.e., curriculum design). The interviewees provided a considerable depth of understanding of both the educational and practical field experience related to risk management education. The following five themes emerged from the data as guiding principles for curriculum design:

1. Identify industry needs.
2. Define and articulate program goals.
3. Identify essential skills and competencies.
4. Determine teaching methodologies.
5. Select suitably qualified staff.

Each theme is briefly described below and key components highlighted.

1. **Identify industry needs.**
 - Align curriculum with local and national industry standards.
 - Identify necessary or preferred qualifications for leaders.
 - Stay current with legal responsibilities of outdoor adventure leaders.
2. **Define and articulate program goals.**
 - Assess the level of training to be offered and associated risk.
 - Define course curriculum and progressions.
 - Articulate industry needs expectations.
 - Determine need for student selection process.
3. **Identify essential skills and competencies.**
 - Identify technical skills to be learned and evaluated.
 - Identify leadership skills to be learned and evaluated.
 - Identify experience to be gained and demonstrated during the academic program.
4. **Determine teaching methodologies.**
 - Determine appropriate teaching methodologies, which can include field experience, scenarios, history and theory and literature.

5. Select suitably qualified staff.

- Hire industry-recognized professionals.
- Ensure technical competency of staff.
- Ensure effective teaching and facilitation skills of staff.

Implications

These five principles provide a generic template for the design and delivery of many facets of outdoor adventure education and training. This curriculum design framework aims to address the needs of students, postsecondary institutions and industry. Further to the curriculum design principles, the following recommendations were distilled from the findings and direct input from interviewees:

1. Greater alignment is needed between practitioners and faculty of postsecondary outdoor adventure programs to build continuity in training, education and research.
2. Students should learn outdoor adventure skills from industry-recognized professionals or faculty who can maintain currency through professional standing and practice.
3. Students may benefit from flexible academic program designs that relate to specific industry positions (e.g., shorter technical training with transferability to diploma or degree programs for later career opportunities).
4. The terms *risk assessment* and *safety management* were generally preferred over *risk management*.
5. Academic programs need to be clear in articulating to students the level of training to be offered, the objective risk involved, and industry expectations (legal and ethical) of an outdoor adventure leader with that level of training.
6. Effort to educate the general public on the realities of risk management in outdoor adventure activities is needed to reduce negative publicity when accidents or significant near misses occur.

Conclusions

This paper provides a brief overview of a Canadian risk management study published in an international outdoor adventure journal. As academic literature has limited readership, the opportunity is taken here to offer some insight to the study findings, while providing reference to the full study for those interested. These findings have caused me to question my motives to continue teaching and leading outdoor adventure activities as I move toward an academic career. Faculty in postsecondary outdoor adventure programs may be displeased with the findings concerning who should teach skills to outdoor adventure students. This is understandable, since many professionals transition from the field into academia with hopes of maintaining their outdoor leadership training component. These findings serve as a challenge to those desiring to live in both worlds. With the competing demands of the academic system (i.e., teaching, research, service), it is incumbent upon outdoor adventure programs and faculty to ensure the highest possible standards for training can be provided to their students.

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Outdoor Adventure Leadership at Laurentian University

by Jim Little

Graduating with a Bachelor of Physical and Health Education (BPHE) degree with a specialty in Outdoor Adventure Leadership is a unique reality in Canada offered by Sudbury's Laurentian University. Developed over 20 years ago, the Outdoor Adventure Leadership (ADVL) program has been one of Laurentian's six landmark Human Kinetics programs. From a scholastic perspective the ADVL students (nicknamed ADVLers) are striving to become competent leaders in the outdoors by acquiring sound theoretical knowledge, building their technical skills and participating in a wide range of enriching educational and work-related experiences, all the while hoping to develop a lucrative career after graduation. With top-notch students and a powerhouse of professors and instructors, the ADVL program is poised for international recognition in the outdoor adventure marketplace.

The ADVL program is soundly based on three key elements: academic knowledge, professional orientation and technical certification. These three elements are highlighted throughout the four-year undergraduate degree requirements. As Dr. Couture states in the Spring 2001 issue of *Pathways*, "ADVL is a holistic program that promotes personal growth, develops leadership skills and trains individuals to be safety-minded in a variety of outdoor settings." This philosophy holds true today; the program provides a balanced mix of scholarly pursuits and outdoor field-related experiences that challenge the mind, body and soul.

Academic Knowledge

Academics are a key component in the ADVL program, which hones each student's theoretical knowledge in physical and health education. A well-rounded core first year includes courses in Exercise Science, Human Movement, Anatomy, Kinesiology and North

American Native Studies. In second, third and fourth years, each student builds on this base by taking program-specific courses such as Outdoor Education, Adventure Leadership and Adventure Therapy. These specific courses help the student develop theoretical knowledge and enjoy a smooth transition to their practical application. To remain in the program, students are required to maintain a 60% average, yet they are encouraged to maintain a 70% average, which would result in an honours designation with their degree. With a sound foundation of theoretical knowledge and the requirement to maintain a high academic standard, the students are helped to excel in an industry that demands the constant application of this knowledge in real-life situations.

Professional Orientation

The ADVL program is committed to orienting students to their future career paths in outdoor adventure leadership by offering courses that encompass both the theory and practical application of the outdoor adventure scene. Core courses aptly named Expedition Planning, Risk Management and Wilderness Emergency Management add to the rock solid platform that the students will develop throughout their four years of study.

The ADVL program strives to offer a practical hands-on approach to students by offering practicum and internship opportunities. Independent study practicums take many shapes and sizes but are focused on outdoor adventure-based learning. For instance, 40-hour practicum positions may include working with local tourism businesses, involvement in outdoor community events, assisting outdoor education school groups, being a Teaching Assistant in one of Laurentian's Human Kinetics activity classes or being a board member of a university-sanctioned club.

Third-year ADVLer Dave Marrone is currently doing his practicum by running the school's Outers Club. Through this club, Marrone is able to gain experience promoting and leading outdoor activities around Sudbury through his self-developed Web site at www.sudburyoutside.ca. With the development of this site, Marrone is aligned with his future plans of "starting a small guiding company" when he graduates. Each ADVL student must also embark on a more intense practical experience either by participating in a 400-hour internship position or leading an international expedition.

The working internship provides the student with the opportunity to experience the realities of the working field of adventure activity alongside a community mentor. Through this experience, the student must formulate achievable scholarly objectives and produce tangible benefits to the organization in which they are working. The international expedition option provides the student with the opportunity to plan, prepare and lead a wilderness excursion outside Canada. Julie Bremner, a third-year ADVLer, on top of her active life as a student, is "trying to do a certificate in environmental biology and lead an international backpacking expedition to Spain" in the summer of 2007. The ADVL program has a unique career-oriented array of both theory and practical courses to help prepare its graduates for entry into the demanding world marketplace.

