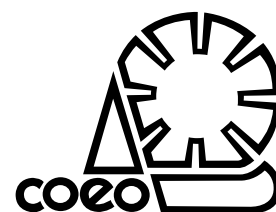


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF
Winter 2012, 24(2)

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



Pathways

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. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive 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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Pathways

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Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please refer to page 36 for submission guidelines.

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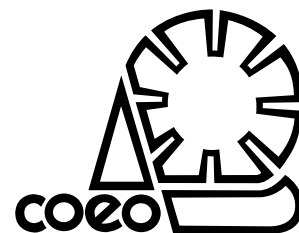
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Daniel Tziatis

Pathways is now in the midst of a successful routine of having two open content and two theme issues each year. The theme issues involve guest editors (often from our own editorial board or annual conference organizers) who may work a year ahead to gather quality content to showcase important issues and initiatives in outdoor education. The open content issues involve coordinating the submissions that arrive over the year with the odd choice reprint and the sought out submission.

With this open content issue, we have all of the above. We are pleased to print a report covering views of environmental and outdoor education by Erminia Pedretti (OISE, Science Education). Also arriving in 2011 was Liz Kirk's thoughtful questioning, "Is age 30 over the hill for outdoor professionals?" Liz also presented on this topic at the 2011 annual conference. David Bain's muse about readings and guiding on the trail is reprinted with permission from *Nastawgan*. It is a rare treat of personal insight that many can relate to on multiple levels. Finally, Ulrich Dettweiler's submission is a request. I met Ulrich at an International Outdoor Research Conference in Denmark. He referred to "adjustment symptoms" for staff returning from guiding in outdoor programs. That was more than enough grounds for us to strike up a friendship. *Pathways* is now in Germany and Uli is published in Canada. These three means of gathering submissions—the request, the reprint and the "happy arrival"—all speak to a certain excitement that comes with each open content issue of *Pathways*.

The same is true for our columns: all three means are in play. Zsuzsi Fodor was asked to write about her connections between food systems, activism and outdoor education, but elected to write a piece about mentoring (and the above three themes) best suited for our "Trail Blazers" column. Daniel Tziatis, learning about *Pathways*, offers a "Prospect Point" column concerning humour and insightful personal storylines. And Bonnie Anderson responds here to a request for more of the always essential "Backpocket" activity-based column.

I suppose I am explaining the process of gathering material for a 36-page issue twice a year. It is a . . . well . . . fun and rewarding experience. Try service as a guest editor down the trail and see for yourself.

Finally one correction to report: In Greg Lowan's Summer 2011 article, "Adrift in Our National Consciousness," (p. 27) we listed a participant as Solo, when the correct spelling should have been "Sto:lo". This is the participant's cultural name and is important in the context of the quotation shared. We apologize for the error.

At *Pathways* we look forward to 2012. Be in touch with us through our editorial team to help us seek submissions as requests, reprints and "happy arrivals."

Bob Henderson
Interim Chair of Editorial Board

Sketch Pad – Thanks to art teacher Suzanne Calderone-Bowerman, and to student artists Lara Hunter (cover and pages 3, 31, 36), Carolyn Garbas (page 14), Elena Routledge (page 20) and Carlannah Chester (page 27).

President's View

It's winter again and without fail, everywhere I go I overhear people's comments about how much they disdain this time of year. In the line at the post office: "Can you believe it? It just kept snowing. I had to shovel my driveway three times yesterday!" At the grocery store checkout: "Really, I don't care what that weather guy says, I don't ever remember it being this cold before." At the dinner table: "I'm soooo cold! I HATE WINTER!!! Can we move to California?" Maybe winter makes you feel like moving to California or at least like not wanting to leave your home. Yes, winter weather can make life difficult and uncomfortable at times, but it does have an upside: snow. I'm sure many of you have great memories associated with snow (and the winter weather that brings it) — childhood memories of times spent outside in nature and participating in a variety of physical activities.

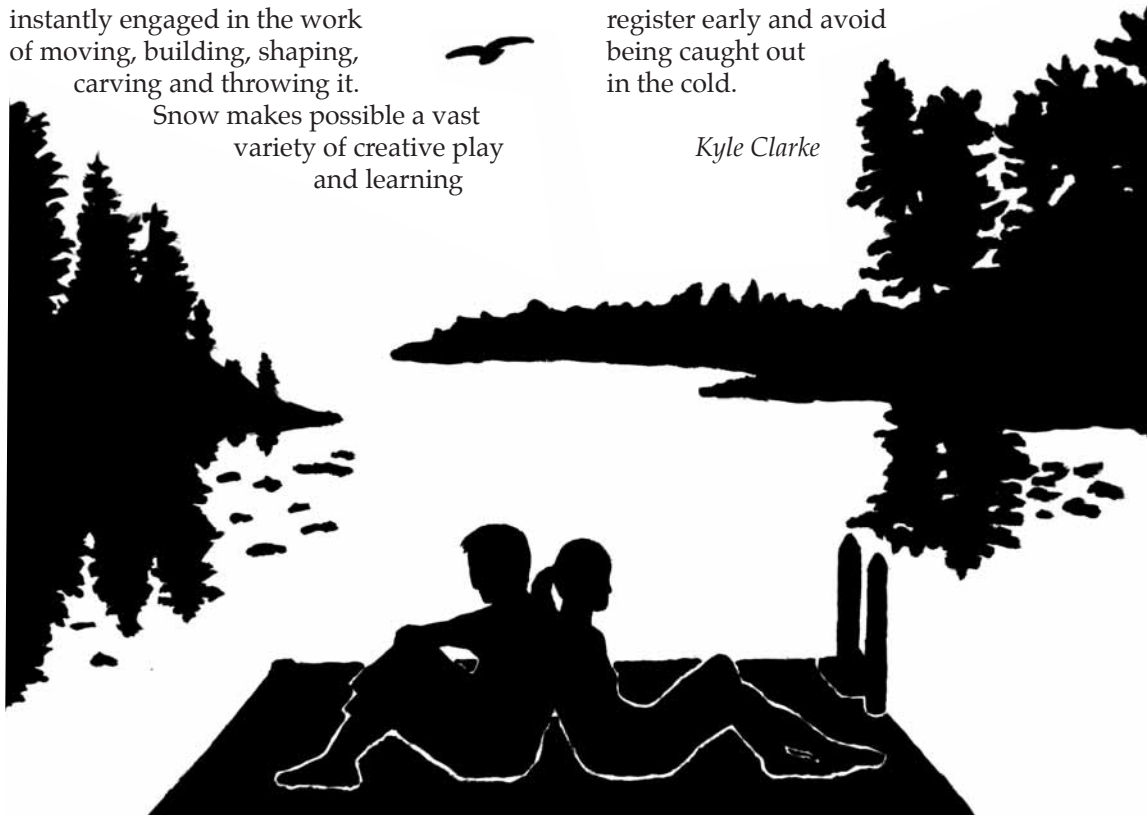
For children, snow = fun. From what I have observed and experienced I believe this to be true and I'm sure most elementary school teachers would support my claim. Our elementary schoolyards are transformed with the addition of snow. Children become instantly engaged in the work of moving, building, shaping, carving and throwing it.

Snow makes possible a vast variety of creative play and learning

opportunities, as expeditions are undertaken, works of art created, fortresses constructed, athletic records set and peaceful places of tranquility discovered and enjoyed. Snow is a captivating material and with it wintertime offers countless possibilities for learning outside.

