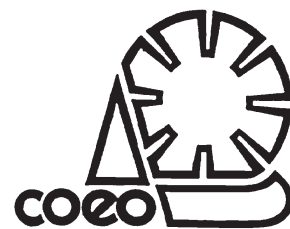


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Summer 2007, 19(4)



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.

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

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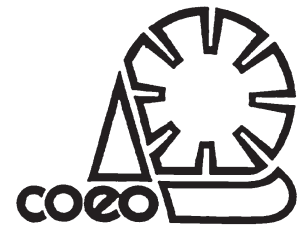
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Pathways is published four times a year for The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) and distributed to COEO members. Membership fees include a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

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Having just rummaged through “the box” of *Pathways*’ information and previous issues passed on to me as the new chair of the Editorial Board, it was all I could do to keep from reading the very first issues. Instead, I sat down to write my first “Editor’s Logbook” and thought about my own history with *Pathways*.

I have no specific memory of when I became aware of *Pathways*. I don’t remember reading a specific article, can’t picture a specific cover. Like canoeing, camping and cooking over a fire, it seems like *Pathways* has always just been around. I could always find the right copy when I needed it.

I stopped taking *Pathways* for granted when I was pursuing my PhD at Texas A&M University. Not only did finding a particular article require a request to interlibrary loans, it also required patience and planning ahead to ensure that the article would arrive before the due date of the particular paper I was working on. I didn’t think much about this interlibrary loan process (why would an institution in Texas subscribe to my local outdoor education journal?) or how unique *Pathways*’ balance of research and practice was until I started being approached by my fellow students.

More than once I had a conversation that went something like this:

- Hey, Kathy, you’re from Canada, right?
- Yes.
- From Ontario?
- Yes.
- Do you know about this outdoor education journal, *Trails* or *Paths* or something?
- Yes, *Pathways*.
- I need issue 15, number 2. Do you have it?

And I would send the individual to interlibrary loans, assuring them that the article they wanted would indeed arrive, with luck before their paper was due.

Given my surreal *Pathways*’ experiences in Texas, when I learned this winter that there was an opening for the chair of the Editorial Board, I considered what this position would entail only briefly before agreeing to take on the task. Somehow it seemed like the right thing to do, that in some way I would be coming full circle — from outdoor education student, to practitioner, to contributing COEO member.

My goal with this and all future issues of *Pathways* is to provide COEO members with a journal that is interesting, informative, immediately useful and individually relevant. To achieve this goal, the Editorial Board has tweaked the journal just a little bit. Our plan is for each issue to include a feature-length article on each of COEO’s four values — environment, well-being, character and curriculum — so that regardless of how you use outdoor education in your practice, each issue will have something for you. In addition, we’re introducing two new regular columns: “Tous Nos Voyageurs” will address diversity while “Watching Our Step” will focus on issues of risk management. Our hope is that this more deliberate approach will ensure that *Pathways* will continue to meet the needs of teachers, students and outdoor education practitioners.

Kathy Haras

Sketch Pad — Art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously provided by Orest Haras, who retired this March as principal of South Lincoln Secondary School in Smithville, Ontario.

This spring the provincial government announced a grant to school boards of \$35 million. That's \$7,500 per school to enhance programs for arts, physical education and outdoor education. When announcements like this are made, special interest groups complain that it's not enough and the government needs to do more. COEO is one of these groups and we have been advocating for provincial recognition of the value of outdoor experiential education (OEE) to Ontario's students for a long time.

Do we want government to do more? Absolutely! COEO advocates for a five-day residential experience for senior elementary students. If the province provided quality outdoor education experiences for *every* student in the province, guaranteeing one-day programs in grades two and four, and a two-night residential outdoor education experience in grade six, seven or eight, it would cost approximately \$70 million per year.

Work must continue to achieve these goals, but let's look at the positives of this announcement. By naming outdoor education in its press release for these grants, the province took an initial step in acknowledging that OEE should be a valued part of Ontario students' education. It also ensured that direct reference would be made to OEE in newspapers and on radio and television, thus raising the profile of OEE in the public eye. If we want the province to act further on our recommendations it will require pressure from parents saying they want funding for these programs to continue. In recent surveys climate change and the environment are quickly catching up to healthcare as Ontarians' number one priority for the government. OEE can be a major part of climate change and environmental education for students. I am sure this is partly why outdoor education was listed specifically in this announcement.

The next step is to deal with the grant's details. While \$7,500 per school may seem like a substantial amount of money, the arts and physical education programs are also looking for their share. Don't misunderstand me: I'm for visual arts, music and physical education too, but I'm President of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario. We need to show how OEE can contribute to these disciplines (art programs in natural surroundings, physical activity in the form of hikes and skiing, and so on). COEO's plan is to provide every board of education with copies of our research summary. We hope it will help them direct the funds effectively and will ensure outdoor education gets its fair share. COEO members and our supporters need to communicate with the boards directly and guide them to use this money appropriately. This announcement is step one, and we need to continue moving forward.

In April COEO partnered with the Association for Canadian Educational Resources (ACER) and other groups in sharing a booth at the Toronto Green Living Show. Having a presence at an event where we can engage the general public was new for COEO. Our volunteers spoke to many people about the importance of outdoor learning to connect students with a world that is environmentally threatened. We heard positive comments from parents whose children had participated in OEE programs, teachers who wanted to find out more about OEE for their students and other folks who were glad to find out OEE is happening at all! Lots of people asked about cutbacks to programs giving us an opportunity to encourage them to speak to school board administrations and provincial politicians to show support for these programs. Thanks to Judy Kramer, Jane Wadden and Steve and Astrid Turner for volunteering their time and to Alice Casselman for organizing this.

Shane Kramer

Outdoor Education and Environmental (Make that Nature) Learning

by Julie Johnston

Outdoor education cannot *not* be about nature learning. Just as David Orr (1992) says that all education is environmental education, so too all outdoor education teaches something about the natural world — either that it matters or that it doesn't.

According to COEO, "outdoor education directly exposes participants to our natural environment in ways that engender personal connections, knowledge, skills and a lifelong environmental [nature] ethic." This is why outdoor educators must also see themselves as environmental educators. If you're a ropes course expert and aficionado without a naturalist's bone in your body, that might seem unfair. But everybody can model respectful interest in nature, think ecologically, encourage play in wild nature, use the environment as an integrated context for learning, and share the magic of natural history and nature connecting — all without any training in environmental science, and no matter where their outdoor teaching takes them.

Model Respectful Interest in Nature

Every time we're with learners, they're observing us, whether consciously (you know those kids!) or unconsciously. They're taking us in, whether we mean for that to happen or not. They're watching to see what choices we make, and noticing whether we model a nature ethic.

They see whether we're friends with the rest of nature. Do we notice and greet the birds and animals we encounter? Do we celebrate the turning of the seasons? Do we move branches gently out of the way, as the living things they are, or let them break off? Learners listen to the language we use and the metaphors we choose (or choose to avoid). Are we still

saying things like "killing two birds with one stone"? Or is our language less violent and more nature-friendly? (There's always "doing two things at once," or something more poetic such as "feeding two birds from one hand.") Do we use "the environment" (a mechanized, dead, inorganic view of the world), or "nature" (a time-honoured word connoting aliveness and beingness)?

Joseph Cornell (1998) suggests that we allow a sense of joy to permeate outdoor learning experiences, "whether in the form of gaiety or calm attentiveness." As part of our responsibility to participants, we have to avoid giving them the impression that nature is an overly dangerous place. We can do this by teaching them how to treat nature carefully, like a friend, and by fostering biophilia, our innate affinity for life and nature.

Learners notice our ethics and attitudes in action. Is the outdoors our home and our nurturance, or merely a setting? Do we enjoy the journey, or simply hurry to the next activity site? Do we stop to pick up litter along the path or pass it by? Do we share our care and concern for the Earth (in age-appropriate ways) or communicate disinterest?

Do we talk out loud about the joy nature gives us and our appreciation for nature's gifts? Part of our teaching practice must be to exaggerate that which we want to instill, and so we have to make a point of communicating our environmental ethic and affinity for nature.

Think Ecologically

Many outdoor education programs include icebreakers, warm-up activities, initiative tasks, cooperative games, ropes courses and other adventure elements. Helping people work

together better will almost always be a good thing, and creating a sense of community is essential for being eco-friendly. And perhaps our environmental crisis can be attributed in part to the inability of human beings (mainly in our Euro-American culture) to come up with sustainable ways of living together.

Beyond this, however, children (and adults, too) need to learn the principles of ecology (how life works), and they need to see the connections between human beings and the rest of nature. The urgent timeframe of global climate change means that any learning that doesn't contribute to these understandings could be part of the problem.

But how can we integrate environmental learning into outdoor education without drastically changing program elements, and while still contributing to group dynamics and character building? It isn't easy, but it is simple: We need to stretch what we do as outdoor educators in another direction by "ecologicalizing" outdoor education. Learning ecological principles experientially and seeing the interconnections between humans and the natural world — outdoors, whether deliberately or in passing — will be easier for learners if we set the stage for them.

Ecologicalizing outdoor education means looking for those principles and connections in all of our activities. For example, in *Sharing Nature with Children*, Joseph Cornell's ice breaker activities (which he calls "awakening enthusiasm") are all nature-related — placed-based or otherwise focused on animals and plants. Give Chuck the Chicken (I've never figured out if Chuck is a proper noun or a verb!) a miss, but try fun nature-oriented activities like Cornell's Pyramid of Life or Owls and Crows, or Rediscovery's Don't Bungle the Jungle, or Bear, Bug, Frog (Henley, 1996).

Follow-up to an initiative task that demands "group think" can lead to a discussion of behaviour of fish in schools or birds in flocks.

How did participants communicate with each other? Why? How do the strategies they came up with to meet their challenge compare with fish or birds dealing with a challenge such as a predator? (See www.ualberta.ca/~publicas/folio/44/17/front.html for a fascinating look at research in mathematical biology.)

A group activity that demands cooperation can lead to participants discussing the similarities between humans and other social animals. For example, at the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve, Rick Whitteker helps participants learn how wolf behaviour can act as a metaphor for effective group functioning, character development and leadership.

That so many roles need filling to keep someone safe on a high ropes course exemplifies the connectedness of the living web — what happens to the web of safety if one participant falls down on the job? And how does this compare with losing one species or degrading one aspect of an ecosystem? Let's talk about these things with participants.

If your outdoor education program already includes lots of hands-on nature connecting, you can highlight and reinforce ecological understandings by pointing out or asking for evidence of nature's gifts or ecosystem services in action. This could be a wonderful ambulatory activity. (For a primer on ecosystem services, see www.actionbioscience.org/environment/esa.html.)

Nature abides by rules. Games work well and reflect nature if they combine rules with cooperation and some "friendly competition" (in the sense that every individual is doing his or her best). Beware of overstressing competition — the goal, it seems, of our culture. Ecology relies on mutualism, and life relies on synergistic symbiosis. In nature, "the fittest" is the one who fits into its ecosystem best. This is a lesson our culture desperately needs to learn.