Technical Certifications

Industry standards in the outdoor adventure field are becoming rigorous and closely regulated and monitored by government and industry players. These rising standards are making it tougher for individuals to find their niche in the outdoor adventure market. The increasing costs and availability of relevant technical certifications also creates its own set of hurdles. Laurentian's ADVL program coordinator and professors anticipated these issues, and through strategic partnership agreements with certifying organizations (as well as having in-house certified instructors to deliver the programs), they can offer cost-effective technical certifications to their students.

Throughout the four-year program, ADVL students have the choice of taking up to 15 nationally recognized technical certifications. Ontario Recreational Canoe and Kayak



Association (ORCKA) certificates, Swift Water Rescue Technician (SRT), National Life Saving Society (NLS), Wilderness First Responder (Sirius Wilderness Medicine) and Top-roper Rock Climbing Instructor (L'École Nationale d'Escalade du Québec) are a few of the certifications offered. To streamline the delivery of technical skills acquisition, many of the certifications are offered through degree required courses. The best example of these course offerings is "Summer Session," where students five weeks of technical training in wilderness pursuits (with certifications) before graduation. Academic certification courses in Sea Kayaking, White Water Canoeing, Swift Water Rescue, Rock Climbing and Canoe Tripping fill the bill in this intensive period of training.

Many of these certification courses go above and beyond the minimum certification requirements (as set out by the certification organization). For instance, an ORCKA Canoe Tripping Level 2 (Trip Leader-CT2) certification that requires candidates to participate in a five-day wilderness canoe trip is currently blended into the ADVL Advanced Wilderness Canoe Tripping course. However, the requirements for the canoe tripping course are designed specifically for students to plan, prepare and participate in a minimum 14-day remote wilderness canoe trip held somewhere in the northern climes of Canada. This far surpasses the minimum certification requirement of a five-day trip. Previous annual Advanced Wilderness Canoe Trips have been run throughout Northern Ontario in the James Bay Watershed (Missinaibi River, Kattawagami River, Harricanaw River), Northern Quebec (Pontax River) and Manitoba (Bloodvein River).

The ADVL program at Laurentian University is a demanding one. The course load and personal time commitment is typically heavier than what is required in other university degree programs. Admission applications through the Ontario University Application Centre (OUAC) "have been consistently above one hundred over the past four years"



according to Professor Stephen Ritchie, Coordinator of the ADVL program. The program admissions requirements are rigorous and admission to ADVL is capped at 14 students each year. The program is also unique in Canada since it leverages the strength of a Bachelor of Physical and Health Education (BPHE) with a specialization in Outdoor Adventure Leadership. This firm grounding in understanding the human body, physical education, health and nutrition balanced with the diverse issues and needs surrounding the outdoor adventure industry ensures that graduates from the program are uniquely qualified as outdoor leaders in Canada and beyond.

For more information on the Outdoor Adventure Leadership Program at Laurentian University, visit www.humankinetics.laurentian.ca.

Full-time instructor in the School of Human Kinetics at Laurentian University, Jim Little enjoys canoe tripping, running whitewater in the Sudbury region and hanging out with his wife, Jenny, and 2½-year-old son, Finn.

The Gathering

by Bob Henderson

I will always have a soft spot in my heart for the 2006 COEO annual conference, *Outdoor Education — With the Community, In the Community, For the Community*. It isn't because we had the biggest turnout (60 rather than 200), or the most exotic presenters (all presenters were local to the GTA), or the most enticing conference site (I and others camped at the Indian Line Campground at Highway 427 and 407). Indeed, we moved awkwardly at times between the area community center, Humber College facilities, the campground and, in different group sign-up travel packages, parks and sites of outdoor education throughout the city. It isn't because we had the most "outdoorsy" setting (with others, I paddled up the Humber River, under the 407 highway). No, the soft spot is for a group of COEO folks who rose to a challenge to commit to an idea and see it through no matter the setbacks along the way.

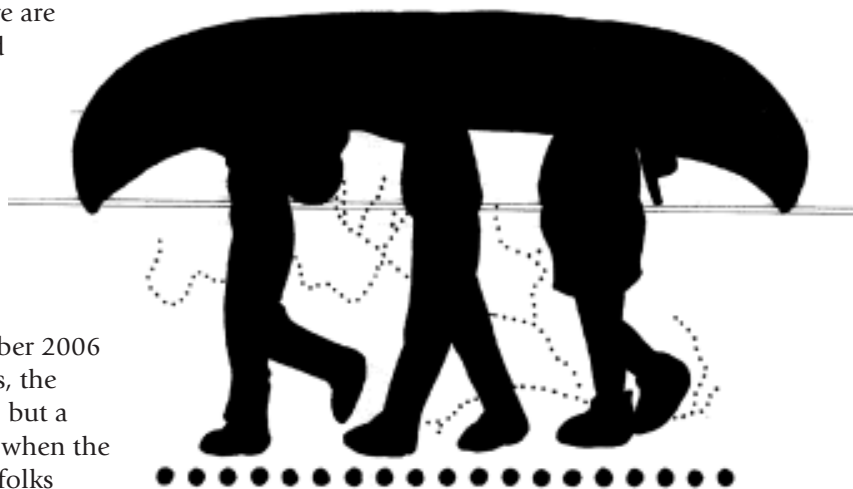
Committee members came and went, ideas rose and fell, low registration numbers forced quick decisions. Yet, for those who were there in September and we, the conference committee, there is a satisfaction of having launched, delivered on, tried the idea of working WITH/IN/FOR the GTA community. We cannot neglect the urban centers and their youth in our notions of outdoor education in Ontario, Canada or beyond. There are large populations in Ontario, and particularly in Toronto, who have far too little exposure to the natural world and the benefits of outdoor education as they might interpret them. We must listen and learn and invite and support.

We began that process in September 2006 as an organization. As individuals, the lessons were varied and personal, but a central theme seems to ring clear when the travel groups and on site session folks

shared their days: Toronto has a vibrant collection of outdoor educators committed to working positively to better the lives of all. There are also many challenges. We, who were at the COEO conference in 2006, could share in that work and vision for our work extending ourselves to the edges and core of Toronto's many communities.

Camping Saturday night after the festivities and learning of the day, I vividly now remember chatting in Mike Elrick's Swedish tent with a small wood stove taking the edge off a mist rain. There was a hum of the two major highways. There was a glow of surrounding city lights and reflection of lights in the Humber reservoir waters where many had paddled earlier, and there was a swell of contentment in the tent that night. We were all involved in "a good thing," in good work, and in a good community, extending ourselves out with others involved in good work. Hard work.

A special thanks goes out to those involved in making our 2006 conference a reality: Pamela Miller, Judy Kramer, Karen Fullbrook, Carol Ray, Clare Magee, Mark Whitcombe, Allan Crawford, Andrea Foster, Lynn Short, Jeff Needham, Shane Kramer and Bob Henderson.