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario believes that winter is an excellent time of the year to be learning outdoors and so we are once again proud to be presenting our annual Make Peace with Winter gathering. This year's MPWW is being held at The Institute for Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies in Wiarton, Ontario during the first weekend in February. COEO member Deborah Diebel has taken the lead in organizing this event and has put together an itinerary filled with loads of outdoor learning and fun. From moccasin making and toboggan building to stargazing and snowflake identification, this winter gathering has it all — including a winter gear and clothing swap! More information about this conference is available on the COEO website, but please note that registration numbers are limited, so it would be best to register early and avoid being caught out in the cold.

Kyle Clarke



A Baseline Study of Ontario Teachers' Views of Environmental and Outdoor Education

By Erminia Pedretti, Joanne Nazir, Michael Tan, Katherine Bellomo and Gabriel Ayyavoo

The research described in this report came about as a result of several converging factors in Ontario: a resurgence of interest in environmental and outdoor education (including outdoor education (OE) centres); recent publications supporting environmental and outdoor education; and curriculum revisions across subject areas that include environmental education (EE) outcomes.

Despite the surge of interest in EE, a variety of theoretical perspectives on the subject, and the growing abundance of teaching resources, it is still unclear how EE is being enacted in classrooms. As far back as 1996, Hart identified the lack of existing empirical studies tracking teachers' views and pedagogical practices of EE. A search of academic literature more than a decade later revealed little change. We were unable to find any substantial studies mapping Ontario teachers' knowledge, views and practice of EE or its link to OE. This study was designed in response to this gap, to act as a baseline study of environmental and outdoor education in Ontario.

Environmental and Outdoor Education in Ontario

EE and OE have established, linked histories in Canada (Passmore, 1972). In the year 2000, Russell, Bell and Fawcett described EE in Canada as consisting of a "diversity of narratives" (p. 207) with many possible avenues of practice. Traditional courses, advocacy activities, media programs and outdoor-/nature-based programs are some of the avenues they identified through which EE was being enacted across the country. Sauvé (2005) reaffirmed this portrait of EE, as a vaguely defined discipline with multiple avenues of pursuance, by identifying 15 currents or different ways of conceptualising and practicing EE. Several of Sauvé's currents link learning in the outdoors with EE. For example, the naturalist current is

concerned with connecting children to nature by employing experiential strategies to immerse them in the natural world, while the bioregionalist approach aims at developing people's relationships with the local or regional environment or nature, and fostering a sense of belonging and place. (For a more detailed discussion of EE currents, see Sauvé, 2005).

Over the years, EE and OE have remained relatively low status topics in formal education. However, since 2007, a number of reports have been published that have resulted in a surge of interest in both areas within the province of Ontario. The first, *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future: Environmental Education in Ontario Schools*¹ (Working Group on Environmental Education, 2007), identified EE as a key issue in modern societies and recommended its immediate inclusion in all provincial school curricula. In response to this recommendation, the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2009 published the document *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow: A Policy Framework for Environmental Education in Ontario Schools* that sought to expand opportunities and provide support for EE in schools. Other government and non-governmental organizations have also taken up the challenge of providing EE by producing a plethora of resources, ideas and lesson plans for environmental educators to use in classrooms. A third document, *Reconnecting Children with Nature* (Foster & Linney, 2007), was commissioned by the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO). In addition to promoting OE in general, this latter report emphasizes the link between environmental learning and the outdoors:

Early, sequenced and repeated experiences in the outdoors develop a kinship with nature that can evolve into an informed, proactive and lifelong stewardship of our natural environment (Foster & Linney, 2007, p.53).

One of the resounding conclusions of this report is that OE centres are important, unique venues for providing EE in Ontario.

Study Overview

The study consisted of an online survey followed by a series of in-depth interviews with survey respondents who volunteered for this aspect of data collection. The survey was developed over several months by the research team members who read through the literature and engaged in ongoing discussions about the matters most relevant to the Ontario context. The survey consisted of 93 items divided into nine sections: (a) demographic information, (b) personal beliefs about the environment, (c) classroom beliefs about and practices of OE and EE, (d) school context beliefs and practices, (e) gaps between beliefs and practices, (f) challenges to EE/opportunities for professional development, (g) personal beliefs about OE, (h) teachers' use of OE centres, and (i) an open response section. The majority of the questionnaire consisted of five-point Likert-scale responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), along with a *neutral response* (3). The final instrument was validated through standard procedures of peer critique and pilot testing with a small sample of the intended test population. This instrument was posted online through a popular survey hosting platform. The call for participants was widely advertised across Ontario, through established teacher forums, popular teacher magazines and personal contact lists. The survey remained open for response by all teachers of all grade levels for eight months between November 2008 and June 2009. The online platform used to host the survey automatically collated the data and generated descriptive statistics. These descriptive statistics form the basis of the analysis presented in this paper.

As part of the open response section, survey respondents were invited to volunteer for an in-depth interview, intended to allow them to expand on answers given in the survey and provide opportunities for the emergence of ideas that may not have been anticipated by the instrument. Twenty-four

interviews (mainly telephone interviews) were conducted with teachers and outdoor educators from across the province. These interviews were analyzed for salient categories and themes relevant to OE and EE using standard qualitative analysis procedures. The reporting of direct quotes is followed by a pseudonym and subject area, while responses to open-ended survey questions are identified by a respondent number.

There are a few limitations to note about the study. First, although there was a seemingly large response to the survey (N=377), the actual responses represent but a small proportion of the total number of Ontario teachers.² Second, participants in the study do not constitute a statistically representative sample of Ontario teachers since participation in the survey was self-selecting and voluntary. Based on these two points, caution is advised regarding the extent to which generalizations can be made to the entire Ontario teaching population. Third, the study combines elementary and secondary data. It is worth noting that the needs of elementary and secondary teachers are often different, as are the contexts in which they operate. For the purposes of this report, the choice was made to present a broad picture of the Ontario landscape. Subsequent reports will provide more fine-grained analyses. Furthermore, a complete reporting of all data is beyond the scope of this paper. In spite of these limitations, we believe that our study provides a reasonable and helpful portrayal of what is going on in the province with respect to EE and OE. More importantly, our research provided a forum for teachers' voices across the province. Below we highlight some of the findings from our study.

Study Participants

Of the 377 respondents to the survey, 69% identified themselves as female. The majority of respondents possessed both an undergraduate degree (81.6%) and a Bachelor of Education degree (82.2%). A significant minority possessed a graduate degree: 27.1% at the master's level and

2.8% at the doctorate level. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (60.1%) were between 31 and 50 years old. Many were experienced teachers, with 56.5% reporting more than ten years' teaching experience, and 25% reporting five to ten years' teaching experience. Only 18.5% of the respondents were beginning teachers with less than five years' teaching experience.