Encourage Undirected Play and Quiet Reflection in Wild Nature

As outdoor educators, how often do we allow learners to simply “be” in the natural world? More often, we believe that participants have to be supervised at all times, or “occupied” from the moment they get off the bus (or wake up in the morning) to the moment they get back on the bus (or head to bed). Got a few minutes before the bus arrives or the meal is served? Don’t fill every moment with sports or games. Let participants simply be. Let them “waste time” in a natural spot. Nature teaches us at a subconscious level.

More and more research (see for example Foster & Linney, 2007) is showing the importance of wild nature in the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual development and wellbeing of children (and adults). Outdoor educators have a vital role to play. For some participants, visiting a local park, naturalized school yard or outdoor education centre will be their only opportunity to spend time in a natural environment.

For young ones, “wild nature” can be a postage stamp-sized overgrown vacant lot — the wildness comes from being allowed to play

imaginatively, undirected. Older participants might appreciate a chance to just chill out in the woods, or on the fringes of a pond.

Remember that unorganized, “non-adult mediated” time is a true gift to children, stimulating positive social interactions and decreasing bullying; improving cognitive development, reasoning, observation skills and creativity; buffering the impact of stress; and instilling a sense of wonder, oneness and peace in them. An affinity for nature and a positive environmental ethic grow out of children’s regular play in the natural world (White, 2004). Whenever possible, let’s give participants — and the Earth — this gift.

Use the Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC) for Learning

Never heard of EIC? Check out the American study that showed far-reaching and encouraging benefits from this framework of interdisciplinary, collaborative, student-centred and hands-on learning (www.seer.org). The observed benefits include

- better student performance in reading, writing, math, science and social studies
- a decrease in discipline and classroom management problems
- increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning
- greater pride and ownership in accomplishments.

EIC-based learning is not simply learning about the environment or developing environmental awareness. According to *Closing the Achievement Gap* (Leiberman & Hoody, 2002), it focuses primarily on “using a school’s surroundings and community as a framework within which students can construct their own learning.” In helping education move away from compartmentalization to this comprehensive, integrated framework for learning, outdoor educators might finally have found the rationale for secure and continued funding for their programs. Outdoor learning should be seen as fundamentally important for all education.



Using EIC will also contribute to ecological literacy, as students start to see themselves as “members and citizens of the biotic community,” as Aldo Leopold once put it.

Share the Magic of Natural History and Nature Connecting

Each of us comes to outdoor education for different reasons, but it usually has something to do with peak experiences in the outdoors when we were children. Nature inspires. Share that inspiration with participants. Even if yours was a childhood adventure experience and you’re still an adrenaline junkie, there’s probably something inside that beats to the Earth’s rhythm. Think back to special times and favourite places. Where did you first feel independence? How did you build your first fort? Where did you sit with your first love? What was your first edible wild? When did you first sleep outside?

Teach less and share more, Joseph Cornell suggests: “I believe it is important for an adult to share his inner self with the child. Only by sharing our deeper thoughts and feelings do we communicate to, and inspire in others, a love and respect for the Earth.” Cornell also suggests that we be receptive, listening to the children and being alert to what nature is doing around us at any given moment. “Look and experience first; talk later,” he tells us. Encourage participants to become attuned with the natural world.

Cornell (1998) also has advice for those who can’t play “Twenty Trees” or “Twenty Birds”: “Don’t feel badly about not knowing names. The names of plants and animals are only superficial labels for what those things really are. Just as your own essence isn’t captured by your name” Avoid naming and labelling things, agrees Steve Van Matre (1990). Practise sharing and doing, rather than showing and telling. Focus on processes of life versus parts of life, “emphasizing magic and meaning instead of names and numbers.”

Natural history doesn’t have to be about facts and figures; it’s about learning that good

neighbours come in all species. Every species has its story, which is the best way to learn about life.

Conclusion — Let Nature Be the Teacher

A colleague remarked recently that with cuts to outdoor education, the disconnect of many young people from their natural environment has increased, especially in urban centres. And with cuts to environmental education, too . . . Well, it’s time for outdoor educators and environmental educators to claim their common ground and collectively call for a transformation — to make nature the teacher and the Earth matter, more than anything else in the world.

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Curriculum-based Learning — Museum Style

by Stephanie Yuill

Conserving, preserving and protecting: words near and dear to the hearts of biologists and historians, a way of life for ecologists and curators. Yet in the past, rarely did the two paths cross. Natural heritage practitioners focussed on biodiversity while cultural heritage folks zeroed in on artifacts and their provenance.

Fortunately, this way of thinking is rapidly disappearing. From the World Conservation Union to front-line practitioners, there is increasing recognition of the interaction between nature and people, and a growing integration of environmental and social issues.

This also rings true for natural and cultural heritage educators as the line between nature and culture education slowly blurs. Ten years ago, a bat program might have concentrated on echolocation. Today, such a program might revolve around mosquitoes, humans and the role of bats in preventing the spread of West Nile virus.

The Flip Side of the Coin

Some readers may have experience in both the natural and cultural heritage sectors. For others, the world of museums, archives and galleries may seem like another planet. I am fortunate to have instructed on both sides of the heritage coin and my goal is to better acquaint you with the world of curriculum-based cultural heritage education.

As educators, we are bound by a number of common threads beyond our passion for the topic. The following is from an e-mail entitled "You May Be a Museum Professional If" Yet, it is remarkably easy to substitute the title for "You May Be an Outdoor Educator If"

- You tell your kids to use the back door and you've accidentally called it the school group entrance.

- To you, "Grant" isn't just some guy's first name.
- The idea of directional signage being designed with 1-inch medium grey letters on a light grey background makes sense to you.
- Without thinking, you put a colon in every title. Recipes: Relatives' Reflections; Susie's Lunch: A Bagged Buffet; To Do: The Undone Retrospective.

The [Curriculum] Ties That Bind Us

Perhaps the biggest tie linking natural and cultural heritage educators is the provincial curriculum. From September to June our work lives revolve around rubrics, exemplars and programming. We ask and answer questions and we revel when comprehension steals across students' faces. The school year has begun and for many educators, so has the madness.

Museums, archives and galleries have a wide variety of grades and subjects they link with their programming. For many, this is their bread and butter. Some sites see literally thousands of students during the school year compared to hundreds of visitors during the summer months. From a financial standpoint, the more curriculum-based programs the higher the revenue. And in this climate of budget reductions and government program cuts, revenue is important.

It's All in the Timing

Programs themselves run from one hour, to one day, to one day and night. The Markham Museum in Markham for example, runs a 60-minute preschool program on pioneer life exploring how people travelled before cars.

In northern Ontario, the Red Lake Museum offers a multitude of one-day programs including a grade five program on the role of

Aboriginal peoples in the fur trade and a grade eight program on how treaties were made and the affects they had on Aboriginal peoples.

Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg offers an incredible 22-hour Village Overnight Live-In Adventure for grades three to eight. Students wear 1860's clothing, participate in various hand-on activities, assist with farm chores and attend a one-room schoolhouse. The living accommodations are in two historical residences that are, fortunately for the students, outfitted with a modern kitchen and washrooms.

The Cost of Doing Business

Most museums charge on a per student basis depending on program length. On average, the price is approximately \$2.00 per hour per student but each site also has artifacts, staff and other related expenditures to take into consideration when pricing a school program.

While program fees seem reasonable, it is often transportation to and from the site that makes the experience cost prohibitive. Chartering a 48-seat school bus in Toronto costs \$177 for in-city travel; the \$1.61 per kilometre charge for travel outside the city limits increases the cost substantially.

In response to shrinking funds and increasing costs, many sites are reaching out to schools by offering in-class visits. The Dufferin County Museum and Archives produces road shows: one-hour presentations by educators in the classroom. Programs are interactive, hands-on and adaptable to all grade levels. My favourite is the Immigrant Trunk, where students examine why the trunk is a specific size, what the new settlers brought in it and why they brought what they did. An ingenious marketing strategy, the Museum also offers a complimentary day pass to the Museum and Archives so that each participating student can continue to explore his or her community history.

Education kits are another way museums are reaching out to students. Kits, which are crates

containing artifacts, student activity cards and other learning materials, are available for rent from participating sites. As the St. Catharines Museum quotes, "It's like getting your own museum expert in a box!"

Costs are generally pre-determined depending on rental period. The museum in St. Catharines charges \$35.00 for ten days. Their two program kits, "Let's Pretend We're Pioneers" and "Medieval Life," contain lesson plans and student activities suitable for full-class participation.

Some larger facilities are taking a two-pronged approach. The Royal Ontario Museum, for example, rents out two different-sized kits. The larger school cases provide objects/artifacts, resource and reference materials, and student activity cards. While cases can be rented for as little as two weeks, teachers can rent them for the entire school year for \$375. Smaller resource boxes can be used by teachers to highlight specific points of a topic or by students for small group work and independent study. These boxes are available for two-, four- and twelve-week periods or the entire school year (\$230.00).

Connecting the Curriculum

So what do museums, archives and galleries do for outdoor experiential education programming? How do they tie into the provincial curriculum? History is just one of the core subjects museums draw from. Music, visual arts, drama and dance, and language can all be integrated into programming in conjunction with key curriculum areas. For example, while developing a grade two Traditions and Celebrations program, word searches and crossword puzzles can be developed to fulfill the writing component of language.

Science and technology can be also found in museum programming. Some sites have natural areas where they do environmental education and sometimes the twinning of cultural and natural heritage simply fits. A

favourite program of mine was Two Hundred Years of Recycling, created for a grade five Conservation of Energy class. The premise was that, out of necessity, pioneers reduced, reused and recycled and today's generations can learn energy conservation from these early environmental practices.

There are some recurring subject areas found within the cultural heritage sector. The table

below provides an overview of the grades, strands, subjects and related topics commonly found in museum programming.

The Fun Stuff

Like environmental education, programming in museums can be fun, exciting and terribly amusing. I once 'taught' in a one-room schoolhouse at Muskoka Heritage Place in

Subject	Strand	Grade	Related Topic(s)
Civics		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed Citizenship • Purposeful Citizenship • Active Citizenship
Geography		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human–Environment Interaction
History		7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New France • British North America • Conflict and Change
		8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confederation • Canada: A Changing Society
	Canadian History since World War I	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities: Local, National and Global • Change and Continuity • Citizenship and Heritage • Social, Economic and Political Structures • Methods of Historical Inquiry and Communications
		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian History and Politics Since 1945
		12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada: History, Identity and Culture
Native Studies		9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing Aboriginal Cultures
		10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
Politics		11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Politics and Citizenship
Social Studies	Heritage and Citizenship	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships, Rule and Responsibilities
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditions and Celebrations
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Settlements in Upper Canada
		6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations People and European Explorers
	Canada and World Connections	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Community
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban and Rural Communities
		4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada's Provinces, Territories and Regions
		5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspects of Citizenship and Government in Canada

Huntsville. While instructing on the Union Jack, I would ask students to read a passage from a primer explaining how the flag was a combination of the flags from England (St. George), Ireland (St. Patrick) and Scotland (St. Andrew). Many an unknowing student read out loud that the flag was composed of standards from *Street George*, *Street Patrick* and *Street Scotland*.