Every Plant Has a Story

by Allan Foster

At the COEO conference last fall, Allan Foster presented a workshop on the use of plants in the classroom to celebrate significant holidays. In keeping with the theme of the conference, Allan's workshop honoured the diversity of human cultures, as well as the diversity of plants.

Now that I'm retired, one of my pet projects is to demonstrate to teachers how easy it is to grow plants in the classroom. As excited as I am about botany, I recognize that very few people share my enthusiasm. However, I have finally found a hook: in order to create equitable schools in Ontario, teachers are mandated to honour diversity in their classrooms by celebrating a diversity of special significant days such as Ramadan, Kwansaa, Diwali and Chinese New Year. Not only does this provide students with an opportunity to learn about other cultures while sharing and celebrating their own, it is also a great way for students to learn about plants, because every significant day seems to have its own celebratory plant. Many of these plants carry a rich heritage of stories, and some are easy for students to grow on the classroom windowsill.

By finding a group of plants that celebrate significant days, I designed a curriculum model to demonstrate their propagation and care in the classroom. The model even provides a schedule and gift-wrap ideas so that students of all backgrounds can take the plant home as a gift to celebrate those special days. Of course as a Canadian, I hope this will lead to a sharing of information about cultures other than my own. As a botanist and outdoor educator, I hope the engagement begun in the classroom will lead to an interest in plants growing outside as well.

Stories of the African Violet

As an example of where this might lead, I have chosen one of the easiest plants in the world to procure and grow — the African violet. At less than five dollars for two plants, the plant is affordable, and two plants are more than enough to supply sufficient growing material so that all of your students have something to take home.

Because the African Violet comes from Africa, it could be a gift to take home during Kwansaa. Or, it could be used as a present for students to take home on Mother's Day. Finally, because the name "violet" is tied to Greek mythology, the flower might be used to celebrate a special Greek day such as Easter.

Three stories with three different cultural roots can be used in order to make the violet a more engaging teaching tool:

Plucked from the plains of Africa

The first story is about the plant's discovery and how it was named. It's an outdoor story about tents, trekking and observations made in the wild. No European had ever seen the plant before the end of the 19th century. It grew undetected and undeveloped in the mountains of Tanzania in Africa (Tanzania was a German colony known then as Tanganika). Although the Africans certainly knew the plant, they had no known use for it.

No use for it, that is, until Europeans developed an unquenchable thirst for new and exciting plants to grow as ornaments in and around their homes. The theory is that a German horticultural society, hungry for new plant material for their nurseries, funded a small expedition to Tanzania to see if there were any plants to exploit.

Leading the expedition was a landed aristocrat by the name of Walter von Saintpaul. Walter's father, Baron Walter von Saint Paul, was a botanist and had studied and worked in horticulture. Excited about his delivery, Walter sent his father living samples of the plants in special glass boxes called Wardian cases.¹

Unfortunately, many plants never survived the trip, with many Wardian cases being smashed by raging seas and shipwrecks. Other plants simply never survived the shock of being dug up and transported thousands of miles. However, a few precious plants did make it back to Germany. Under the baron's loving care, they thrived as a houseplant. Very soon, African Violets became a common commodity at the plant markets in Germany. There are now African Violet Societies all over the world, with sales in African Violets numbering millions of dollars. Sadly, Tanzania itself has not profited one cent from the success of its native son.

To honour the man who found the plant in Africa, African violets still carry the scientific name of *Saintpaulia* to this day.

In the name of love

The second story comes from Greek legend, and refers to the other violet, *Viola*. As it turns out, Zeus, the most powerful of the Greek gods, was in love with a beautiful nymph by the name of Io. Legend has it that Zeus and Io spent many happy hours together lying in the flower-covered meadows by the sea.

Hera, Zeus' wife of many years, knew about his frequent dalliance. One bright day, seeing Hera coming across the meadow, Zeus transformed Io into a large white cow in order to protect his girlfriend from the wrath of his

wife (another version maintains that it was Hera who turned Io into the cow).

But the two lovers were not quick enough to fool Hera. She created nasty biting flies to pester Io — the same flies that pester cattle to this day. Unable to withstand the biting, Io jumped into the sea to escape. That part of the sea is still called "Cow Sea" or "The Bosphorus" ("Bos" is another word for "cow" and the Bosphorus is also known as the Istanbul Strait).

While running through the meadow toward the sea, the stinging of the flies caused Io's eyes to well up, and huge cow tears fell to the ground. Wherever tears fell, violets sprang up and grew. Her name became the root of the word "violet", for which the plants are still called today.

Mothering Sunday

The third story about violets comes from England. During the Middle Age, young girls from small villages often worked for the landlord as scullery maids in the kitchen or chambermaids in the bedrooms. They worked very hard and only had one day off each year.

Their one holiday was called Mothering Sunday. On that day, the girls could quickly run home to their village and spend the rest of the day with their family. Because there was no time and no money to buy a gift for mother, the girls would pick a small bouquet of violets that grew at the side of the road that time of year. The special day later became Mother's Day and, for a long time, the traditional gift was a bouquet of violets.

The Biology of the African Violet

Once you have engaged the learner by telling a story, this is the time to introduce its biology.

There are many books and Web pages about the African violet, but I will simply share the easiest way to propagate *Saintpaulia* on the windowsill.

¹ A Wardian case is simply a fancy glass terrarium that protected living plants and animals on their difficult journey back to Europe. These cases had been used by Victorian naturalists for almost 50 years.

This is a long-term project. It will take three or four months to achieve the results you want. However, once you set the activity up, you have nothing to do but wait. You don't even need to water the plants — foil wrap will prevent evaporation.

To keep costs down, buy 36 clear plastic shot glasses at the dollar store. Cover each glass with a square of aluminum foil, folding it down so that the foil is tight across the top of the glass. Then with a pencil, poke a hole in the middle of the foil. Fill each glass with water through the hole in the foil. (I do this by holding the glass under a running tap. The foil will balloon up when the glass is full.)

Hold your breath while you do this next part, because now you are going to destroy an African violet plant. Cut all the leaves from the middle of the stock. These will be just the right age — not too young and not too old. Cut each petiole (leaf stem) to about 3 centimetres in length. Then trim the cut end on an angle of 45 degrees to maximize the area that will eventually produce the roots. Next, stick the leaf stem through the hole in the aluminum but keep the leaf itself dry.

Place all the shot glass leaves on a tray in a window, where they will get lots of indirect sunlight. It will take up to two months but you can watch the roots develop at the base of the cut stem. Eventually you will begin to see some tiny leaves developing with the roots under the surface of the water. This is the time to remove the plantlets from the water and aluminum foil and pot them in some good potting soil. Pot them so that the new leaves are above the surface of the soil and the roots are below. Do not remove the original parent leaf until the new plantlets have begun to grow.