The survey was open province wide but 36.3% of the responses came from the City of Toronto (not surprising since Toronto has approximately 42% of Ontario's population). Responses came from 43 different cities and towns in Ontario, including Barrie, Brampton, Cambridge, Dryden, Guelph, Kingston, London, North Bay, Oshawa, Orillia, Pembroke, Port Colborne, Sarnia,

Table 1: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Statement	Rating Average*
<i>The Environment</i>	
The dangers of environmental degradation are often overstated	2.00
Environmental action at an individual level is futile	1.60
Corporate expansion is a major cause of environmental degradation in the last 50 years	3.89
Governments should do more to alleviate environmental degradation	4.38
Technology can reduce the environmental impact of economic development	3.61
I am aware of environmental issues affecting my local community	4.32
I consider myself an ally of environmental causes	4.29
<i>Environmental Education</i>	
Environmental education is a high status topic for me	4.09
Environmental education is generally well implemented in my classroom	3.54
I am successful in getting my students concerned about the GLOBAL environment	3.40
I am successful in getting my students concerned about my LOCAL environment	3.55
In classrooms teachers should advocate a particular stand with respect to environmental issues	3.43
Environmental education should include a social justice perspective	4.20
Environmental education should include an action component	4.36
<i>Outdoor Education</i>	
Fieldtrips and activities outside the classroom area essential to environmental education	4.46
I make opportunities to be close to nature	3.87
I frequently use Outdoor Education Centre visits to promote environmental awareness	2.85
Visits to Outdoor Education Centres should be an essential component of environmental education	4.47
Outdoor education should be about connecting children to the natural environment	4.58
Outdoor education should be about helping students to understand the role of nature in their lives	4.58
Outdoor education should be about helping students to make choices about socio-political action	4.03

Temiskaming Shores, Timmins, Welland and Woodstock. Overall, 58% of the respondents identified their school as urban. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents worked within public English school systems, 23.3 % within Catholic English schools and 5.2% in independent schools. A slightly greater proportion of secondary level teachers (54%) chose to respond to the survey than those at the elementary level (46%).

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Table 1 summarises respondents' main beliefs and practices with respect to the environment, EE and OE. From these results it is clear that respondents hold decisive opinions about the issues under study.

Notably, the teachers surveyed possess an urgent sense that the environment is deteriorating, and are of the opinion that multi-level action is needed to address the problem. Overwhelmingly, study participants consider themselves allies of environmental causes (rating average= 4.29) and agree that EE is a high status topic for them personally (4.09). They also believe they are doing a good job at implementing EE in their individual classrooms (3.54), specifically reporting fair levels of success in getting students interested in the global (3.40) and local (3.55) environment. Figure 1 provides more detailed information on the self reported frequency of EE in classrooms. It shows that 92% of the respondents engage in some form of EE in their normal teaching practice. However, this engagement is of

variable frequency, with only 47% percent reporting that EE occurs at least once a week in their classrooms.

The study data also indicates that respondents have many ideas about the ideal nature of EE and how it should be practiced in schools. Table 1 demonstrates some of these beliefs. Most conspicuously, teachers surveyed believe that, in classrooms, teachers should advocate a particular stand with respect to environment (3.43); EE should include social justice (4.20) and action components (4.36); and outdoor education is an essential component of EE (4.46). OE is viewed as necessary for connecting children to the natural environment (4.58); and helping students to understand the role of nature in their lives (4.58).

Participants passionately expanded on their beliefs in their open ended comments and interviews. For example,

This [the environment] is the most important issue of the coming century. Though I'm concerned about desensitization through repetition and hypocrisy (Respondent 330).

... to me, the most important part of environmental education is developing students with the skills so that they do something as they get older to help improve the environment or work with the environment, or be aware of the environment (Interview with Julian, Geography Teacher).

I believe that if the teacher feels passionate about environmental issues s/he can pass on their sentiments to their students. As a holistic educator I believe in transformational learning. Through their learning experiences students need to be transformed into better human beings who can be stewards of the environment. Through my involvement in environmental committees, I have provided opportunities for students to become sensitized to environmental issues (Respondent 123).

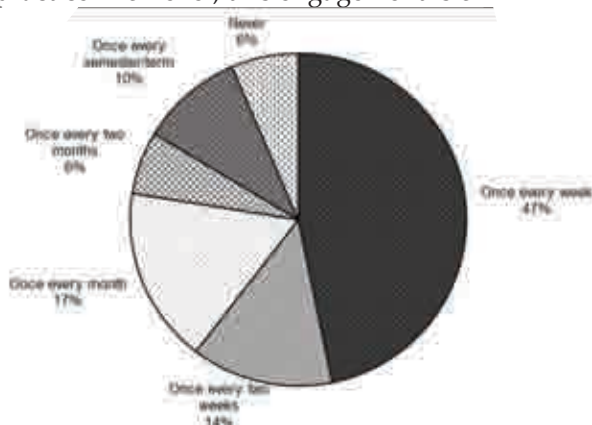


Figure 1: The Frequency of Environmental Education in Classrooms

Based on the results reported above, it is reasonable to infer that the study participants support the inclusion of EE in schools. On the issue of who should be responsible for teaching it, 60% of educators felt that EE is a cross-curricular component and thus the responsibility of all teachers, not the domain of a subject specialist or a standalone course (see Figure 2). Interestingly, of the 5% who felt that EE should be taught through a subject, science and geography were the most common choices.

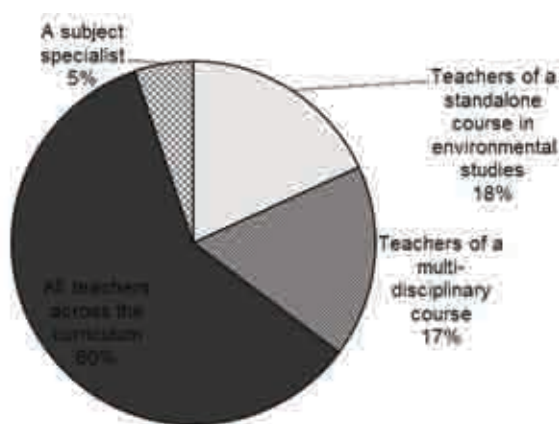


Figure 2: Who Should Be Responsible for Environmental Education?

Tensions and Opportunities

In addition to clear positive indicators supporting the viability of EE and OE for schools, the study data also revealed tensions and possible opportunities for intervention concerning these issues. Four of these are highlighted below:

Environmental Educators: A Marginalised Minority

While study participants were confident in their support for environmental and outdoor education, they were equally certain that in schools they exist as a marginalised minority, that is, many of their colleagues do not support EE. Their responses converged around the opinion that they are commonly caricatured as “weird, tree hugging idealists” by students and fellow teachers. For many, this unflattering portrait is a source of

disenchantment and disempowerment. According to one interviewee,

I find many of the staff at the school where I work, don't really seem to care very much about environmental issues. And they are not role modeling, because they don't care; they're not really very good role models to the students. I still see teachers throwing pop cans in the garbage and not recycling their paper. . . . With my green team I've put reuse boxes for paper that's only been used on one side pretty much in every classroom and every office space in the school. But I can't convince people to use one-sided paper in their printers. I feel that I'm the only one that goes collecting one-sided paper for my printer. I don't have a lot of support at my school from the other staff. So that's hard, because you feel you're one person against everybody and trying to change people's views (Interview with Flora, Teacher / Former Outdoor Educator).

Additional studies need to be done to verify this phenomenon. However, if it is true that environmental educators are perceived as a marginal group, a possible direction for professional development would be to support and nurture them, perhaps by increasing the number of networking opportunities, action research projects or other forums known to bring educators together and assist in building strong communities of practice.