Indeed, it's typically the students' responses that make a program memorable. At Eildon Hall Memorial Museum in Sutton we played an artifact identification game as part of a grade three Early Settlement in Canada program. Items included a bed warmer, curling iron and snuffbox. But it was a 19th century tea box with accompanying lock and key that stumped students the most. As a hint, I would tell them it stored something so important it had to be locked up at all times. Guesses of what it housed included jewellery and keys but by far the most guessed was alcohol!

Beth Sinyard at the Elman Campbell Museum in Newmarket runs a terrific grade two Traditions and Celebrations program called "Cards, Candies and Celebrations: Holidays in Victorian Newmarket."

When asked how pioneers cooked, she reports at least one student invariably answers, "With a microwave." When we ask how pioneers travelled in the winter, one response is usually, "Snowmobile." The candle snuffer becomes a candle sniffer, a chamber pot a soup bowl. As to what qualifies as winter vegetables, in these days of superstores, students' replies often include lettuce and watermelon.

Finally

As the world changes and transforms, so too does education. Today's educators are challenged by increasing multiculturalism, exponentially advancing technology and a multitude of changing climates (political, social, economic and environmental).



Museum and environmental educators are not exempt from this evolution. Increasingly, we are recognizing the ties between humans and the world around us.

In 1753 Voltaire stated that Canada is, "a country covered with snows [sic] and ices [sic] eight months of the year. . . ." An embellishment? Perhaps. Yet it illustrates the profound impact the weather and climate had on early explorers and settlers. They were forced to meet the elements head on and this in turn shaped the pioneer experience.

Conversely, awareness of the human impact on the climate is just now approaching its zenith. We now recognize that our actions have actually shaped and changed the climate. As educators, we can help tackle these issues in part by increasingly incorporating human-environment interactions into programming.

Stephanie Yuill has 'taught' in one-room schoolhouses and provincial parks, living history villages and conservation areas for several years.

How a Climbing Wall Became Part of a NEW Physical Education Program

by Gordon Cook, Al Boyan, Alice Mendelsohn, Alison Green and Colleen Woolvett

The introduction of a NEW physical education (PE) program at Ancaster Senior Public School had, at its root, the desire to make physical activity an inclusive domain for both athletic students and those not so inclined. With the growing concerns over the rapid and consistent rise in childhood obesity rates it was evident that the current model of competitive sport skill-related programs was not meeting the needs of many students. In an effort to address these concerns, it was necessary to look for ways to engage students that would meet their needs and interests.

To accomplish this end, it was determined that many of the goals we were attempting to meet could be addressed through the use of a climbing wall. The climbing wall was seen as a legitimate educational activity that would encourage the physical, mental, social and emotional growth of each participant. So many benefits could be accrued through involvement in wall climbing and it became an integral part of our NEW PE program. The new model of PE was now to consist of the traditional skills-related program (leading to competitive game sports), fitness classes utilizing selectorized strength training machines, cardio machines, interactive gamebikes and other aerobic training equipment AND . . . a climbing wall.

Planning for the first regular-use, permanent installed climbing wall in the Hamilton–Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) was a new and uncharted area for schools. Although climbing is clearly an accepted activity for students in schools (appearing in the OPHEA 2004 guidelines, by which PE safety is governed) it was heretofore not an activity included in the regular and daily PE programs of schools in Hamilton. For this reason, there was a great deal of uncertainty

and scepticism regarding the appropriateness of it as a full-time activity in school. In gaining acceptance it was critical that risk management be a primary focus and that all possible concerns for safety be addressed. The combination of good equipment and facility combined with appropriate training and supervision had to be the basis of a successful ongoing in-school climbing program.

In January 2006 Adventureworks Associates, Inc. built and installed the new climbing wall. Following installation, eight teachers and two administrators embarked on a series of training sessions to obtain required certification. Within this group, there was a wide variation in the levels of experience ranging from non-climbers to regular participants in the activity. Through the 16 hours of training during evenings, a sense of camaraderie and team spirit developed among staff who were involved. Each recognized the unique role they would undertake within the NEW PE program and support for one another was evident.

Following completion of the training and testing, the next step was to open the facility up for parents to view and ask questions, the number of which seemed to grow as the enthusiasm for the new element in our program came closer to being implemented. In February we held a Demonstration and Information Evening for parents to see the wall in use and ask questions about the program for the climbing wall. Throughout the meeting, school staff and Brian Lisson from Adventureworks Associates, Inc. discussed the inherent risks of the activity while focusing and stressing the elements of safety involved during use (equipment, ropes, structure and trained staff supervising). During the evening, teachers demonstrated and

modeled safe climbing and belaying practices for parents.

The next step was to obtain parental consent for student involvement and use of the facility. The HWDSB legal staff prepared a document entitled *Voluntary Assumption of Risk* for review and signatures of parent and student. Although parents do not have the legal right to sign away future rights of their children and students under the age of 18 cannot legally enter into a contract, this paperwork was viewed as a necessary step in the process of gaining approval and consent for student use. (A similar consent form was required for student involvement and use of the fitness room and strength training equipment).

The Assumption of Risk Forms were then distributed to all parents of all students along with a letter outlining the intended program and benefits. No student would be allowed to be involved in the climbing wall portion of the NEW PE program without a signed consent form.

At long last with over 90% of student forms returned, the program began after March Break. Since it was so late in the school year and students had been anticipating the construction and use of the climbing wall (after fundraising to make it a reality), staff involved in the program determined that it was important to get students on the wall and climbing. Students were given opportunities to do some bouldering activities. Then, the time came to go vertical. Students were harnessed and belayed by trained teachers. A special schedule of wall climbing supervision was developed that consisted of approximately 15 periods of wall climbing per week. Additionally, some staff remained after school one evening per week providing opportunities for more students to climb. The goal was to provide climbing opportunities to all students in order to get them “on the wall” as soon as possible. This goal was accomplished through the diligence and support of trained staff.

In April 2006, we began training grade seven students who had demonstrated leadership qualities and responsible attitudes on how to belay. This training took place during lunch hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and lasted approximately four weeks. This occurred because of a dedicated staff team who volunteered their lunch hours to make this possible. The training schedule provided sufficient training time for belayers but still allowed for Tuesday and Thursday intramural athletics activities to continue uninterrupted. This belay training was and continues to be a very popular program for many students who regularly request involvement in the training through voluntary participation. It is a goal they set and that may, in part, underlie some positive behaviour in order to qualify for this leadership opportunity. The initial goal was to have students fully trained and ready to belay during open house demonstrations in May 2006.

This goal was accomplished and during the open house event our student belaying team demonstrated their skills under teacher supervision for other students, parents and staff. This provided a wonderful occasion to showcase and celebrate the accomplishments of our staff and students working together in a strong “learning community.”

September 2006 began a new year and as a grade seven and eight only school, 50% of our student population turns over each year. A whole new group of students arrived with wide eyes and desire to be a part of this new experience they had been hearing about.

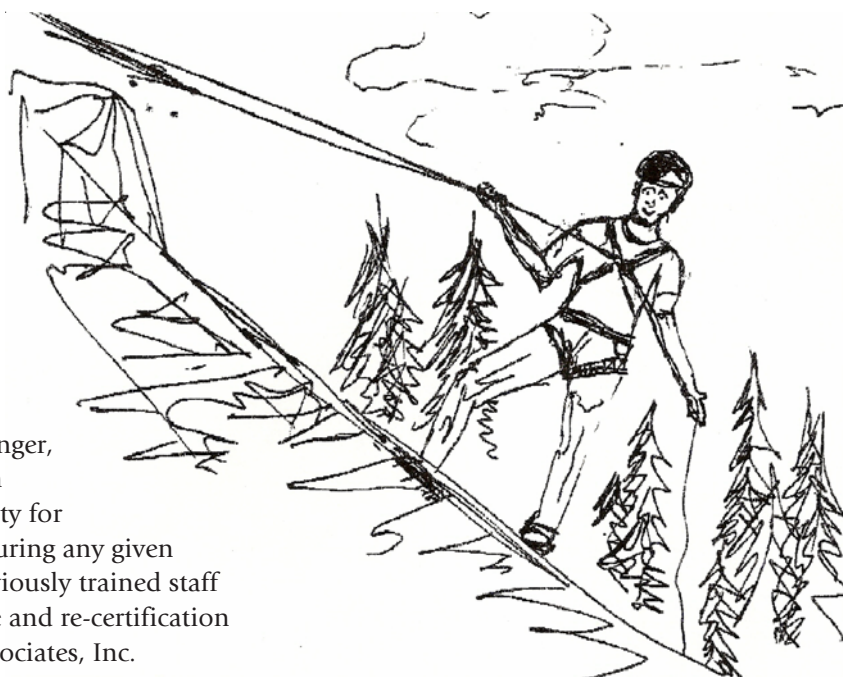
The new school year was an opportunity for staff supervisors to do some changing and experimenting now that they had a greater comfort level and understanding of the climbing wall experience. Climbing routes were changed — some to more challenging for those with experience under their “harnesses,” others to more attainable for our new students with little or no experience. The objective was to create an inviting environment where our

grade eight students with experience would continue to feel challenged while our new students would gain some experience and success with bouldering and easier routes on the wall.

A climbing wall schedule was developed based on our new timetable and longer, 60-minute periods, which provided more opportunity for more students to climb during any given period. Additionally, previously trained staff received a training update and re-certification from Adventureworks Associates, Inc.

Teachers were now gaining greater skill at developing lesson plans and activities using the wall as an integral part of our NEW PE program. A further goal was set to train *all* students in order to facilitate and maximize the safe use of the climbing wall for belaying and climbing of more students throughout the year. This plan involved the training of all students in harnessing, knot tying, boulder activities and ongoing safety procedures. By January 2007 all students had received training in harnessing and climbing safety. At this time teachers reflected on the program to date and it was determined that, in order to get more students climbing, knots would become part of the belay training. Up to this point, teachers had tied knots and some groups were trained during the harnessing lessons. It was felt that this was too time consuming and so the lesson plans were changed to reflect a different approach. March 2007 saw the start of training the grade seven leadership group to prepare them for next year. The goal is to train 50 to be ready for next year; to date 24 have been trained.

The climbing wall program continues to be one that generates high student interest and involvement (about 96% of students climb). It is also a program that our incoming students



look forward to. Sustaining the program given the demands on our staffing and trained supervisors is an ongoing challenge.

The climbing wall as envisioned is an integral part of our NEW PE program. In total the data that have been tracked have indicated fewer office referrals, fewer student suspensions and increased student involvement in our combined skill and fitness base program.