The magic of seeing the roots and the tiny new plants developing at the base of the cut leaf are the ultimate reward. Good luck and happy gardening.

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Allan Foster is President of the Ontario Society for Environmental Education and a long-time educator at the Kortright Centre for Conservation. If you would like to read more of Allan's stories you can access them at the following link: www.trca.on.ca/parks_and_culture/locations/kortright_centre/about/default.asp?load=allanfoster.

Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) — Manitoba Region's Environmental Education Program

by Cathy Shaluk

What prairie bird are you? A sleek Northern Harrier? A dancing Sharp-tailed Grouse? Or perhaps a soaring Sandhill Crane? Spread your wings wide and we will find out! With the Prairie Wing String stretched in front of you from one fingertip to the other, your wingspan will match up with that of a wingspan of a prairie bird! It could be any number of birds including the tiny Ruby-throated hummingbird with a wingspan of 12 cm to one of the largest, the White Pelican at 280 cm!

Or discover what the Sleeping Sheep, Red Buffalo and Brown Bison all have in common — they all at one time helped to shape and maintain the health of the Tall Grass Prairie!

Or visually see the incredible lengths some prairie grasses will go to in order to reach life-sustaining water — such as Big Blue Stem with a root system that will stretch across the classroom to a length of four metres!

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is excited and proud to offer its first ever in-class education programs on the Tall Grass Prairie Ecosystem. These curriculum-based programs are offered to students from Kindergarten through to Grade 12. This experience gives many students who may never have the opportunity to visit a real live prairie to feel, hear, see and appreciate the uniqueness of one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.

With the support of generous and dedicated donors, the Manitoba Region of NCC was able to create, launch and deliver the curriculum-based "Prairie Studies Education Program" to students in Manitoba classrooms. There are now over 11,000 students who have measured their wingspans, stretched a Big Bluestem grass from tip to root across the span of the classroom, and patted a Black Bear's fur!

Our programming is free, fun, interactive, curriculum-based . . . and growing! The in-class program consists of a vibrant presentation showing the Tall Grass Prairie in full colour photography, a hands-on activity component, a question-and-answer period, and suggested multi-disciplinary follow-up activities. The presentations are structured to the level of the students. Topics range from an introduction to prairie plants and animals and their special adaptations needed to survive, to relationships within and around their habitats. Students learn about settlement and geologic history of the region, sustainable development, and the management tools used in prairie restoration and maintenance.

The Manitoba Region of NCC's presence in the classroom has gained acceptance and recognition from the Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth, school division administrators, principals and classroom educators. As the education community becomes more involved with us, the Manitoba Region of NCC has been invited to present and provide resources to the provincial and national Envirothon Science Competitions for Senior Years Students. As the Education Coordinator of the Manitoba Region of NCC, I am now a member of the Science Teachers Association of Manitoba Education.

Due to NCC's involvement and success in the environmental education field, the Manitoba Region of NCC was invited to participate in the Monarch Teacher Network (MTN) Canada Program. With the goal of promoting the Monarch Butterfly program to classroom teachers in Manitoba, NCC, the Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth, and MTN volunteers hosted an exciting and successful training workshop for Manitoba teachers in 2006.

The goal of the Manitoba Region of NCC is to raise the awareness of our young people, to challenge them to become effective stewards of the land, and to help them realize that they can influence the future and health of what remains of our natural legacy for the benefit of all Canadians.

Call the Manitoba office today (204) 942-6156, and give a student the opportunity to feel, hear, see and appreciate the uniqueness of one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America: the Tall Grass Prairie.

Background Information on NCC and History of the Tall Grass Prairie

The NCC, a national non-profit organization, has a broad mission to preserve ecologically significant areas and educational interest in Canada. Currently, NCC is the largest private steward of lands conserving species at risk in Canada, having secured and protected over 1,200 properties for a total of two million acres from coast to coast since 1962.

The Manitoba Region of NCC has concentrated most of its attention on the southern ecosystems and on the streams and river valleys that traverse them. Manitoba's native tall, mixed, and fescue grass prairies and aspen parklands have been the prime focus of NCC as these ecosystems have been reduced to tiny remnants of their former expanse.

To date, less than half of 1% of what was once nearly 1.5 million acres of Tall Grass Prairie remain. Through settlement, most of the original prairie, which extended from the Interlake region of Manitoba down to Texas, had been lost. In the late 1980s, significant remnants of Tall Grass Prairie were discovered in southeastern Manitoba; since then over 20,000 acres of this endangered prairie have been protected.

Since 1989, through the creative and cooperative efforts of the Critical Wildlife Habitat Program Partners, the Manitoba Region of NCC has taken the lead role in the management of the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in southeastern Manitoba. To date, through these partnerships, over 90 properties in Manitoba have been secured, with a cumulative total area exceeding 25,000 acres. NCC is able to secure and protect properties through land donation and purchases, donated or purchased conservation easements, and cash donations.

Cathy Shaluk joined the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) team four years ago as Education Coordinator for the Manitoba Region. Bringing over 15 years of experience working in the environmental education field, Cathy brought NCC's new "Prairie Studies" Education Program on the Tall Grass Prairie to life!



The Bay of Fundy Model Forest

by Barb Scott

Since New Brunswick is 85 per cent forest covered, Fundy Model Forest considers it vitally important that we help children learn about forest ecosystems and learn about the many benefits that we derive from our woodlands.

We are one of 11 model forests across Canada and nearly 40 model forests worldwide. Lake Abitibi and Eastern Ontario Model Forests are found in Ontario. Like almost all other Canadian model forests, they too offer outdoor education programs.

Fundy Model Forest is located in southeastern New Brunswick in the Acadian forest region, where many softwoods are reaching the southern edge of their range and many hardwoods are at the northern reach of theirs. The resulting mix is a varied and colourful backdrop for residents and visitors throughout the Maritimes. Come visit us in the fall!

Fundy Model Forest was created in 1992 and works to advance sustainable forest management through research, develop innovative tools and processes, and encourage the adoption of these tools and processes through demonstration. One of the underlying tenets of the model forest is that we can derive economic benefit from the forest, while at the same time protecting the environment and respecting the many social values placed on our woodlands.

Education has been a priority at the Fundy Model Forest from the beginning. Each year we have activities directed toward public schools. Among our 39 partner organizations are two school districts, three universities and one college, which makes this model forest an ideal forum for pooling resources and knowledge. We also have research organizations within our partnerships, allowing us access to scientists willing to provide glimpses into their work. Our

education projects can involve one or more partner organizations and/or other organizations in the region.

In earlier years, efforts were concentrated on creating supplemental materials for classroom use and in-service training for teachers to complement the school curriculum. While we continue to develop products and sponsor teacher awareness events, more and more often our energies are directed towards programs that allow children to visit the woods and learn about forest ecosystems where they can see hardwoods and softwoods growing, hear birds among the branches and inhale the thick sweet aroma of maple sap evaporating.