More Basic Environmental Education for Teachers

Across the study a number of items were included to investigate the barriers to effective EE and OE. Participant responses indicated the perennial challenges that educators generally face: an overcrowded curriculum, lack of curriculum resources, and difficulties in aligning EE with existing official expectations. However, one set of results that were particularly noteworthy, and offered a possible entry point for intervention, came from an item

designed to explore the sources of teachers' environmental knowledge: as shown in Figure 3, a majority of participants (over 75%) attributed their EE to personal studies rather than professional development sources. Indeed, professional teacher education opportunities, such as Additional Qualification (AQ) courses and Preservice courses, were cited by only 10–12% of respondents as a source of EE.

Teachers' disappointment with current professional educational opportunities for EE was further indicated by their response to a survey item that asked them to identify topics in which they needed additional education. A wide range of topics received high positive rating averages, including content knowledge (3.78), pedagogical strategies (3.96), assessment techniques (3.71), curriculum development (4.09) and the use of OE facilities (3.97). When asked about the kinds of professional development they would like to see, 30% of respondents chose "time at school to plan with colleagues;" 38% wanted a "full day in-service workshop;" 21% indicated they would like an opportunity to "visit an OE centre;" and 11% chose "action research."

Our results suggest that teachers who are passionate about the environment generally believe they are acting in isolation, and primarily use personal knowledge to provide EE. They believe they are doing their best in the face of very little professional support. However, they seem to hunger for appropriate educational opportunities that allow them to grow in their knowledge and practice of EE. Going further, these results may also indicate one reason why EE is not more widely practiced in formal education. Many teachers may simply lack basic knowledge and/or pedagogical

strategies about environmental issues and education. Faculties of education and teacher professional development bodies may consider supplementing their programs and expanding opportunities for EE in their offerings in the light of these results.

The Gap Between Beliefs and Practices

A section of the survey was dedicated to exploring the relationship between teachers' ideal beliefs about EE and their practices in classrooms. The results revealed a clear gap between what respondents believe EE *should be* and *what it is* in actuality. Figure 4 illustrates the gap.

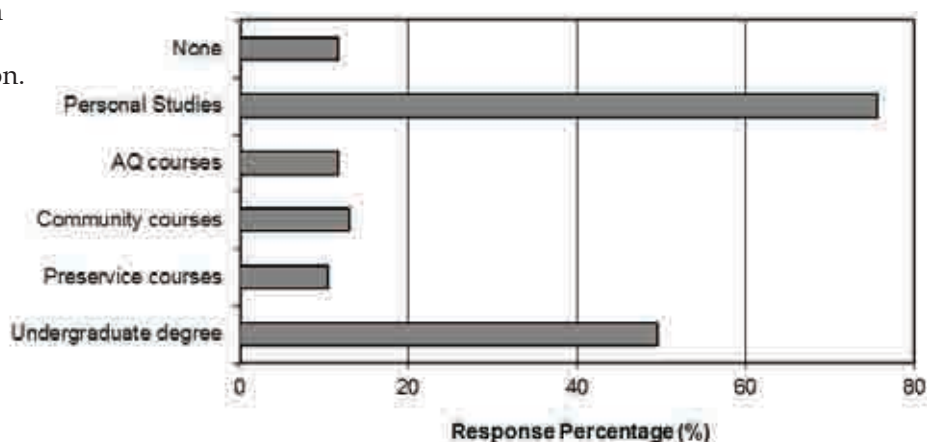


Figure 3: Sources of Teachers' Environmental Education

From the graphic, it is clear that teachers have higher expectations for EE than what usually occurs in classrooms. It is also clear that, while raising student awareness about the environment is important, teachers also believe that other aspects—such as critical thinking, the influence of technology, the effect of global trade flows and environmental activism—should receive greater emphasis in practice.

The existence of gaps between what teachers believe and what they do in practice is not, in itself, surprising; the existence of theory–practice gaps is well established in education research literature about teacher praxis. Understanding why specific gaps exist is necessary to suggest how they might be bridged. The nature of the gaps identified in this study indicates, among other things, the complex nature of EE. Teachers' visions of

EE often involve complex and controversial components. For example, incorporating activism in classrooms is a compelling idea, but achieving it within the confines of the

day, or learning the names of plants, or growing a garden and watching things change, or looking at animals. Just sort of giving them that experience,

outdoors. And helping them understand a bit about their relationship with nature, like for instance, a food web, or an energy pyramid (Interview with Allison, Kindergarten teacher).

However despite enthusiastic support for the connection between OE and EE, 52% of respondents indicated that they *do not* make use of visits to OE centres in their teaching. When asked

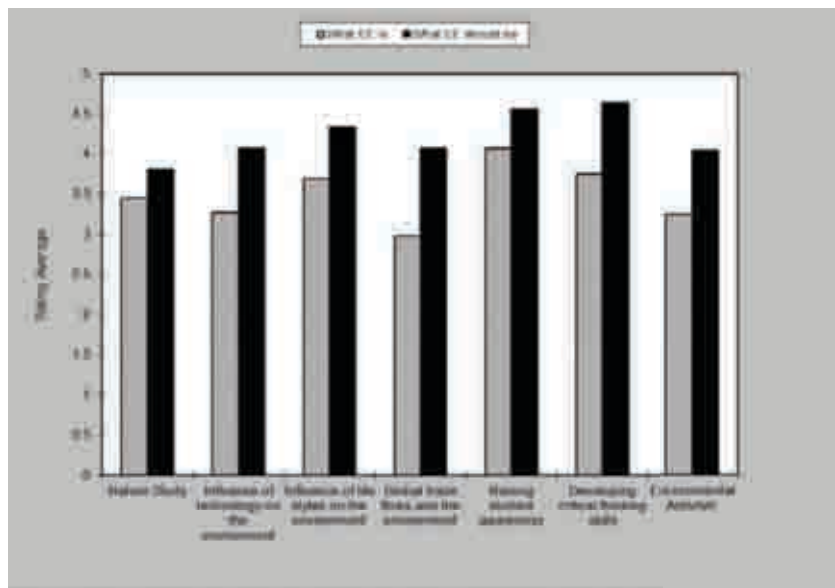


Figure 4: The Nature of Environmental Education in Schools

traditional classroom is a conundrum well-established in existing educational literature (e.g., Alsop & Bencze, 2010; Roth & Calabrese Barton, 2004; Pedretti et al., 2008). Additional work is needed to explore these gaps in more detail and to assist teachers in developing practical pedagogical strategies to bridge them.

The Link Between Environmental and Outdoor Education

As discussed earlier, survey respondents believe there is a strong link between OE and EE (see Table 1). In addition to the statistical data summarized in Table 1, in-depth interviews provided considerable evidence to support this link. According to one teacher,

I think part of environmental education is getting kids to be comfortable in nature. Having them understand that they can enjoy being in nature, they don't have to be afraid of it. That it's a place where they can have fun, outside, enjoying the shade on a hot

to account for this discrepancy, teachers identified the lack of access to outdoor facilities and lack of professional knowledge about OE as major barriers to their use of OE centres. For example,

Teachers could be more encouraged and trained on how to bring students outside for lessons in and about their communities. Outdoor education centres are wonderful additions to the classroom education, but environmental issues need to be an everyday issue in the lives of students and teachers. Outdoor centres isolate outdoor education to one or two special days a year and this isn't enough to have a significant impact (Respondent 11).