Climbing is a demanding, challenging and intense activity that has numerous and significant benefits for students observed by our staff:

- Works all of the muscle groups
- Emphasises safety, which helps create a good learning environment
- Increases students' perseverance and trust and develops their goal setting, problem solving, team work and communication skills
- Enhances self-esteem while contributing to overall physical fitness levels, including cardiovascular and muscle endurance as well as strength and coordination development (students will begin wearing Polar Heart Rate monitors to track cardio response during climbing)

- Enables students to recognize that hard work and training pay off; provides real life experiences in working through and meeting challenging situations
- Develops skills that can be transferred from climbing to every day life

Climbing wall activities

- encourage the development of students' self-confidence, personal trust, willpower and courage
- help students learn to focus and concentrate
- enable students to travel beyond their personal comfort zones into the world of adventure-based learning
- provide students with opportunities to learn about and practice important life virtues such as patience, perseverance and persistence
- focus heavily on developing communication skills, including listening, speaking and writing through reflection.

Journals relating to student perceptions of the climbing wall program include the following comments:

"It was great for making your arms and legs stronger because you're pulling and pushing yourself up the wall."

"It was just what the school was waiting for to reinvigorate the same old gym classes we've all had to go through since the first day of school".

"To be a belayer you have to be very responsible and trustworthy because you are responsible for the climber's life."

"The rock climbing wall is a great thing to have in our school!"

"I like the activity when you get to climb with a ball in your hand. That's tough to do."

"I always spend 20 minutes trying to harness myself for about two minutes of reaching like crazy."

As an educational community, Ancaster Senior has chosen to challenge the growing childhood obesity rates and assist students in finding their own activity niche. This is especially important for those who do not see

themselves as athletes and for whom competitive sports hold no interest. We see our challenge as one to discover healthy activity-based life skills that may be utilized in after-school and vacation-time programs as "connecting points" for each of our students. Best practice and evidence-based research points to the importance of positive alternative activities such as sports, music, dance and theatre as positive influences that matter and reduce risk behaviours.

Our program has aimed to expose students to multiple opportunities for activity-based involvement while encouraging a sense of responsibility for personal health outcomes over a lifetime. The integration of a permanent climbing wall in our school as part of our NEW PE program has provided students with an invitation to revisit their childhood and "climb" the new challenges presented in the "new curriculum" of the 21st century. Climbing has been viewed as the ultimate metaphor for life. The magic seems to be in the perceived nature of risk involved with the climb. . . . Ironically, the fears we all have about failing are met face-to-face there on the wall. . . . Through incremental risk-taking via the various wall problems we learn to ask for help, develop trust, accept challenge by choice, break through mental, physical and emotional barriers, and rely on the personal powers that we summon to meet and successfully overcome the challenge at hand.

At Ancaster Senior Public School the installation of a permanent climbing wall facility has taken our NEW PE program to new heights, helping us to achieve acknowledgment for program excellence at the HWDSB Profiling Excellence Awards (May 2007) in recognition of our innovative programming toward improving student achievement.

Gordon Cook is the Principal of Ancaster Senior Public School. He wrote this article with support, assistance and information from Al Boyan, Alice Mendelsohn, Alison Green and Colleen Woolvett — teachers and climbing wall supervisors.

Multicultural Environmental Education

by Kristen Martin

When I was growing up, “the environment” and environmental issues seemed out of reach. This is surprising coming from someone raised on a largely unpeopled shore of Georgian Bay and who, by age of three, was paddling her father’s canoe and collecting milk bags and broccoli elastics for her mother. But I can recall a sense of detachment, and I can trace them to my formal environmental and outdoor education.

Elementary school environmental education was restricted to projects on endangered animals from tropical climates. We did not discuss local concerns such as the invasion of millions of foreign ladybugs and zebra mussels — these topics were restricted to adults and invisible environmental decision makers.

My outdoor education consisted of field trips to areas of environmental concern — cities. On a bus trip to Toronto my classmates and I observed smog, visited unswimmable beaches, and witnessed mass littering. No connection was ever made between city pollution and rural issues such as high commuter emissions, untreated water, or a dumpsite sectioned above a main aquifer.

Secondary school outdoor education took me to the “real” environment — to Killarney, Algonquin and Temagami for bi-annual canoe trips. I remember these adventures fondly except for departure days where several classmates were inevitably left behind because they either did not have the money or the behaviour to accompany us; engaging with the natural world was reserved for well-behaved and wealthy students.

My formal outdoor and environmental education reinforced several age, class, place and status distinctions. In many ways, the environment seemed irrelevant, discouraging, disempowering and inaccessible — the topics, issues and places were simply too far out.

Multicultural Environmental Education

A relatively new reform brings environmental education closer to home. Called multicultural environmental education (MEE), its aim is to rekindle the relationship between humans and the Earth. MEE bridges disjoints between global and local environmental issues, between students, teachers and communities, and between knowledge and action by adding the element of cultural consciousness to the education process. The addition of cultural and experiential dimensions facilitates the development of a more eco-conscious and holistic worldview and promotes more widespread participation in environmental conservation.

MEE is “a new field of theory and practice for environmental education where content is influenced by and taught from multiple cultural perspectives. It is conscious of its own cultural perspectives and of the function that it has in the world and in the lives of diverse students and communities” (Running-Grass, 1996).

MEE is based on the premise that the world is experiencing an environmental crisis that is largely the product and responsibility of Western culture (Bryant, 1996). This crisis is characterized by global environmental devastation and international and local environmental injustices. To preserve the lives of humans and other species and to reinstate intercultural justice, Westerners must change their relationship with the Earth and engage *everyone* in environmental issues. MEE assumes that environmental education is necessary to achieving these ends, but also argues for reform. It recognizes cultural heterogeneity — differences in perspectives, histories, interactions, opportunities, neighbourhoods and priorities — when teaching about environmental issues. It acknowledges that environmental destruction and injustices are culturally determined, that culture is not uniform across a nation, and that environmental education must be sensitive to

these differences (Anthony, 1996). Furthermore, it understands that both the process and the content of education must resonate with local community and cultural values, and must extend beyond the pages of a textbook.

A Need to Consider Alternatives

Right to multicultural representation. Canada is rich with knowledge due to the diversity of people contained within its borders. Canada boasts of the highest per capita immigration in the world and counts a relatively high number of aboriginal people in its population (Jimenez, 2007). In 2001 visible minorities accounted for 13.4 percent of the population (Jimenez, 2007) and aboriginal people accounted for 4.4 percent of the population (Carter, 2004). Canada has an obligation to embrace the knowledge of these populations not only because of the failure of Western culture to produce ecologically sensitive living, but because considering alternative knowledge is a constitutional right.

Canada is the first country in the world to adopt a multiculturalism policy and to include multiculturalism in its national constitution. In the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, the Canadian government declared it to be their policy “to foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and to promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures” (Canadian Heritage, 2004). This policy must extend to the environment and environmental education. In their article on multicultural education, Beairsto and Carrigan (2004) argued that educational institutions have a critical role to play in the implementation and ongoing definition of multiculturalism so that the nation’s rich diversity can be a source of social dynamism. With the national goal of annually landing 1 percent of the population as newcomers, schoolrooms and communities will become increasingly diverse (Beairsto & Carrigan, 2004). To be true to the Multiculturalism Act, environmental education must evolve to include new cultural realities in specific community contexts (Running-Grass, 1996).

Minority populations most at risk and most excluded. Research shows a strong correlation between environmental health risk and the social positions of race and class (Thompson, 2002). Poor people, people of colour, immigrants, and aboriginal people are more likely to live in hazardous environments than affluent white Westerners (Thompson, 2002). A Hamilton study concluded that acute health effects from air pollution in low-income areas were more than double the regional or citywide average. The zone with low education and high manufacturing had the largest health-related effects, while areas with the highest socioeconomic characteristics showed no significant health effects (Jarrett, 2002). A country-wide study from the University of Manitoba found that environmental health risks — specifically, abandoned waste disposal sites, hazardous facilities and toxic emission scores — were statistically significantly greater for First Nations reserves and poor communities (Thompson, 2002). The demographics of poor communities betray even greater disparities and environmental injustice: immigrants are 3.2 times more likely (Yelaja, 2007) and aboriginal people are 2.3 times more likely (Carter, 2004) to live in poor communities.

Because class, race and status relate to environmental and human health, these elements must be incorporated into environmental education. Because a high proportion of people with alternative cultural perspectives live in environmentally hazardous areas, there is an urgency to provide environmental education that considers these perspectives as a means of informing and empowering everyone — including those who are most at risk — to identify and to resolve injustices.

Barriers to Multicultural Representation in Environmental Issues

One of the principal concerns of multicultural environmental educators surrounds the word “environment,” which has become synonymous with wilderness and unpeopled places of unusual beauty, and the antonym to urban life (Taylor, 1996). This definition leads to several problems. First of all, it excludes

many environmental issues from the environmental agenda. Environmental injustices, for instance, often involve disputes about the location of industrial facilities, mines and dumps with respect to human settlements, yet none of these aspects fit into this limited definition of environment.

Secondly, the definition limits the participation of a large portion of the population in environmental issues. Untouched natural areas are inaccessible for people from urban areas or of lower income as are “all-natural” environmental programs. Wilderness summer camps, fishing and hunting outfitters, mountaineering and bird-watching clubs, and other environmental societies are mostly attended by middle and upper class whites (Taylor, 1996). Threats to wild places like Canada’s boreal forests and freshwater lakes, northern tundra and arctic glaciers may be of little concern to people who cannot access for such natural areas. Limited concern for these areas means limited participation in conserving them, and limited conservation exacerbates the environmental crisis, which affects everyone’s wellbeing.

Finally, the romanticized notion of environment advances disjoints between education and community, as well as education and action. Studies reveal that many students reject schools because they fail to deal with issues relevant to their lives (Lee, 1996). As public institutions, schools have the responsibility to offer opportunities for students to conduct meaningful dialogues about social issues and to interact with local concerns. But the conventional definition of the environment opposes this approach by confining learning to the classroom and locating “the environment” far away.

Overcoming Barriers Through Multicultural Environmental Education

MEE attempts to improve upon conventional environmental education by making it more inclusive and empowering. It reformulates what environmental education is, where it is learned, what it teaches, and how it is taught while being conscious of the relationship

between culture and environment, and the increasingly multicultural makeup of society.

Redefining environmental education. MEE goes beyond the “wilderness” definition of environment to include environments that are occupied or influenced by humans.

Environments are more than green spaces (Sakakeeny, 1996); they can be highways, inner cities, suburban developments, factories, hospitals, corporations, dumps, reservoirs, sewage disposal facilities, military fly zones, Native reserves, sidewalks, school yards — any of the physical or social landscapes that define the modern world (Anthony, 1996).

This extended definition makes it possible for visible minorities, aboriginals, poor people and urban people to identify with and participate in environmental issues. It also helps to prevent the sense of alienation that occurs when discussing the environmental crisis on a global or national level by including familiar environments in the debate (Agyeman, 2002).

The discussion of local environmental issues also increases the likelihood that they will be resolved from a community-based and culturally conscious approach. One example is the Red Deer Social Action Project developed by teachers and students of grade five and six classes in Red Deer, Alberta. In response to a proposal to increase chemical spraying for a mosquito outbreak in the community, the classes set about determining alternative solutions. Parents were employed to guide students through research and activism, which resulted in an alternative solution to the mosquito problem (Moore, Taylor, & Chamberlin, 1994).