One of the projects that Fundy Model Forest has helped institute is Healthy Habitats, which is geared to the grade four science curriculum. Classes are bussed to Elmhurst Outdoors, an outdoor education and recreation centre, which is also a partner of the Fundy Model Forest. Through an interpretative hike and various games, the students learn about concepts such as predator-prey relationships, carrying capacity, and forest succession.

Gig Keirstead, an elementary school teacher who retired last year after 26 years of teaching, designed and delivers the program along with his wife Denise Howlett, who is also a teacher. Over the years, Gig has earned many awards for programs he initiated in his lifelong dedication to have outdoors education a part of school activities. Thank-you notes he has received from classes reveal the extent to which many children appreciated the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural world through the Healthy Habitat program.

Several years ago, with the help of the Fundy Model Forest, Gig also developed an environmental ethics and forest management

course that he taught as an optional credit to high school students. The curriculum has been accepted by the provincial education department as an optional course available to any interested teacher.

National Forest Week is a yearly opportunity for the Fundy Model Forest to offer a range of activities to schools. Again, we try to come up with events that will allow young people “real world” experiences. We have taken high school classes to one of our woodlots where they learned about common forestry tools and instruments, such as prisms and GPS units, and were given a chance to try them out. We have taken high school classes on interpretative walks through demonstration sites, explaining some of the factors a woodlot owner or forest manager must take into consideration in their management decisions, and then giving them the opportunity to voice what their goal would be if the woodlot were theirs and how they would balance different values.

This year we are partnering with several organizations to put together two “Kids in the Forest” activity days — one in Fredericton at the Atlantic Forestry Centre/UNB woodlot and another at Elmhurst Outdoors, which is between Saint John and Sussex. We hope to have about 400 grade five to seven students take part.

Each year we are one of the sponsors of the provincial Envirothon competition. Again, we provide opportunities for teams to visit one of our demonstration woodlots and learn how scientific knowledge about soil, water and other issues is applied through best management practices in a working forest.

We have worked with local Girl Guide and Boy Scout troops. Three years ago, with the assistance of two of our partners (UNB Faculty



of Forestry and Environmental Management and Elmhurst Outdoors), we organized a Forestry Day during a district Girl Guide camp. Among the activities were tree identification, an interpretative hike and other games.

Fundy Model Forest believes it is important that young people, especially elementary school children, be able to learn about the natural world. We also hope to spark an interest in forestry as a field of study. Enrolments in forestry programs are dropping across Canada. We try to show that there is a wide range of career paths open to those who choose a forestry education. We also hope that by working with schools we are helping create informed decision makers of the future.

Natural Resources Canada, through the Canadian Forest Service, initiated and continues to support the Canadian Model Forest Program. More information about our projects and organization can be found at www.fundymodelforest.net. To learn more about Model Forests throughout Canada, visit the Canadian Model Forest Network website at www.modelforest.net. Teaching kits and other materials are available on request.

Barb Scott is the communications coordinator for the Fundy Model Forest.

Losing My Religion

by Allan Crawford

In the last issue of *Pathways*, the article by Simon Beames about losing our religion moved me, as I have had some experience losing my religion and the confidence of a “true believer.” The volume of “critical theory” and financial constraints suggests that the path ahead for outdoor educators is to make our own way. The article starts with the notion that the 1990s were good for outdoor education, and at Dorothy Walters’ celebration of life it was evident the goodness went back farther than that. We are losing our priests, our field centres and our funding to sustain people willing to take leadership in changing times.

What made Beames’ article so poignant after the fall conference of COEO was my sense that not only have outdoor educators lost their funding, but they have lost their way. They have lost their religion and are in danger of losing their spirit.

At the outset, let me say this very clearly: Outdoor educators are the salt of the Earth and the light of the world. We must continue to ask questions but we must never doubt that we make a difference. Outdoor educators do great and important work by meeting people where they are and helping them attain a higher level of understanding about their place in the world — and not by grading course work. Isn’t it interesting how challenge and community for the least able “student” has been dropped from the curriculum? I have heard it said: “Teach to failure and then teach the failure.” Interesting in these times when our failures can often be solved by hitting the reset button.

Having said that, I see several problems:

1. Education vs. Recreation
2. Accountability and Responsibility
3. The Profile of Today’s Youth

1. Education vs. Recreation

We have easily been tricked into believing that education in outdoor education is paramount because most of us were first and foremost trained as teachers. The “education not recreation argument” is an example of that slippery slope. We have clung to “complex education theories” and squeezed ourselves so that we fit the curriculum. While doing so we have not taken a natural integrated approach to experiencing our place in nature (Beames). Even though we may have included biology, astronomy, health and music in our experiential programs in the out of doors, nonetheless we are trapped. Once in the position of not being able to defend what we were doing for its academic sake alone, outdoor education became less valued than gradable classroom teaching.

Youth is a rite of passage and especially now as we become removed from community and environment. The youth most in need of the challenge and community that real (not the BUN stuff) outdoor programs deliver are unable to get it.

2. Accountability and Responsibility

The requirement for certification has become a problem — a way to put up barriers. We cannot raise funds unless we conduct risk assessment. In addition, gaining new qualifications costs money while the organization that does the testing is raising funds for their own survival rather than providing direct programming.

While we may appear to be becoming more professional, we may also be forgetting that in any reasonable and responsible action there are risks. Is a walk in the woods more dangerous than a walk in the city? Reading the literature one could quickly come to this conclusion. Consider, for example, the

response to the tragedy that occurred at the Royal Botanical Gardens.

In his article, Beames suggests that we should develop our own guiding principles. Here are some guiding principles for leading any outdoor education experience that I've learned from others:

*Everyone has a place on the trail.
Everyone is responsible for themselves.
We are on this journey together.
Everyone shares responsibility for safety.
Everyone respects the world around them.*

3. The Profile of Today's Youth

Consider that 80% of us live in urban settings. In Toronto, 52% of the population is visible minorities, many without a mental or cultural sense of Canadian wilderness. Schools are only open 187 days of the year and the testable 3Rs leave little room for development of real experiential learning at school.

Some 32% of our students are not finishing secondary school. While they are at school they are learning fewer real employable skills than previously. Where I work some schools record numbers as high as 23% on suspension, although I am told the real number is higher than that. In one school that I visit, on some days 40% of the student body is absent.

There are also non-school challenges, including Sesame Street with its encouragement of a 20-second attention span; the Adventure Bun including prepackaged adventures such as those provided by Canada's Wonderland and White Water Kingdom; and modern marketing that makes today's youth adverse to experiential education. The resilience, resourcefulness and responsibility required by an outdoor experience do not come naturally to many of the youth of today. We must nurture those qualities — not just in the classroom, but out in life as well.

My deepest admiration goes out to those who are able to connect youth with a natural environment within the school system. To

work in this cultural and teaching environment and still produce the well educated and wonderful youth I see every summer in our community centres indicates that Super Heroes and Saints are teaching in our schools.