A search of the existing academic literature reveals a dearth of rigorous research about the benefits of OE, especially the work done at OE centres. The history of OE in Ontario suggests that the Ministry of Education is often ambivalent, viewing OE centres as quaint but expendable facilities in times of

organizational strain. In contrast, the results reported above suggest the existence of an essential role for OE centres and the need for further investigation into the connections between OE in general and EE. Such work may further corroborate the need for greater collaboration between outdoor and indoor educators and an expansion of existing OE opportunities for schools as part of the overarching future development of EE.

Implications and Conclusions

This study sought to establish a baseline of Ontario teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to EE and OE. Overall, it is extremely heartening that there exists a dedicated core of teachers who are passionate about EE and recognise its link to OE. However, a number of implications emerged from this study that warrant further consideration.

First, there is a need for more research of this type, especially exploring the gaps between teachers' beliefs and practices in EE and OE. For example, detailed studies are needed of why teachers do not include action or agency more frequently in their lessons when they clearly believe it to be a vital part of EE. More studies are also needed to explore the barriers to the use of outdoor centres since teachers believe outdoor experiences are intrinsic to environmental learning. Ideally such research should go beyond explaining the gaps, seeking instead to bridge them in ways that are realistic, praxis oriented and relevant to teachers.

Second, there is a pressing need for more professional education opportunities for teachers in the areas of EE and OE. The analyses indicate that most of the respondents' knowledge in these domains comes from personal studies/interest. Furthermore, the data suggests that various types of educational interventions may be necessary for different groups of educators; those who are not particularly committed to EE or OE will have different needs from those who are committed but need help in deepening their understanding and practice of EE and OE. For many teachers, opportunities are needed to come up

with pedagogical strategies for intrinsic components of EE, paying particular attention to, for example, developing the necessary skills in decision making, critical thinking, action, and outdoor pedagogy.

Third, our study suggests that much stronger links between EE and OE would be beneficial. This could take many forms: working together in Professional Learning Communities that have diverse membership (i.e., teachers, environmental specialists, outdoor educators); providing teachers with opportunities to visit OE as part of professional development; and providing students with ongoing opportunities to attend OE centres while in elementary and secondary schooling.

Fourth, EE and OE need to be an important component of pre-service education programs. Again, there are many ways in which this can be accomplished (and in some faculties of education, some of these strategies are already in place): lobbying for EE as a teachable subject; integrating EE across all subjects in elementary and secondary programs in a coherent way; and offering environmental studies courses that are intense in content and pedagogy. The question of whether EE should be a stand-alone subject or integrated across the curriculum is still open to debate, although 60% of respondents in this study agree that EE should be the responsibility of all teachers across the curriculum.

What seems clear is that many teachers who are committed to EE have their own ideas about it. Although some ready-made plans and kits exist to assist teachers, they may not fully take into account teachers' ideas or the practical realities of schooling. As such, rather than providing more tailor-made resources, those interested in promoting EE should consider supporting research and educational opportunities to nurture the development of strong communities of environmental educators in schools. Teachers indicated that time in schools to work with colleagues and opportunities to develop curriculum are sorely lacking. If we are indeed to make significant strides

in EE, then we must provide teachers with more opportunities to work in collegial communities, develop curriculum, and examine practice.

Notes

¹ This report is commonly referred to as “The Bondar Report.”

² For 2008–2009, the Ontario Ministry of Education reported that there were 114,872.91 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers working in Ontario.

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100 Campfires: Towards a Personal Canoeing Philosophy

By David Bain

This article is based on a presentation made at the Wilderness Canoeing Symposium (WCS) hosted by the Toronto Wilderness Canoeing Association on February 19, 2011. This article first appeared in *Nastawgan, Summer 2011*, 38(2). It is reprinted here with permission.

I guess that in my 17 years of novice canoeing, I have racked up a little over 100 “tent” nights. For me that’s 100 or so campfires, 100 chances to talk, surrounded by the silence. In fact, some of the best conversations I’ve ever had have been around a campfire. A little Scotch, great friends, the vault of the sky. . . . Over time, and a lot of conversation, the great group of guys I trip with have sure chewed the fat—a lot. And we have slowly, over that time, arrived at a common understanding of why we do this thing, this ritual from other centuries passed: Canoeing. Because I’m not sure it fits very well into the 21st century. It’s an anachronism.

At first it seemed important, to me anyway, to have “an approach” to canoeing: when to trip, who to trip with, what to take. But I had an incredible lack of practical experience to draw on. So I started to read. I went to the library and used book stores, and I discovered eBay.

And over the next five years or so, I read every canoe book I could get my hands on. I read Grey Owl and canoe history. I read about contemporary canoe trips and Bill Mason, and I even enjoyed some canoeing fiction. After reading Jerry Dennis’ *From a Wooden Canoe*, I caught the bug and collected antique paddles, axes, packs and snowshoes. I bought a wood and canvas canoe that weighed about 115 lbs, and later sold it when I realized that I couldn’t get 115 lbs of canoe on top of my Honda Civic.

I even found time for canoeing. After five years I had been on a total of five canoe trips of five days each. And by then I owned and had read over 300 books on canoeing. I think you can imagine where this is going . . .

I remember being picked up at 2 am for one of those early trips to Killarney. I was at the end of the driveway with my own gear, plus all of the group gear (because, of course, I had read all of those books so I thought I knew exactly what we needed). I even had the mixed CD of Gordon Lightfoot music that we would listen to—exclusively—all the way to Killarney. When we arrived, I started to give advice. I quoted Sig Olson and Bill Mason and Edward Abbey. I set up the tarp, I consulted on the placement of everyone’s tents. I had brought canoeing books on the trip with me, and encouraged my companions to read them. My first trip had a total of three adults and two 11 year olds. By my fourth trip there were only two of us left. Message received: I had become a royal pain in the ass.

The four of us who canoe together now have been at it as a group for seven years. One of them is my buddy Mike. He was on my first trip, and has been on every trip with me since. This summer will be our 17th trip together. But I still buy and read books about the wilderness and canoeing, even if I’ve tried to stop being in charge of every aspect of the trip. In all that reading, 17 annual one-week trips, and all those campfire conversations, had an approach to canoeing worth sharing actually emerged? Had we as a group developed any sort of useful canoeing philosophy? Is there such a thing?

I teach Canadian history and English to Grade 7 and 8 students. I guess as the “history guy,” my contribution was context. So naturally, between teaching about the native people and the Voyageurs for the past 21 years, I began to develop an understanding of where canoeing in Canada has come from.

If I was an IT guy, I might break canoeing in Canada into distinct software versions:

Canoeing 1.0 – Aboriginal canoeing

Canoeing 2.0 – The fur trade years: The canoe as a truck

Canoeing 3.0 – The recreation years (the afternoon paddle, linen and parasol crowd)

Canoeing 4.0 – The early trippers: The wood/canvas-balsam bed crowd

Canoeing 5.0 – The fibreglass / Kevlar / Royalex / Thermarest crowd

Canoeing 6.0 – is here now....

I call it Canoeing 6.0. You can call it anything you want, but I believe that if you look critically at the last ten years, you will see that inevitable change has come to the canoeing community. The average length of a canoe trip has been steadily dropping for years. The rise



of sea kayaking and white-water playboating has made canoeing, for many, an activity for a few hours in an afternoon, like a round of golf. And I think that it is fairly easy to see that one of the biggest changes for wilderness canoeing is the exponential growth in communications technology.