It might be argued that the Red Deer Social Action Project is not an example of MEE because it does not address ethnicity or social class. But MEE recognizes that culture does not refer only to race, colour or class, but more generally refers to unique community values and concerns (Agyeman, 2002). The Red Deer project was “cultured” because it used a local issue of personal significance to students, and drew on the specific knowledge, beliefs and

skills of the community with respect to the environment (George & Glasgow, 2002). Owing to this cultural aspect, the program achieved high levels of participation, support and effectiveness (Moore et al., 1994).

The definitions of environment and culture work together to redefine environmental quality — the ultimate goal of almost all environmental initiatives. Environmental quality includes not only environmental health; it also includes the health and wellbeing of the people living within the environment. And this wellbeing is represented by the preservation of human rights, health, culture, socio-economic opportunity and justice (Running-Grass, 1996).

Relocating environmental education. MEE relocates environmental education from the classroom and teachers to the environment and people it concerns. Proponents of MEE encourage environmental educators to use experiential learning and community mentorships as a means of lessening the divide between classroom learning and out-of-school applications (Kraft, 1992). Students have confirmed the effectiveness of out-of-classroom opportunities. A study of urban youth environmental activists found that most students do not identify school classes as significant to initiating their environmental concerns; instead, most credit activities outside of school — especially relationships with adults — as being particularly important (Habib, 1996). Furthermore, all students in the study determined that participatory activities that involve inquiry, dialogue, field research and presentation were of greatest interest to them (Habib, 1996). This study suggests that MEE would be more effective than conventional classroom environmental education.

Revising environmental education content and process. More than a reform of environmental education curricula, MEE is a paradigmatic shift (Agyeman, 2002). Content must be taught in a way that is both culturally appropriate and culturally inherent (Simpson, 2002). For instance, a teacher might go beyond teaching students *about* indigenous customs to teaching students *by means of*

indigenous customs including learning by doing, storytelling, observing, reflecting and creating (Simpson, 2002). The simultaneous emphasis on process and content could help to foster a better understanding of non-dominant cultures, or to present lessons to students of non-dominant cultures in a more comprehensible manner.

Conclusion

Much of the environmental debate has been conducted as though the human community were uniform, without great differences in culture and experience, power and opportunity (Running-Grass, 1996). It has been framed largely in the terms of affluent Westerners, economic competition, corporate power and national policy. Those who do not share dominant Western values feel detached from environmental initiatives and education. Furthermore, the diverse voices and helping hands of these people, essential to developing a sustainable relationship with the Earth, are silenced and neglected. Unfortunately it is also these people who suffer the worst of the consequences of the environmental crisis, including unhealthy living conditions and infringements of constitutional rights. If the debate continues without recognizing the diversity of the human race, everyone will fall victim to the environment the industrialized world is currently attacking.

We urgently require environmental education that serves all people and all environments. MEE does just this; through revised content and processes it adapts to the cultural perspectives and social geography of a community to engage as many people as possible in their environment and thus their wellbeing and survival.

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Beyond Learning to Canoe

by Dale Duncan

Getting outdoors can get some youth out of trouble, but funding such programs is a hard sell.

Twenty-year-old Franki Lodge and her co-workers listen intently as their supervisor goes over the day's agenda. Tomorrow, they head out on their first camping trip of the season and there's a lot of work to be done.

The excited group sits in a circle on the ground outside the clubhouse, where the 26-foot canoes are stored. To their backs is a quiet beach and a lake that stretches to the horizon. It's a scene familiar to anyone who's spent their summers working as a camp counsellor in Ontario. But Lodge and her team aren't on the shores of Georgian Bay or Lake Huron. They're at Sunnyside Beach in Toronto. Walk toward the water and you can see the CN Tower and a cluster of high-rises in the east marking the city's busy downtown core.

Lodge and her crewmates help run Toronto's Inner City Outtripping Centre (ICOC), an outdoor education program aimed at inner-city youth. Started in 1995 to reduce conflict between rival gangs in Christie Pits Park, the organization has since grown to include the Paddle and Picnic program (day camps where kids, teens and even seniors canoe up the Humber River); the Toronto Recreational Outreach Outtripping Program (TROOP) Trip (three-day camping trips where police officers and youth portage, paddle, cook and set up camp together on McCrae Lake near Georgian Bay); and two-week leadership programs, which include a week of training and a week of camping.

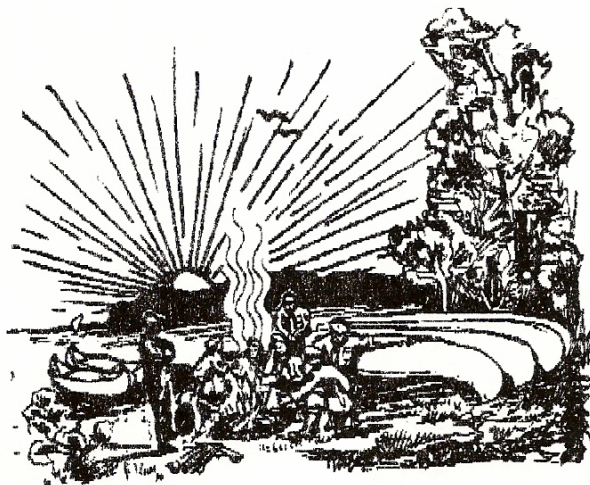
While many people debate whether building more basketball courts or community centres is the best way to help solve the problems of gangs, drugs and violence, the ICOC takes advantage of the many spaces that already exist in Toronto, getting kids and teens to see

and experience the city in ways most of us rarely consider.

"A lot of kids that come down [to Sunnyside Beach] are amazed that there's a lake you can't see the other side of. Or they've never seen swans before — and they've lived in Toronto their whole life," Lodge says. "We help them see that they don't need that media buzz. We take them away from all of that."

Despite the large spider that'll scare her out of the clubhouse an hour from now, Lodge considers herself lucky. While others her age prepare for a summer selling burgers or washing dishes, she gets to teach the J-stroke, picnic in High Park and swim in Sunnyside pool. The experiences she helps provide may motivate a few of the kids she works with this summer to turn their lives around as she did after participating in the program four years ago.

"The TROOP Trip involves taking bad kids from bad areas and showing them that there's more to life than gangs, guns and drugs," explains Lodge, who grew up in Rexdale and joined the trip when she was 16 years old. "When I was approached with the idea of going on trips with cops, I wanted nothing to do with it. A friend talked me into going."



At the time, Lodge had dropped out of school and wasn't speaking to her mother, but her experience with the program changed all that. Each year, TROOP Trip participants who show interest and take initiative are asked to join a once-a-year, end-of-the-summer trip to Temagami. Back then, Lodge was one of the campers invited to go.

"Just going through the program and being called back was a complete wake-up call. I saw how people viewed me when I took responsibility," Lodge says. Campers are expected to help out with every aspect of the trip, from portaging to setting up the tents to cooking the meals. "The summer after, I got to come back to volunteer with the Paddle and Picnic program. I did a complete 180. I went back to school and I dropped certain people from my life."

One of Lodge's co-workers, 19-year-old Aislinn Malszecki, who's starting his second summer working for the ICOC, has seen a change in some of the adults who participate in the program as well. "The big focus is on kids getting to know the cops, but in my opinion, it's also about the cops getting to know the kids," Malszecki says.

Lodge agrees. "[The police] see a kid that comes over wearing a b-boy hat and pants down to his knees, and looking like a thug and they think he's up to no good. They learn that just because a kid dresses like that doesn't mean that's what's in his heart," she says.

As a testament to the ICOC's popularity, its programs were booked solid last summer. Parks, Forestry and Recreation employee Allan Crawford, who oversees programming for the centre, would like to see outdoor education programs expand. "Thirty-two per cent of our youth are not finishing high school, so if your only point of contact is high school, you've lost nearly one-third of the kids," Crawford argues. "Outdoor education has been formalized to the point that a one-week inoculation during an entire school career is seen as meaningful."

Crawford would ideally like to see the city play a larger role, but despite the benefits of recreation programs, he says garnering financial support is a challenge. Politicians are more likely to put money into a park than a program such as the ICOC, he explains. Once a park is built, some additional funds will be required for upkeep, but people can use it freely without the aid of paid employees. Programs, on the other hand, require the same infusion of funds each year. Cutting a program is often more noticeable than making cuts to the maintenance of a park. Politically, it's a difficult commitment to pull out of.

"Funding happens in three-year blocks, so there are not a lot of long-term plans that can be made," says Crawford. "But it's programs, not places, that are important."

Crawford has been pushing the idea of building a lodge at the mouth of the Humber River where groups similar to those involved with the ICOC could meet and spend the night before hiking or canoeing along the river. A team of architects has already drawn up plans for a sustainable building for the site after a request for proposals went out in 2000. Despite the city's current infatuation with improving the waterfront, no one at City Hall is working to move the idea forward.

"We're less connected," Crawford argues. "We're changing the way community is formed and the way community functions. We're very quickly getting into trouble." Thankfully, for Lodge, trouble has been averted. She plans to go to university to study English literature and maybe even become a professor.

"I'm really fortunate that I went through the program," she says. "Now I want to give back what people have given to me."

Dale Duncan is an ESL teacher in Toronto. Her article about Toronto's Inner City Outtripping Centre was first published in Eye Weekly, www.eyeweekly.com/eye/issue/issue_06.08.06/city/news.php. It is reprinted here with permission.

Questions

by Haley Kuntz

As a canoe trip guide for young people, you get used to the never-ending flow of questions. Kids are constantly inquiring about how many kilometres have been traveled that day, how many kilometres to go that day, what is for dinner and when the next set of moving water is coming up. If you've ever worked with kids, you'll understand what I'm saying. I've heard of kids asking how many cups of water make up the lake or how many fish live in the lake.

With kids, the questions are endless.

Questions often are used as a teaching opportunity, or as an introduction to a conversation or debate. Sometimes questions from kids are conveniently discarded by tossing a question back at them, or answering their many questions with the same random number. On occasion, a question really stumps you, and can't just be left hanging in the air.

During a trip last summer, I was leading a group of energetic and curious 13-year-olds. After dinner a wasp was doing its duty as a wasp and while doing so, bugging the kids. It was then that the first question came from an especially inquisitive and talkative kid: "What is the purpose of a wasp?"

I answered, explaining how, like bees, wasps help flowers reproduce by picking up and spreading their pollen. Then came the second question: "What is the purpose of a human being? All we seem to do is walk around and strip the Earth."

I looked at the other guide who was as caught off guard as I was. How do you answer the question of existence to a group of incredibly impressionable 13-year-olds? This is a question that entire subjects of philosophy are devoted to, a question that some spend their whole lives pondering. I explained that everyone would say life is something different and we're all allowed to have our own answer.

Upon returning from that trip, I received an e-mail from a friend. She was questioning to her closest friends about what we're all supposed to be doing in between gathering food, building shelter and finding a mate to share life with. Basically, she was asking the same question as the kid on my trip.