How can we support those bright young people who are working in broad-based experiential education in spite of huge obstacles? How can we keep them from becoming discouraged while supporting their outdoor endeavours? We must support them in solid, sustainable and supported work. It is no good that the things that have shaped the strength and spirit of outdoor education have become twisted into a testable subject or consumable commodity. Even present day leaders such as Richard Louv are falling into this trap. He recently applauded the suggestion of Liz Baird, director of school programs for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, that we can create a logo that could be adapted by localized groups that take children out of doors, or a sticker that says "I Took My Kid Outside" to be worn after the deed is done. "After the deed is done" just about sums it up. Education doesn't just happen in schools anymore than religion just happens in religious buildings.

At the Ripples conference at Camp Tawingo a year ago, I found it a little troubling that very few outdoor educators attended the presentation by Andrew Brookes at the end of the last day. Andrew Brookes came all the way from Australia. He was seen as a person who profoundly challenged us about what we claim we can do through outdoor education. He uses international examples to criticize our attempts in outdoor education to prove that we achieve the changes in behaviour that we claim to change.

I urge you to read his article. He argues that a lot of our evaluations are just storytelling. We can't prove that someone has changed after watching a magnificent sunset.

He didn't deny we are accomplishing something in the outdoor education business.

What he said was that we have to be careful about what we claim we do. Key for me was a story he told me privately about how his great grandfather stole a horse and was punished by being transported to Australia. I guess that experience changed his life and, even from a Neo-Hahnian critique, that weekend adventure changed someone's life! There is a learning in every experience if we just look for and reflect on it, not as education but as life. After the conference, I took Andrew Brookes for a tour of Toronto and we met up with Professor Kirk Wipper. (Wipper founded Camp Kandalore and the Peterborough Canoe Museum.) I wrote down something Brookes said to Wipper:

I am an optimist about outdoor education. Otherwise it wouldn't be worth the effort to try and get it right.

But how do we measure something in order to know we got it right? What can be done? I

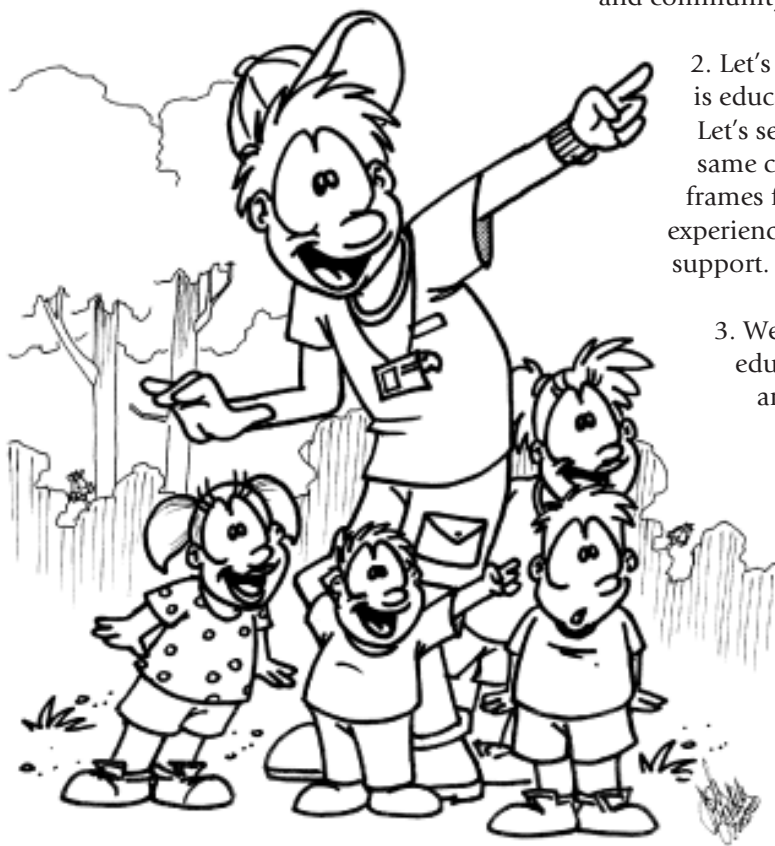
have some personal suggestions for outdoor educators. These are suggestions gleaned from my own experience as well as from my discussion with other educators such as Wipper and Brookes. You can make of them what you will.

1. Outdoor educators must be more optimistic. We must integrate not infiltrate. We have to integrate by standing up for our values and show how they work. It is not infiltration. It is valuing. We can no longer expect to move to another organization or create a new educational centre. Our ivory towers (our field centres) are in ruins having sucked away a disproportionate amount of our collected funding. Once we were many but now we are few. There are only a few centres left with sufficient sustainable resources to continue providing traditional outdoor education. Change the tradition by starting where we are, without huge transportation costs, without huge centres. Work with others and be willing to integrate, all the while not losing the spirit of challenge, responsibility and community.

2. Let's not argue anymore about what is education and what is recreation. Let's see them both as parts of the same continuum and equally valid frames for outdoor educational experiences and mutually worthy of support.

3. We must pursue outdoor education as a responsible way and not pander to cheap thrills. We must insist that those whom we lead must adhere to the highest levels of safety both physically and mentally.

Remember that the first job of those responsible for funding is to keep their jobs. Because their second job is to manage funds, their third job is to make sure you measure things —



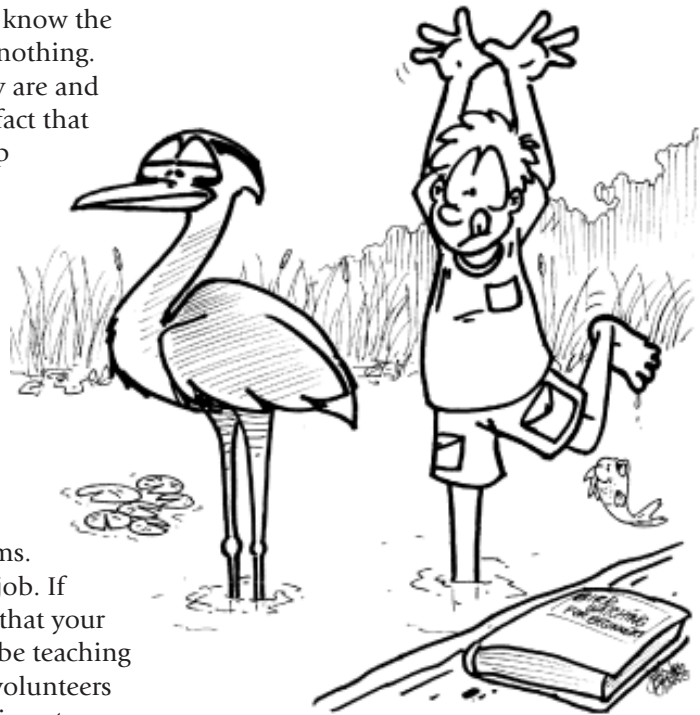
not to assist you to do things. They know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. We must expose them for what they are and how they use us. Stand firm in the fact that what we really do is not some cheap thrill; we seek to change lives by opening eyes to a healthy life on this Earth. It is the hardest work there is and some who participate are immediately not up to the challenge. This day and age may never accept the challenge. We will not save them all, but they were invited on the journey.