A case in point: In Ted Kerasote's *Out There: In the Wild in a Wired Age*, he addresses one of the key issues we face in the early 21st century: the effect that our use of communication technology has on our relationships with others, and on the existing social fabric, or, in this case, on the fabric of a canoe trip. In 2003, when Kerasote's partner takes a Sat phone on a trip down the Horton, Kerasote finds the nature of his experience changing. The two of them do not have it for emergency only. They are expected by those back home to "stay in touch," and Kerasote finds that, in his experience, this changes the entire nature of the trip.

When his partner starts to call home daily, Kerasote puts it this way: "Even on the Horton, the blessing of uncluttered mental space is no longer a function of remoteness . . . but of desire . . ." This is important to him because, "What matters and what is of little consequence becomes much clearer to me out here. In less quiet places, the noise surrounding my life disguises the difference."

Kerasote goes on to say, "It is not that the Sat phone is innovative. We both use technology at home. It's that it crosses some boundary erected in my mind as to what is appropriate behaviour when you are 'out there.'"

That was 2003. Today the Sat phone, the SPOT, the GPS, the iPod, and the ability to text and blog and use solar chargers while in previously remote areas of Canada's wilderness, have all become second nature. And to some of us it is frightening the speed with which they have become as accepted on the trip as a new design of sleeping pad or tent. Because unlike a tent or a sleeping pad, the adoption of remote communications technology can fundamentally alter the tripping experience, if you choose to let it. I would never argue against safety; wireless

communication would have saved Hornby, and Hubbard, no question. But beyond safety, are there other effects—either positive or negative?

In my Grade 8 English class we often discuss social media and networking, which is natural since the parents of half of my students work for RIM. We recently read an article in *USA Today* that highlighted several books addressing the effects of communications technologies on human relationships. The article concludes that we are in the middle of an enormous shift, and while it is impossible to truly grasp the significance of events while they are occurring, the point that came through loud and clear to my students was that the connections that we now enjoy with those who are *elsewhere* are weakening that connections we have with the people *we are actually with*. We've confused continual connectivity with real connection. In the article, Sherry Turkle, author of *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, is quoted as saying, "Technology is good at giving you more and more 'friended' people, more and more contacts all over the world, . . . It's not so good at giving you the contacts that count." With the right technology we can now blog from some remote arctic river, and we can Facebook from a campfire anywhere in the back of beyond. But at what cost to our wilderness experience?

The group I canoe with has so far adopted the approach that we will take technology (which is so far limited to cell phones) for emergency use only, on those more and more frequent occasions when we would have service. We want to focus our time together on the company of not only each other but also, and more importantly, the fifth member of our little group—the beautiful location we have spent all this energy getting to. Some of the places we visit, such as the eastern shoreline of Georgian Bay, are indeed unique. We try to give them our full, undivided attention for the always too short time we are there.

Are my fellow paddlers Luddites? Maybe, but I don't think so. We use technology freely at home. We choose not to use it when we canoe.

Again, this is not a rant against technology in and of itself; it is a cautionary stance against the effect that the use of technology can have on the nature of the canoe tripping experience. If one of us calls home the rest are in trouble for not doing the same. More than that, the authors whose writings I most admire contain passages that speak to the peace, the remoteness, the isolation of the canoeing experience. How would 21st century communications affect their experiences? I suspect the impact would be significant.

In the 1956 classic, *The Singing Wilderness*, Sigurd Olson created something quite different from the “land ethic” of earlier ecologists like Aldo Leopold; Olson created a land “aesthetic.” Olson observes that, “Looking for old pine knots to burn, picking berries, and paddling a canoe are not only fulfilling in themselves, they are an opportunity to participate in an act hallowed by forgotten generations.” He goes on to say that, “The movement of a canoe is like a reed in the wind. Silence is part of it . . . and wind in the trees. . . . When a man is part of his canoe, he is part of all that canoes have ever known.” For Olson, “peace is not to be mistaken for silence . . . rather it is a oneness with nature that is energizing and sustaining.”

Similarly, Paul Gruchow in *Travels in Canoe Country* writes that a wilderness journey appeals to that part of our being that is not dependent upon wisdom, but rather those activities that depend upon experience with the physical world . . . how to steer a canoe into the wind, how to make a fire in the rain, whether that sound in the night is sinister or benign . . . and to our capacity for delight and wonder . . . to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives . . . to our sense of beauty and pain the connection between the two forgotten, “until after we have all day battled a fierce wind and at last, with aching muscles, discover the bliss that descends with last light.” The perfect medicine, I think we would agree, for the nature deficit facing so many of our urban youth in Canada.

In the same vein, in *Outside of Straight Lines*, Robert Perkins, writing of a trip to the Torngat

Mountains, mused after several weeks of solo tripping about his inability to look at “the whole of things . . . not just through some system’s eye or preconceived notion” but “how to hold the whole picture, not just a fragment of it. . . . How to keep it outside of straight lines.”

I also think Pierre Trudeau was right when in 1944 he wrote the words that we all know so well:

What sets a canoeing expedition apart is that it purifies you more rapidly and inescapably than any other. Travel a thousand miles by train and you are a brute; pedal five hundred on a bicycle and you remain basically a bourgeois; paddle a hundred in a canoe and you are already a child of nature.

Now, in a canoe, where these premises are based on nature in its original state the mind conforms to that higher wisdom which we call natural philosophy; later, that healthy methodology and acquired humility will be useful in confronting mystical and spiritual questions.

His quote is an observation not only on the benefits of a specific location to travel, but more importantly on the *mode* of travel. I would like to suggest that another great Canadian thinker, Marshall McLuhan, would have agreed with Trudeau. I don’t know if McLuhan ever canoed, but his famous observation that the medium of delivery of any message has at least as much impact as the message itself, if not more, is equally applicable to canoeing as it is to media.

I think that the way you canoe sends a deep, unconscious message to your brain, and it defines the canoeing experience for you and those with you. Chew up the map and bag lakes in an all-day race to cover territory, and you are not going to be a fan of Sig Olson’s assertion that “without stillness there can be no knowing.” I imagine that if you take the leash of 21st century communication with you on your journey, you would not embrace

his dictum that “without divorcement from outside influences, man cannot know what spirit means.”

Some of us may in fact have sensed this detachment from the wilderness experience from something as common as a camera. When you are too focused on getting the picture, you can miss the forest for the trees.

Here is a case in point: I once struggled to get a photo of a bear swimming in Temagami with a cheap point and shoot digital camera. I knew that I couldn't get a great shot with that camera, but somehow the importance of getting that shot so that I could “remember the experience” became more important than actually looking at the bear with my eyes, using my ears, really “taking in” the experience as it happened, rather than settling for a less than perfect two-dimensional reminder to look at later. I suspect that we all have stories like this that we could share.

I have seen my companions simply put the camera down, and try to live in the now, in the present, and take the “mental” picture home, which is a more complete one since it includes sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. If a camera can detach us from the experience in that way, how much more interference can we expect from a communication device that invites all of the interruptions, separation anxieties and “noise” of the world we left behind to join us?

The eagerness of writers like Olson and others to embrace the isolation of the Canadian wilderness, and leave behind the noise of the modern world has shaped the philosophy of those I canoe with. Your philosophy will differ, and of course the challenge is to find those to trip with whose approach is compatible with your own.

Outside forces threaten. In 2008, potential changes to the Navigational Water Protection Act proposed at the federal level raised the spectre of a time when the historic right to paddle our streams and rivers will be challenged. This issue is ongoing, and may again raise its ugly head. In 2011, registration regulations for canoes, instructors and trip

leaders were proposed by Transport Canada with little or no input from the recreational canoeing community. A recent news story that quoted an Ontario government official as saying that certain areas of Crown Land in the province would be set aside for “fly-in” outfitters certainly set off alarm bells for many in the paddling community.