By saying that everyone would have a different answer to *the* question, I feel that I answered the question correctly. I suppose it would also be right to say that there are no answers to those kinds of questions. We all give meaning to our lives in different ways. And we all have the freedom to do so.

Time to think is one of the luxuries of a canoe trip. Life on trip allows for time to daydream, time to question. There are no deadlines or pressures while paddling a lake or hiking along a trail. Getting lost in your own thoughts and socializing are the only things that can be done. The less hurried lifestyle of outdoor trips is a well deserved break from daily life. At work and school we are flooded with information. From the time we wake up to the news on the clock radio, to the time we go to sleep after reading a book or magazine, we are bombarded with information. Most of this information is discarded. We are programmed to only take in the important details. In the outdoors, the information overload is put on pause. The mind is clear of distractions. Maybe this is why some of my most important "life decisions" have been made while on a canoe trip. The mind has time to digest things that have happened in life in the last few months.

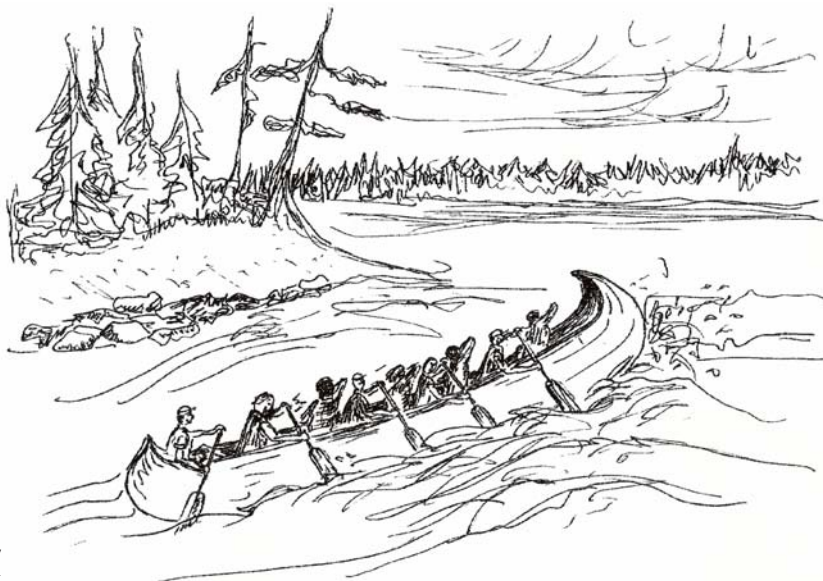
Asking questions is what outdoor education and canoe tripping are about. Trip gives us time to observe things going on around us in the natural world, and time to question. Kids need this time to think. The school system doesn't always give the time and allow kids

the freedom to think and learn in their own individual ways. Hurried lessons and regimented day schedules are necessary to complete all required lessons. Oftentimes, lessons are catered to one type of learner, leaving many intelligent and creative thinkers behind.

Outdoor education and experiential learning allows for, and actually encourages, different avenues of thought and methods of learning. A huge challenge of education is sparking an interest in learning, getting kids to *want* to learn. Sometimes sparking this urge to learn is not as much of a problem on canoe trip. Perhaps it is the rule of reverse psychology; because kids aren't being forced to do something they will do it.

On trip kids learn voluntarily. With time to think, they are free to learn at their own pace. They learn so that they may better understand the world around them, not for the sake of a test. With a greater understanding of the natural world from outdoor education comes a greater appreciation of the natural world. There is no better thing to pass on to someone than that.

It can be difficult not to expect kids to share your enthusiasm for a topic ("who cares what kind of tree this is?") and hard not to lecture. Good outdoor educators don't preach. They don't tell kids *what* to think about a subject, or the world around them. They teach kids *how* to think. A quote I recently came across perfectly illustrates this point. It went something like this: A teacher needs only to put a spark in the head of the student. If there is some good flammable stuff, the spark will ignite, allowing creative thoughts and original ideas. Effective teachers encourage students to



question reality and think with a critical mind. They teach them not to believe everything they hear, and to form their own opinions based on their ideas and life experiences — not someone else's.

Canoe trips, like learning and thinking, are not about the end result. It is the process that matters. On a trip, the take-out or end of the trail is not engrained in one's memory as vividly as the northern lights on Day 3, or that fabulous view from the top of the ridge on Day 5. Similarly, the mark on a test paper or written paper may not do justice to what a student took away from the test or paper.

So, until the next baffling question comes along, I will go to school, paddle lakes and rivers, hike mountains, be sure to scare myself from time to time, and try to remember the words of environmentalist and Greenpeace founder, Robert Hunter. In describing a canoe trip he could be describing the journey of life: "You don't canoe to get somewhere; the purpose of the trip is the trip. You are where you are going as you get there."

Haley Kuntz is a student at Laurentian University completing a Bachelor of Physical and Health Education degree in Outdoor Adventure Leadership.

Diversity in the OEE Community

by Kathy Haras

Frances Hopkin's *Shooting the Rapids* is a classic piece of Canadian artwork. Even if you don't recognize the name or the artist, you can likely recall the image of a fully loaded voyageur canoe shooting the rapids.

What has always struck me about this painting is the diversity of people in the canoe: The gentleman in the top hat, the woman in what appears to be her Sunday best, the hardy voyageurs who are members of First Nations or Québécois. There is perhaps no better illustration of what it means to be in the same boat.

So in the spirit of *Shooting the Rapids* I have named this regular column that will address all aspects of diversity in outdoor education "Tous Nos Voyageurs." And I want to start by reflecting on our own diversity — the diversity that exists in the outdoor and experiential education (OEE) community.

In recent years there has been much conversation within the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) about the demise of outdoor education centres and what this means to the health of outdoor education in general. Less acknowledged is the myriad of "other" outdoor education centres and programs that provide opportunities for outdoor education. If I attempt to list the outdoor education programs that exist within one hour of my home, I come up with several college and university-run programs, private businesses including summer camps, religiously affiliated camp and conference centres, conservation authorities, public recreation agencies, nature centres, membership-based recreation organizations, museums, charitable organizations, ethnically affiliated facilities, church-run programs and school board-operated outdoor education centres.

This assortment of providers speaks to the value Ontarians of all backgrounds see in OEE. If OEE weren't considered relevant or desirable, these programs simply would not exist.

The variety of OEE program providers explains in part the range of people delivering outdoor learning opportunities. Along with classroom teachers, there are university students who may be studying outdoor education, special education teachers, full-time and part-time outdoor leaders, environmental and cultural interpreters, volunteers, high school students, biologists and countless others. This diversity of OEE practitioners must be seen as an advantage for connecting with a diverse student population. How many of us became outdoor educators because of a positive experience somewhere in our childhood?

Outdoor education may be used to enhance students' understanding of character, curriculum, wellbeing or the environment. This mixture of values can create friction among practitioners about which aspect of outdoor education is most important. Are we going winter camping to learn about teamwork, the physics of snow structures, how our bodies work in cold temperatures, or the adaptations of animals that live in northern climates? In some ways this type of argument is absurd. Outdoor education can serve all of these values. The value that is most important is the one that best aligns with the outcomes of the program. One day it might be about wellbeing and the next day it might be about character. Some programs and practitioners might do a bit of everything while others may specialize. Our canoe should be large enough for all high-quality outdoor education programs regardless of their focus.

Did Hopkin's voyageurs make it through the rapids? Were they able to leverage their differences to reach their destination? For us to move forward as outdoor educators meeting the needs of a diverse population, we first need to remember that no matter where we work, who our students are, or what value of OEE we focus on, we are all in the same boat.

Kathy Haras is Chair of the Pathways Editorial Board.

UNBC: Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program

by Pat Maher

The University of Northern British Columbia's Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program . . . your path to an education, a career and a lifestyle.

The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is located in Prince George, British Columbia, at the confluence of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers, and on the doorstep of the Cariboo and Rocky Mountains. Located in the heart of the province, Prince George is an eight-hour drive north from Vancouver, four hours from Jasper, Alberta, eight hours from the Pacific, and 12 hours from the Yukon border. So although UNBC is relatively remote in Prince George, it's the perfect setting for the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management (ORTM) Program.

UNBC officially opened in 1994, and has already become one of Canada's best small universities (fourth in the Maclean's rankings). It is noted as a research-intensive university with strengths particularly in areas such as Natural Resource and Environmental Studies (NRES). The ORTM Program is part of this area of strength in that it offers two underlying undergraduate degrees: a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Natural Resource Management, with a major in Outdoor Recreation and Conservation, and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Nature-Based Tourism. As well, there is the opportunity for students to pursue graduate studies in ORTM through the integrated NRES program at both the Master (MA, MSc, MNRES) degree and PhD level.

The ORTM Program at UNBC began at the same time as the university, and its first Chair was Alan Ewert (past editor of the *Journal of Experiential Education*, one of the founding editors of the *International Journal of Wilderness* and now professor at Indiana University).

When the program began, there was only a BSc offered; it wasn't until 1997 that the BA materialized after a proposal was accepted by British Columbia's Ministry of Advanced Education. For much of the past 13 years, the ORTM Program was called the Resource Recreation and Tourism (RRT) Program, but this changed in the fall of 2006. Over the past two years, in addition to the name change, the program has been considerably overhauled. With a full complement of four faculty members onsite there has been a complete revision of the curriculum and focus for the program.

The ORTM Program's focus is now squarely on the management of outdoor recreation as it relates to conservation (i.e., in and around parks and protected areas), tourism that is both based in and concerned with the natural/cultural environment rather than business or hospitality, and hands-on integrated learning that gives students real-world experience, and the opportunity to pursue certifications that will supplement their degree and allow them to find meaningful employment in their field/industry.

Present faculty members have strength in areas as diverse as community involvement in tourism, outdoor and experiential education, environmental interpretation, and conservation-based approaches to protected area design, management and monitoring. While it's difficult to highlight only a few key undergraduate courses or projects, here are some recent successes:

- **ORTM 100** — the new first-year capstone course for the program helps students become aware of all the opportunities in the field, involves students in the community for volunteer work, and allows students to meet face-to-face in

their classroom with representatives from agencies such as BC Parks, the Northern BC Tourism Association, the BC Ministry of Tourism Sports and the Arts, and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS).

- **ORTM 301** — the program's third-year environmental interpretation course, which in 2006 involved students working on a local trail project at Driscoll Ridge (100 kilometres east of Prince George). The Interior Cedar/Hemlock ecosystem at Driscoll Ridge is world class, with many old growth trees, and the ORTM 301 class assisted with the design of trail brochures and interpretive signage.
- **ORTM 333** — the capstone field course for the program, which in past years has included visits to Jasper National Park, and Northwest BC (Prince Rupert, the Nass Valley, and so on). In 2007, ORTM 333 is being combined with another ORTM special topic course, and offered as a Field School on the Stikine River for the entire month of August.
- **ORTM 410** — the capstone course in research methods for the program, which offers students an excellent opportunity to work in real-world situations with real agencies that need questions answered or needs assessed. In 2006 this class worked on a project examining the visitor orientation programs at Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site on the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii).