4. Be careful with volunteer programs. Volunteerism is great if you have a job. If you don't have a job it teaches you that your work is not valued. What it should be teaching us is that, if we start to depend on volunteers to do our work, what we are doing is not sustainable. Again, funders need a wakeup call that support for solid programs means paid people in order for them to be sustainable.

5. Dr. Gina Browne, a leader in the healthcare profession, and her colleagues clearly show in their report, *When the Bough Breaks*, that supported integrated services are more effective than non-integrated services. Integrating services such as education, recreation and community services can save money in the long run. What we fail to do is use the savings to develop and support integrated services. Outdoor educators in this province must immediately move towards that integration and support. Not in silos of education, events, crime reduction, health promotion and environmental awareness, but in the core values of what we do — create connections with the world and each other.

6. If anyone doubts that time spent telling stories around a campfire can change lives then they just haven't been listening or they haven't been there.

I hope that in losing religion we gain a spirit of community and purpose — one that joins us and strengthens us. Never doubt that



outdoor educators have made a difference, not with everyone and not forever, but we have made a difference.

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Allan Crawford works in a recreation partnership with a myriad of organizations and agencies in the inner City of Toronto. Youth programs and life-long wellness in a positive environment are the common ground vision.

COEO's Landmark Research Summary: *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education*

by Grant Linney

Over the past year, Andrea Foster (our first full-time employee thanks to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation) reviewed a wide array of current and international research into the multiple, powerful and lasting outcomes produced through utilizing outdoor and experiential education (OEE) as a key learning methodology. As co-authors, Andrea and I produced an 80-page document that reports the findings according to COEO's four stated values, namely, education for curriculum and community, character, wellbeing, and environment.

Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education also highlights "OEE in Action" descriptions of particular programs such as secondary school interdisciplinary studies, wilderness adventure pursuits, and urban-based activities including the exploration of local neighbourhoods and school ground greening projects. The publication features a professional layout and numerous great colour photographs of students powerfully connecting with themselves, others and their natural surroundings through outdoor learning. In addition to outlining exemplary examples of government leadership in establishing and making effective use of OEE, it also provides a number of evidence-based recommendations to the Ontario government as well as to Canadian postgraduate schools.

This is a landmark publication whose time has come. It is clear that OEE is needed now more than ever before. However, OEE will only assume its rightful place in educating for our future if we can convince our political leaders and many others of its value through the promotion of solid outcomes-based research. We hope that, through its widespread distribution, *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education* will contribute significantly to current discussions about making today's youth more active and comfortable in the outdoors, more confident about themselves

and their interactions with others, and more connected through their hands, heart and mind to the natural life support systems of this planet.

Executive Summary of *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education*

Outdoor and Experiential Education (OEE) is a vital learning methodology for today's children and young people. Its provision of safe, educator-framed and hands-on experiences in outdoor settings provides unique, vital and lasting benefits in terms of education for curriculum and community, education for character, education for wellbeing and education for environment. This document is a compelling synthesis of a wide variety of current outcomes-based research. It offers concrete evidence as to why OEE should become an essential and publicly funded part of education for the future.

OEE relates curricula to real-life situations. Research shows that students using OEE and the local environment as a comprehensive focus and framework for curricula demonstrate

- increased engagement with and enthusiasm for learning
- improved academic performance, including better language skills
- greater sense of pride and ownership in accomplishments
- a variety of substantially increased critical thinking skills.

OEE promotes lifelong physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. A growing body of studies suggests that

- contact with nature is as important to children as good nutrition and adequate sleep
- time spent outdoors correlates with increased physical activity and fitness in children

- exposure to green space reduces crime and increases individuals' general wellbeing and ability to focus
- children as young as five have shown a significant reduction in the symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder when they are engaged in outdoor activities in natural settings.

OEE educates for character. It provides powerful opportunities for extensive personal and interpersonal growth, particularly when trained outdoor educators are involved in all aspects of the program. Major research studies have found that

- many character traits are significantly enhanced as a result of OEE experiences, including creativity, enthusiasm, self-motivation, self-understanding, assertiveness, maturity, independence and self-confidence
- many social skills are also enhanced through OEE experiences, including cooperation, effective communication, decision making, problem solving, task leadership and social competence
- OEE promotes marked improvements in behaviour for special populations such as at-risk youth. Retention and continued growth in these areas is also evident as a result of such hands-on experiences.

Finally, and in COEO's opinion most importantly, **OEE directly exposes children and youth to the natural environment in ways that develop powerful, knowledgeable and lifelong connections essential for a healthy and sustainable future.** Leading Canadians such as Robert Bateman, Thomas Homer-Dixon and David Suzuki all strongly agree and are quoted in this document.

Research also shows that

- children who have early, sequenced and repeated experiences in the outdoors develop a kinship with nature that can evolve into an informed, proactive and lifelong stewardship of the natural environment
- there are great benefits in the use of outdoor education methodologies for environmental education purposes

- children love to be part of the solution — especially when they are able to see the effects of their positive interaction with nature first-hand.

As a result of these findings, The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) urges government, parents, volunteer leaders and other community members to actively reclaim the outdoors as a safe, fulfilling and essential part of growing up in this province and beyond.

COEO also makes the following major recommendations to the Ontario government:

1. Formally recognize the value of OEE as a unique and powerful learning methodology that particularly addresses the pressing need of education for environment as well education for character, wellbeing and curriculum.
2. Develop a comprehensive across-all-grades sequence of school-based outdoor activities that addresses the four values of OEE and particularly education for environment.
3. Provide funding to school boards so that every student is assured a minimum of two one-day OEE programs and one five-day OEE program at recognized outdoor education centres.
4. Mandate that OEE is a recognized area of specialization at Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels in all Ontario faculties of education.

Postgraduate schools of Canadian universities are also urged to promote further Canadian-based research into the various powerful and lasting benefits of OEE for all elementary and secondary school students.

For more information about *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education*, including details about how to order single or multiple copies, go to www.coeo.org/news.htm.

Grant Linney teaches at the Upper Canada College Norval Outdoor School. He refuses to retire because he is having too good a time.

How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School

Reviewed by Kathy Haras

National Research Council. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded ed.). Washington, DC: National Academy Press. ISBN: 0-309-07036-8.