The comfortable days when canoe tripping was an accepted mainstream Canadian cultural activity may be behind us. Canoeing 6.0, and all the changes that it entails, beckons. Whether W.L. Morton's contention that “the alternative penetration of the wilderness and return to civilization is the basic rhythm of Canadian life” holds true in future, remains to be seen. In fact, canoeing may come to be viewed as a “subversive” activity, outside of the new mainstream of Canadian culture, a voice in the wilderness, as it were.

My group of trippers, certainly, are content to apply the brakes. We will remain, for now, paddlers in Canoeing Version 5.0—the Pandora's box of “technical improvements to paddle sports” is one that we are content to leave to the early adopters among our recreational canoeing community. As Roy MacGregor begins his book, *Escape: In Search of the Natural Soul of Canada*, with a quote from Melville: “It is not down on any map . . . true places never are.” I suspect that you won't find them on a GPS, either.

So what is in your canoeing future? Are you eager to embrace Canoeing 6.0? Are you content to stay firmly in Version 5.0? Or do you have visions of returning to the “good old days” of wood and canvas? Regardless, I would love to sit around a fire sometime and talk about it. I'll bring the Scotch. And I promise, when that time comes, I'll be the one doing the listening.

See you on the water.

David Bain teaches history for Grades 7 and 8 and is a member of the Wilderness Canoe Association.

Is 30 Years of Age Over-the-Hill for Outdoor Professionals?

By Liz Kirk

I am now 30 years old. For more than a decade, I have been paid to facilitate an array of outdoor-based programming with varying groups of participants. With such breadth of experience, I frequently feel like I am a valuable asset to the organizations for which I work. However, at recent staff training and trip preparation days, where I have been surrounded by other outdoor professionals working in a similar role, I have begun to get inklings of feeling “old.”

Is there an expiry date for frontline outdoor professionals? What is it? Or is it just a suggestion, like the milk you sniff and drink anyway, regardless of the date on the carton? At what point does it become necessary or desirable for an outdoor professional to go into to the “real world” and get a “real job”? How valuable is the experience of an outdoor professional over age 30? Is it worth adapting current organizational practices to retain these individuals for more than one or two seasons? I am unable to answer all of these questions within the next few pages, but I will refer to my personal experience and the available literature in order to share a few insights about longevity on the frontline as an outdoor professional.

At least once each year, I reach a career crossroads. Out of the blue, I suddenly start to panic. I have trouble justifying why I am still working on the frontline in the outdoor industry “at my age.” My mother and father have always been confused by how all the years invested in several university degrees could possibly align with my meagre paycheques. However, the panic tends to dissipate quickly once I again realize that I cannot think of an alternative job that would be more rewarding. My happiness and satisfaction are intertwined with this work, however varied and unpredictable it may be. Every opportunity I have to sense the enthusiasm of a new group bouncing off a bus or hear encouraging words from someone who sees the value in what I do, I

become rejuvenated, justified and resourced to continue working on the frontline in this challenging, yet consistently gratifying field.

Many of the individuals who begin work as outdoor professionals are “young, educated, single, and Caucasian” and are typically recent graduates of a related college or university program (Kirby, 2006, p. 79). In a recent study of frontline workers in three American outdoor behavioural healthcare programs, 85% of respondents were under the age of 30 (Marchand, Russell & Cross, 2009). These young men and women may choose to work in the outdoor industry early in their personal careers for a wide variety of reasons that could include

... their professional identity is likely not yet formed; they have the resources to indulge their own curiosity and cushion a couple of wrong turns; they have few or no familial attachments or obligations; and they are often driven by a strong sense of their own right to explore different careers until they land on a “passion” or “calling.” (Kirby, 2006, p. 4–5)

Kirby (2006) suggests that the outdoor industry attracts “inherently transient” individuals, bound to move on from this type of work within a relatively short period of time, regardless of other factors (p. 4). However, it remains unknown how many passionate outdoor professionals entering the field today earnestly intend on making this demanding lifestyle a long-term venture.

It has been said that the use of the term “career” in relation to either the outdoors or outdoor education is relatively recent, and this concept remains a contentious issue (Allin & Humberstone, 2006, p. 136). Despite opportunities for a diverse range of professional development, “it is generally acknowledged within the field that it lacks a clearly defined career structure” (Allin

& Humberstone, 2006, p. 135; Allin, 2004; Ross, 1989). Since there is no such thing as a standardized career path, if a long-term occupation in this field is your goal, “you have got to really work at it” (Udall, 1986, p. 21). Factors like a significant lack of mentoring opportunities and inadequate support to encourage longevity in younger professionals, combined with “limited opportunities for employees to advance up the career ladder,” contribute to frequent replacement of individuals employed at the “field” staff level (Thomas, 2002/2003, p. 59).

Why do so few people seem to continue this work into their late thirties? Physical limitations or injuries, like ongoing shoulder or back pain, may become no longer manageable within a job that requires portaging canoes every summer. Early departures may also potentially stem from a realization of one’s worth if one was performing “an equivalent job on the outside,” an apprehensiveness about getting trapped in a continually “undervalued” profession or from sensing a “mismatch between the nature of the person and the nature of the job” (Thomas, 2002/2003, p. 58). Perhaps personal goals to have a less intense work schedule and more time available to spend with friends, family and intimate partners motivate frontline employees to quickly move on to other fields where work and non-work aspects of one’s life are more easily combined (Marchand et al., 2009). What if concerns like these were more commonly acknowledged and addressed by managers and directors within the outdoor industry? Could early recognition of these issues lead to successful implementation of creative, low-budget alternatives designed to successfully support longevity among frontline staff?

If institutions or organizations offering outdoor-based programs want to offer high-quality instruction, delivered by dedicated and experienced professionals, they must adopt hiring and incentive practices that appropriately encourage this (Ross, 1989). Instructors in this field generally acknowledge the necessity of intertwining one’s lifestyle with this type of work, getting

“paid to play” as some say. In fact, many outdoor professionals find the satisfaction of the job so great, they willingly opt to overlook things like the high intensity of such work, the lack of significant income opportunities and the inability to have a permanent home or simple amenities of life (Ross, 1989), for at least a little while. Despite all this, older, experienced, educated outdoor professionals are “too often expendable” (Ross, 1989, p. 34) and risk exploitation, since “there seems to be no shortage of new people keen to enter the field” (Thomas, 2002/2003, p. 59). Given the common trend of outdoor professionals switching organizations or leaving the field completely after just one or two seasons, staff recruiting and retention frequently remain as major, if not the “greatest,” concerns for outdoor program directors (McCole, 2005, p. 328; Thomas, 2002/2003). Although proven to be a difficult task, hiring and maintaining a staff of caring, dedicated, knowledgeable, interested and committed individuals is “fundamentally important to the viability of the organization” (Erickson & Erickson, 2006, p. 6).

Outward Bound New Zealand runs mainly multi-day expedition programming and the average age of their employees is approximately 33 (personal communication, April, 2008). Twice this organization has been awarded the title of Best Place to Work in New Zealand due to “a clear, strong vision, a real sense of community amongst its employees, a commitment to grow and develop its people, and a culture of high performance” (Scoop Independent News, February, 2008). This is one example where prioritizing growth and development of all 50 employees creates a “very strong team culture” (Scoop Independent News, 2008). Staff satisfaction has skyrocketed due to the organization’s recognition of the importance of factors like family, time off and development of a supportive community atmosphere. I believe this same effect can happen in other places too.