Apart from specific courses, the ORTM program has successfully initiated and maintained partnerships with organizations such as NOLS, Parks Canada, BC Parks, Northern BC Tourism Association, the University of the Arctic, the BC Protected Areas Research Forum, and many more. Graduate studies have been as diverse as studying grizzly bear/visitor interaction in the Khutzymateen Sanctuary north of Prince Rupert, residents' perceptions of ecosystem management regimes in Mount Robson Provincial Park, and climbers' motivations in Bugaboo Provincial Park.

Across all its degree options the ORTM program strives to capitalize on the unique location of UNBC by discussing relevant outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism within a northern BC, Canadian and international context. The ORTM program offers small class sizes, close contact with faculty, and in our biased opinion, both interesting and challenging courses. From a student's perspective, BSc graduate and MSc candidate Kate Reade says:

The Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management program at UNBC has really strived to keep up with the rapidly evolving field. What I liked best about this program was the small class sizes as we were able to work on real projects and get a taste of what our futures could entail.

Students who might be interested in the ORTM Program likely share the following goals or interests:

- **Respect** for the natural environment
- **Fascination** with outdoor recreation, travel and tourism
- **Passion** for the outdoors and outdoor activities
- **Desire** for flexible employment and career options
- **Curiosity** about how to make a living doing what you love
- **Awareness** of the impacts of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism, both positive and negative.

For more specific program information, please visit www.unbc.ca/ortm.

Pat Maher teaches in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program at UNBC. He has previously taught at other universities in Canada and New Zealand, the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School, and a variety of other outdoor centres.

Risk Management

by Kathy Haras

Risk management is a recurring, even constant, thread at outdoor education conferences. There are even entire annual conferences devoted to this theme. I consider a risk management presentation “good” when it presents me with an easily grasped concept that I can use in my daily work.

In the past nine months, I have run into Grant Davidson’s work on predictors of serious injury in outdoor education activities twice: the first time when Grant presented his doctoral research at the International Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Conference in Minneapolis in November 2006, and the second time when Iain Stewart-Patterson used it as a jumping off point in his presentation at the Northwest Regional AEE conference in Maple Ridge, BC in March 2007.

In his attempt to classify the root causes of outdoor education incidents, Davidson looked at models from all types of accidents to see if there were any plausible analogies. Industrial settings, ironically, seemed to be the best fit.

Davidson concluded that serious injuries in outdoor education settings tend to occur in one of four situations:

1. **Unusual, non-routine activities.** Whether it’s a new instructor, a seasoned outdoor veteran who is a novice at a particular activity, a change in the activity location, or a unique approach to a traditional favourite, without abundant relevant experience instructors will likely miss warning signs that indicate things are about to begin going badly. Small changes can make a huge difference — especially if you have no basis for comparison and hence no expectations that, when violated, would cause you to change your course of action.
2. **Non-productive activities** like free time tend to have low levels of supervision or no supervision at all. When I speak to

parents, teachers and administrators, they are concerned about the safety of climbing activities I have included in their children’s adventure program. Given that climbing is an unusual, non-routine activity for them, I can understand their concern. My concern, however, is the quality of supervision at lunch time when their students may engage with horseplay with friends. That’s when I seem to give out the most icepacks.

3. **High energy sources** make sense in an industrial setting and make equal sense in an outdoor education setting. While construction workers may need to be aware of high voltage cables, outdoor instructors need to be aware of the hazards posed by height (gravity), fire or stoves, moving water, weather systems and speed. Regardless of how it is generated, the greater the force the greater the potential for serious injury.
4. **Activities involving water** may be similar to excavation at a construction site. In both cases, someone falling in may be an unexpected event. In neither case will they be able to breathe easily. The environment changes constantly. Stopping the action that is causing the person to be buried or submerged may well be impossible. Perhaps it’s my four summers as a lifeguard, but I worry less about the relatively controlled environment of a supervised pool and more about canoe trips of any length and location, spur-of-the-moment lake swimming, and activities where the loser of some competitive activity ends up falling or being pushed into water.

As we move into the summer, some outdoor educators are looking forward to a well-deserved break while others are moving into high gear. Remembering, and addressing, these four triggers may help you prevent situations that could lead to serious injury.

Kathy Haras is Chair of the Pathways Editorial Board.

A Critique of *Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education*

by Jennifer Harvey

Foster, Andrea & Linney, Grant. (2007). *Reconnecting children through outdoor education: A research summary*. Toronto ON: The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario.

Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education: A Research Summary by Andrea Foster and Grant Linney is a comprehensive and valuable tool for outdoor and experiential education (OEE) practitioners, researchers, students and governing bodies alike. Using a compilation of research studies and quotes from respected environmentalists and outdoor educators, it presents a series of guidelines and recommendations for the future of OEE and its value in the school curriculum and daily life.

This summary is both direct and concise, making it easy to read and comprehend. Through specific studies, existing OEE programs and research, every conclusion in the document has evidence to support it. All different aspects of OEE are touched upon, including community, self-esteem, behavioural issues and the environment. The broad view it presents helps to exhibit the depth within the field. The physical layout and presentation of the summary is quite appealing to the reader and very engaging. The content is broken up with quotes, large clear titles and outstanding photographs of OEE: the reader is never overwhelmed with pages of writing. In addition, the research compiled reflects OEE on a global scale from Alaska to Australia, Great Britain to Innisfil, Ontario. Using diverse sources, it enforces the idea that OEE is valued everywhere.

As a current Kinesiology student participating in an OEE field placement course, I find the COEO document to be extremely informative and interesting. I view it as a basic tool and resource for developing my knowledge and understanding. After reading only a quarter, I had already jotted down names of researchers, books to look up, and topics to research. It offers a starting place for any aspect of research and a synopsis into the academic world of OEE. Not only are the results of OEE research

presented, but statistics and precise conclusions drawn from research in attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), obesity, self-esteem and youth at risk are laid out clearly for the reader. It helps to uncover possible areas of interest for students and it makes further investigation easy through the endnotes and references lists.

Despite the value and usefulness of the document, Foster and Linney fail to maintain the reader's interest throughout the entire length of the summary. As I eagerly read through it, I found myself reading the same sentences a number of times. Even though one study can demonstrate two separate points, it would add interest and variety to reword or expand these results. At times, the research summary seems redundant and repetitive, making it appear that there is not enough research to provide different examples.

Overall, the summary does a great job of outlining the objectives it seeks to achieve within the community, the curriculum and the educational system. It provides direction for the OEE field and gives goals to strive towards. After reading this research document, it is clear that Foster and Linney have summarized the research in an effective manner that concisely pulls all aspects together into one unified document. OEE is an indispensable teaching method that constantly demonstrates good results and positive effects on children and their communities. This research summary leaves the reader wondering why not everyone is participating in and supporting outdoor and experiential education.

Jennifer Harvey was a student in KINE 4EE3: Field Placement in Outdoor Education at McMaster University.

Discovering Wild Temiskaming

by Bob Henderson

Muir, M. & Muir, V. (2002). *Discovering wild Temiskaming: One day adventures and beyond featuring the Ottawa–Temiskaming Highland Trail*. Temagami, ON: Nastawagan Trails.

In a word, “beckoning” is what comes to mind when I consider *Discovering Wild Temiskaming* — both the book and the place. In Murray and Vicky Muirs’ own words, “this is hill country.” I was aware of the hills and bluffs, rivers, lakes and spring creeks in North-Eastern Ontario. Temagami of course is a jewel in the overall Canadian Shield. But like many others I was unaware of the wider local perspective. This perspective is what the Muirs capture. Be it north towards Englehart to Kirkland Lake and the Little Clay Belt, west towards Elk Lake and Temagami, or south into the Ottawa River Valley with Lakes Temiskaming and Temagami/Anima–Nipissing serving as east–west borders (each of these labels correspond to chapter titles), wild Temiskaming is a self-propelled backcountry traveller’s dream. For most, I assume the country beyond the Temagami hub will be unexplored.

This book aptly describes the many day hiking trips, winter and summer jaunts and many short canoe outings available beyond the Temagami hub. The exceptional component of the book however for the non-local enthusiast is the exciting Ottawa–Temiskaming Highland (OTH) Trail. The Muirs and many local volunteers have been linking existing trails, isolated campsites, and intriguing land features and prominent views over the last decade. What they have now captured here (with pictures, maps and texts) is a 70-kilometre continuous hiking trail. I counted 24 campsites marked in this guidebook along the trail. The trail is marked with white paint lines (blazes) on trails with blue blazes for side trails. Side trail development is ongoing.

This trail guide and corresponding map, “Trails of Temiskaming,” has captured my imagination as a destination for a school hiking trip and friendship group outing. The many campsites and prominent views make this a choice location for those new to self-propelled travel [read school groups]. I plan to check out this trail ASAP.

The Muirs, with obvious bias, are totally believable when they stack up this trail for scenic rugged beauty against their travels by foot in the Rockies, Killarney, The Bruce, Superior and Gros Morne. I might have considered any one of the above when suggesting routes for others depending on their needs. The Muirs and all the trail volunteers are right to be inspired by their work. We need trails like the OTH Trail that meet the needs of many Ontario outdoor educators, students and travellers. With guidebook in hand, I’m excited to head to the OTH Trail as a destination and to seek out a bed and breakfast somewhere in the heart of wild Temiskaming for a few of those day trips.

To order *Discovering Wild Temiskaming*, contact Natural Heritage Books at 1-800-725-9982 or info@naturalheritagebooks.com.

The majority of funds from the book sales go to further trail construction and maintenance. For more information contact www.nastawagantrails.com.

Bob Henderson teaches outdoor education courses at McMaster University and is the winner of the 2006 Association for Experiential Education Michael Stratton Practitioner Award.

Setting the Tone

by Jennifer Stanchfield

Starting With Style

Introductory activities create a positive environment, enhance performance and set the tone for the rest of the program. Taking time for the group to get comfortable and learn each others' names will pay off later.

The more I work with groups, the more I realize the power of the simple things we do as facilitators. An engaging opening activity designed to get the group interacting and sharing names, backgrounds and goals in an intriguing way can really maximize the group process.

Every facilitator has their own set of favourite opening activities. Many activity books have whole sections on this subject. I have learned some of the best and most effective activities in my repertoire from other facilitators, experimenting with groups, and adapting activities over time and experience. The following are a few favourites that work to set the tone for most group situations.

Object Trade

I learned this simple and effective introduction activity as an undergraduate at the University of New Hampshire during a ropes course management class with instructors Pam McPhee and Kim Goody. This activity not only helps participants begin to connect with each other, it also offers an opportunity to find commonalities and define goals for the day. For facilitators, it provides a read on participants' goals and expectations for the day.

Directions:

- Have participants find a partner.
- Ask group members to find something on their persons or something they brought with them to trade (temporarily) with their partners. Encourage participants to share an item with an amusing or

interesting story. Sometimes the simplest objects have involved histories.