I admit it — my participation on listservs mostly consists of lurking. I rarely initiate questions, offer suggestions or share useful resources with other members. And before I bought *How People Learn*, I had never felt compelled to act on someone's advice. But one particular listserv posting did such a great job of describing transfer — the ability to extend learning from one context into another — beyond my usual outdoor and adventure education perspective, I wanted to find out what else the National Research Council had to say.

How People Learn links studies on the science of learning to educational practices. Chapter 3, "Learning and Transfer," describes how learning occurs and highlights four features that facilitate students' abilities to adapt to new problems and settings. While I doubt the editors intended to describe effective outdoor experiential education (OEE) programs, they provided a wonderful resource for explaining the outdoor experiential learning process to supporters, who are convinced OEE is a good thing, and to skeptics, who have yet to appreciate the educational value of going outdoors.

OEE is effective when participants are able to do the following things:

1. Develop initial subject mastery. Mastery depends on the effective use of time and motivation to learn. Students are motivated by the ability to develop competence and make a contribution to their group. Well-designed activities allow students to choose the right level of challenge for them without sacrificing the group's success. OEE provides time for

deliberate practice and application of skills while the structured reflection that follows ensures that key ideas are highlighted.

Since greater amounts of material require more time to develop mastery, it is not surprising that the most effective adventure programs engage students for 14 hours or more (Bunting & Donley, 2002).

2. Understand at a higher level of abstraction. Effective reflection before, during or after an activity organizes information into a principle-based framework that helps students see the potential transfer implications of the topic to their everyday lives. Transfer is more likely to occur when students are aware that all tasks share common elements and they are able to define these similarities. Because OEE-based programs provide an opportunity to cover information in a different context and demonstrate a wide application for various topics, they support and enhance the classroom curriculum in a variety of ways.



3. Engage in an active, dynamic process.

Transfer requires that students be aware of themselves as learners. They need to actively monitor their strategies, consider their resources, assess their own readiness and receive feedback. As students participate in various outdoor education activities, the learning process engages them in a continuous cycle of uncertainty, choice, challenge, trial-and-error, shared group experience and reflection that builds on individual and group strengths.

4. Link their experience to previous learning.

Learning depends on connecting new information to an accurate foundation of previous knowledge. Uncorrected misunderstanding or knowledge gaps prevent transfer as does information that is irrelevant to the students' context. Adventure activities, for example, are often used to develop teamwork and cooperation. If students usually operate in a classroom that is competitive and individually focused, it is unlikely that they will develop values or attitudes that respect collaboration during an adventure program. It

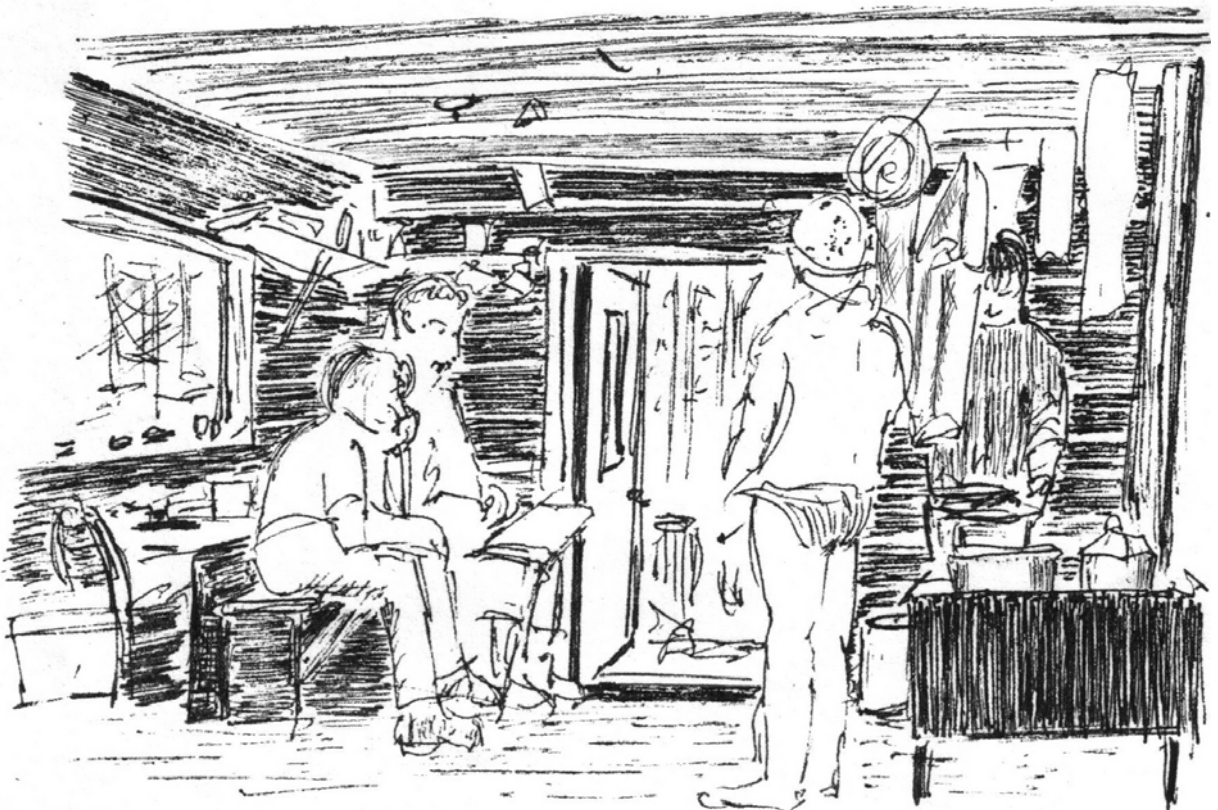
is even less likely they will apply cooperative skills and knowledge from the adventure program to their usual school environment.

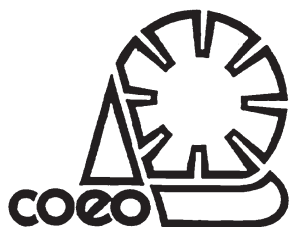
The other chapters of *How People Learn* are equally relevant to those working in the field of OEE. Reading this book will improve both your practice and your ability to convey to others why outdoor education works.

Reference

Bunting, C. J. & Donley, J. P. (2002). Ten years of challenge course research: A review of affective outcome studies. In M.D. Bialeschki, K.A. Henderson, A.B. Young, & R.G. Andrejewski (Eds.), *Research in outdoor education: Vol. 6* (pp. 158–159). Cortland NY: The Coalition for Education in the Outdoors.

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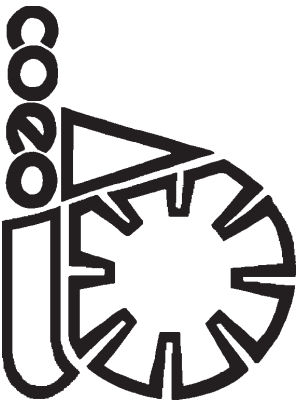
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