- Ask partners to share, 1) something interesting about their object, 2) some information about their own background, and 3) what they would like to get out of the program or day.
- After five minutes or so, have each set of partners introduce each other, sharing information about each other's object, background and goals for the day. Then return the objects to their respective owners.
- If you have a large group, break up these introductions with a few icebreaking games. Have three or four sets of partners introduce each other and share, do a brief icebreaker, and then have three or four more sets of partners share, and so on. The benefit of this method is that while the most comfortable share first, the others warm up.

Postcard Introductions

Collecting interesting postcards is an engaging hobby I enjoy. I was inspired by an activity from Pam McPhee at the University of New Hampshire's Browne Center many years ago when I was a student there. I have managed to gather more than 100 cards over the past few years and often use them as a reflective tool (see *A Teachable Moment* by Cain, Cummings, & Stanchfield, 2005). Postcards can be an engaging way to hook participants right up front. When I use this method to introduce group members to each other, I also learn about group members' goals and expectations for the program. I recommend this method for getting a pulse on your group and gleaning participants' attitudes and expectations for the group experience.

Directions:

- Spread postcards out on a table or floor accessible to all group members.

- Ask group members to choose a card that represents the answer to one or more of the following questions:
 - Why did you come to be a part of the program?
 - What strengths do you bring to the group?
 - What are your expectations for the day?
 - What do you want to achieve as part of the program?
- As in the Object Trade activity, have them find a partner and share their card and information about themselves.
- Give them an opportunity to introduce each other and their chosen cards to the group.
- Due to the novelty of the cards and the opportunity to share information with their partners before answering individually, participants find this activity engaging and less intimidating than other introductory activities.
- Next ask them to find new partners and give each other a low five. These are their low 5 partners.
- Now have them move around the group to find their high 5 partners (give them a high 5), then find their low 5 partners (give them a low 5).
- Next ask them to find new partners and give them an ankle shake. These are their ankle shake partners. Start the sequence again: find their high 5, then low 5, then ankle shake partners.
- Continue this sequence adding new partner activities as appropriate (e.g., a “fishing partner”— one is the reel and one the fish). You will witness laughter, positive interaction, and fun. Participants really will remember each other.
- Later, you can use the partners to form groups or have them run through this sequence to say goodbye to their partners as a closing at the end of the day.

High 5 Mingle

I learned this fun introduction game from Aimee Desrosier Cochran, a former intern at High 5 Adventure Learning Center, who used this activity during her time at Springfield College’s Challenge Course program. I use it with all ages and backgrounds to give group members an opportunity to warm up and interact in a non-threatening way. The beauty of this activity is that it is energizing and fun and everyone gets a chance to come face-to-face with someone new and do a brief introduction. I recommend this activity for groups where you want to break up cliques and facilitate group interaction with everyone. This can be especially helpful in classroom settings.

Directions:

- Have everyone find a partner.
- Ask the group members to give their partner a “high 5.” Tell participants these are now their high 5 partners.

Keep this activity interesting for participants and yourself by exploring and experimenting with new twists.

Concentric Circles

This excellent introductory activity can also be used as a great reflective and closing activity. It is a personal favourite and has been a staple activity in my repertoire since I first picked it up from Paul Hutchinson during our time as fellow graduate students leading programs at MSU Mankato. It works well as an opening warm up, because it is fairly non-intimidating with each person asked to converse with only one other person at a time. This activity can be adapted to most groups regardless of the age of the participants or the size of the group. It works especially well with large groups.

Directions:

- Divide the group in half, and have them form two circles with the participants facing each other in an inner circle and an outer circle.
- Ask participants to greet each other by name and have them participate in a cooperative activity together such as

“finger fencing,” “gotcha,” or “one-handed shoe tying” (see Jim Grout and Karl Rohnke’s *Back Pocket Adventure* for creative partner activities).

- After completing the activity, ask participants to share their answers to a “get to know you” question asked by the facilitator (e.g., What is the most unusual food you have ever eaten? What was your favourite vacation? What do you want to get out of today’s program?).
- After a few moments of conversation, invite the inner circle to form new partnerships by moving four spaces to the left, greeting other participants they pass. Ask the new partners to greet each other then provide another cooperative activity and a question to discuss.
- The activity continues with alternating movement between the inside and outside circle, followed by activities and questions.

Goals, Expectations and Boundaries

The Object Trade and Postcard Introduction activities can be used quite effectively for goal setting. Using these activities to articulate goals helps the facilitator and group members tailor activities to meet the needs of the group and appropriately order and choose activities and interventions.

Another successful engaging activity I have used to help group members articulate their goals, expectations and/or attitudes uses campaign buttons.

Button for the Day

This fun activity was inspired by a shopping trip a co-worker and I took to a local novelty store. Jen Ottinger, High 5’s business manager, and I were gathering postcards and charms for my processing tool kit. Jen spotted a campaign button display that included an assortment of buttons depicting a variety of words, clever slogans and symbols ranging from yin yang and peace signs to lightning bolts and phrases such as “trust me” or “cleverly disguised as a

responsible adult.” Jen said “I bet you could do something with those buttons.” At that moment one of my favourite introduction and reflection activities was created.

The next day we used the buttons at our staff retreat. As colleagues came into the room, I asked them to pick a button that represented their expectations for the day. It was a great success as an icebreaker and for goal setting; later we used the buttons as a reflection tool referring back to those we had initially chosen as we recognized our progress throughout our meeting.

Directions:

- Place an assortment of buttons with a variety of appropriate slogans and symbols in a space where all group members have access to them (to find meaningful and interesting buttons, visit gift shops, stationers and other novelty shops). Have a large enough selection for group members to feel they have a choice.
- Ask participants to choose a button that represents their mood, or the attitude, quality, or strength they are bringing to the day or program.
- Depending on the size or goals of the group, have participants choose partners and share as in the Object Trade activity, or go around in a circle and ask group members to share individually (always allow group members to pass).
- Participants seem to enjoy wearing the buttons for the day; they can be interesting conversation pieces and add a sense of fun and camaraderie.
- At the end of the day or program, use them in closing to report on any changes in attitudes, strengths and so on.

Along with giving participants an opportunity to share some of their goals for a program, it is important for the facilitator to set any necessary expectations or ground rules for the group. Front-loading expectations and ideas for the group to think about at the start of the program is important and can be effectively done in a fun, short, interactive way. There

should be a difference between the program/facilitator-driven ground rules communicated at the start of a program and the group norms or value agreements created by group members themselves later in the group process. It is after the group has experienced some time working together — seeing and experiencing the strengths and weaknesses and actually experiencing some conflict or struggle — that creating their own norms will become most valuable.

Giving Learners Control and Responsibility for Learning

Empowering participants to feel like they own their learning experience and have control from the start of their group experience can encourage participation and “buy in” from group members. Simple but intentional actions can establish a positive trusting tone in which participants feel empowered rather than “at the mercy” of the facilitator.

Think about creating opportunities that build this sense of choice and control for participants from the very beginning of the program. In warm-up activities where someone is in the spotlight make sure there is a rule that allows a person who may be uncomfortable about being in this position an easy “out” or an option to participate at their own pace.

For example, the icebreaker “Have You Ever” (Rohnke, 1991) requires a participant to stand in the centre and ask a question about something they have done in order to establish commonalities with their fellow group members, like “Have you ever been to Paris?” At that point, everyone in the circle who has been to Paris must leave their spot and find a new one, and the person from the centre grabs one of those empty spots leaving someone new in the centre to ask a question. At the beginning of the game I establish an easy buzz word the person in the centre can say if they can’t think of a “Have You Ever” question.

Creating situations that allow more introverted group members some kind of

“out” or “aid” gives them an opportunity to participate fully and warm up to the group process, trusting that you won’t put them in a situation that is embarrassing or put them “on the spot” before they are ready. This technique used during a silly warm-up game can pay off later in the group process. By building trust in this way, group members build comfort within the group and are more willing to push their comfort zone later in the group process when it really matters. If some people are challenged too early in a program before any trust builders or warm ups, a facilitator risks losing them!

Some strategies that I have found to help participants feel what John Dewey called “perceived internal freedom” and in control of their learning include the following:

- Allowing participants to pass in a group discussion especially at the start of the group process.
- Thoughtfully sequencing activities and discussion methods to build comfort within the group incrementally.
- Taking time to get the group warmed up! Start with partner sharing before large group sharing.
- Not calling on people to share in a group, but instead creating opportunities for participants to volunteer.

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Jenn Stanchfield is the program design and curriculum specialist at High Five Adventure Learning Center in Brattleboro Vermont. This selection is from her upcoming book, Tips & Tools: For the Art of Group Facilitation, Wood ‘N’ Barnes Publishing, 405-946-0621.

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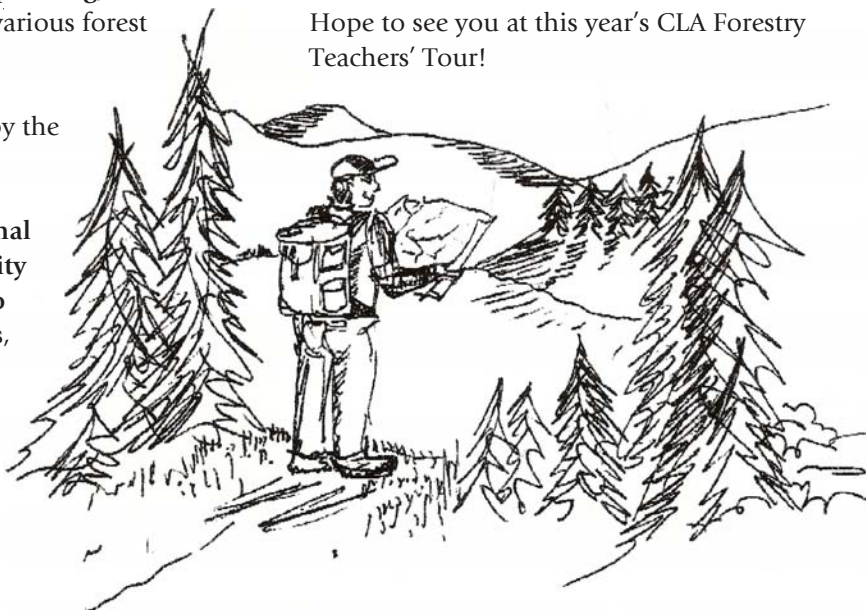
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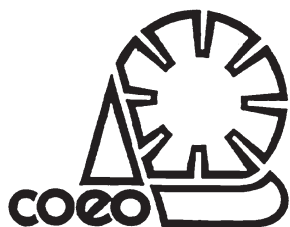
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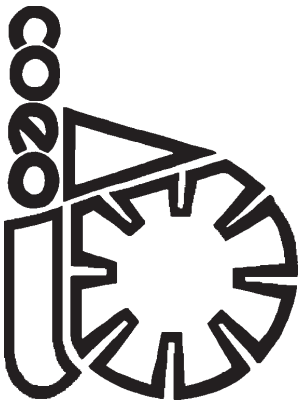
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