Adjustments to current organizational practices are necessary to improve employee retention on the frontline. No one would

argue that additions like sick days, paid vacation, flexible scheduling options and health benefits could contribute to significant increases in employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Involving staff members in major decision making and in the development of policies and programs could also help. It has been found that such involvement allows staff to develop a stronger sense of ownership and acceptance, acquire a voice, and feel empowered to rebut changes, propose new ideas and vote on revisions (Mulvaney, 2011). If organizations are serious about recruiting and retaining high-performing, committed staff, they must take the basic requirements of these individuals into consideration and invest the necessary resources to implement or adapt current policies and programs in order to most effectively accommodate these needs.

Over time, most outdoor professionals develop their skills through various certification courses and professional development workshops. Working with a wide range of co-staff and a diversity of organizations helps expand the facilitation arsenal of the seasoned employee, so that his or her back pocket is overflowing with games, initiative tasks and debriefing ideas, ready to begin just as soon as I say the word “watermelon.” However, those who stick around a while also gain an assortment of skills and abilities that are difficult to quantify or express on a résumé. These skills include learning 13 names in two minutes and not mixing them up even if complete clothing changes are staged several times per day, how to let go of derogatory comments, as well as ways to effectively facilitating important learning experiences by stepping back or stepping in, allowing others to try, fail and succeed.

In today’s highly litigious society, one might assume that organizations offering outdoor programming would place a high value on retaining the decision-making and risk management experience of older outdoor professionals and that “leaders are by and large selected on the basis of their experience and perceived judgmental abilities” (Hanna, 1991, p. 7). Outdoor professionals “with significant field experience,” accumulated from both individual and professional contexts, may respond differently in areas of decision

making and overall judgment than those with limited to no experience in the field (Galloway, 2007, p. 114). In addition,



The rewards to be gained from Canadian outdoor-based organizations adopting a more staff-focused business model could prove to be enormous.

experienced seasonal staff members who return to a summer job are often easier to train and manage than new staff, engender a better response from participants and free up additional time and money to be dedicated to program needs other than hiring and training staff (McCole, 2005).

A messy and non-linear career path is expected for this kind of work and that aspect of the outdoor industry may never change. The rates of pay for frontline work may never become competitive with other fields. However, it is my hope that it will become more feasible and accessible for frontline outdoor professionals to continue doing what they love if they so choose, whatever adjustments on behalf of organizations may be required. Unable to design a research study within my two-year master's thesis that could appropriately measure the value to any organization of retaining an outdoor professional over age 30 on the frontline, I should probably return to graduate school to complete a PhD. But that would be after working at least five more years "in the field," of course.

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The Journey Home: Psychological Adjustment Symptoms following Wilderness Expedition Programs

By Ulrich Dettweiler

Recent empirical research on outdoor education programs describes adjustment symptoms that instructors suffer from after the programs have come to an end. Post-course effects are also documented for students, but those are normally scientifically coded in measured changes in "skills" or "learning effects." In this paper, I compare the adjustment processes of staff and students, and offer a philosophically motivated explanation for these processes with reference to my own experience of Outward Bound wilderness expeditions.

Back from Work in the Wilds

Ellie Lawrence-Wood, researcher in the School of Psychology at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, and Ivan Raymond, principal psychologist at Connected Self in Adelaide, examined "specific adjustment symptoms" of staff reported after wilderness programs. They find that all 62 respondents experienced

both pride and achievement after the program completion, with the overwhelming majority (97%) of staff reporting that their minds wandered "back to the experience." Sixty-five percent of staff experienced "a sense of loss" or "missing the participants and/or adult staff." Seventy-four percent of staff also indicated that they had "difficulties in adjusting back to normal life" and "felt different, just not my normal self" after program completion. Other responses included "becoming upset more easily," "difficulty in relaxing," "difficulty in concentrating," "sleep difficulties," "being quieter than normal," "having less energy than normal," and, for a small number of respondents, "periods of crying," "increased irritability," "being in a daze," and "withdrawing from others" (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011, p. 331).

In short, the symptoms can be summed under three classes: 1) feelings of pride and achievement, 2) feelings of loss, 3) feelings of having their minds drawn back to the experience. However, it is not at all clear to what extent positively connoted feelings such as "pride" and "achievement" experienced after course completion (reported by 100% of respondents) interfere with the more negative, pathological symptoms (class 2: feelings of loss), leaving the authors to conclude that the post-course adjustment process "*has the potential to be distressing*" (Lawrence-Wood & Raymond, 2011, p. 335). It furthermore remains an open question whether feelings/states of mind of class 3 are to be seen positive or negative. The latter are probably contingent on the given situation and can oscillate between negative and positive feelings/states of mind. At least, that is what I would surmise based on my own experiences coming home from an exciting field trip and diving back into normal family life, including two young daughters competing for my attention and my wife feeling entitled to a deserved break from housework after having managed the family alone while I was enjoying a "holiday" in the wilds.

The Effects of Wilderness Programs on Students

I know of very few studies that explore participants' post-course adjustment symptoms. Far more common are studies that measure aspired changes in participants' behaviour, for we know about the pedagogic value of expeditions, which include feeling part of a team, understanding group dynamics, enhancing leadership skills, and improving planning and organizational ability and attention to detail. The students learn to make real decisions and accept real consequences, they obtain a sense of achievement and satisfaction by overcoming challenges and obstacles, and they develop

self-reliance and independence. Last but not least, the students can experience and appreciate nature: The open sea, sunrises and sunsets, the stars in the sky, rain, wind, riffs—encounters that send shivers down the students' spines—they can feel the joy of being in nature (Dettweiler & Kugelmann, 2010).

In such studies as these, negative outcomes are described as the absence of changes, for the measured items rely on a catalogue of desirable (pedagogical) effects. For example, Tim Stott (Liverpool John Moors University) and Neil Hall (University of Greenwich) conducted a study on the participants' self-reported personal, social and technical skills during an extended wilderness experience. They found that participants reported

statistically significant changes (p 0.05) in their ability to avoid depression, avoid loneliness, set priorities, achieve goals, solve problems efficiently, . . . enjoy isolation, manage time efficiently, maintain physical fitness, be enthusiastic, demonstrate confidence and set goals. (Stott & Hall, 2003, 164)

My guess is that, if they had been asked, participants in Stott and Hall's study would have reported post-course adjustment symptoms similar to those reported by the staff members surveyed in Lawrence-Wood and Raymond's study. This is in line with the findings of Claudia Kugelmann, Chair, Department for Sport Pedagogy, Technische Universitaet Muenchen, and Gabriele Lauterbach, Research Associate at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen/Nürnberg, in their report to Staedtler-Stiftung reviewing the Classroom Under Sail (KUS) project (www.kus-projekt.de). These researchers note the students have difficulty readjusting to the "old" learning situation at their home schools after having been on a six-month cruise and experiencing completely different modes of learning (Kugelmann & Lauterbach, 2011, p. 21). The data from the KUS-project suggest that the adjustment experiences of the students are similar to those experienced by the teachers in Lawrence-Wood and Raymond's study; such experiences seemingly "have

the potential to distress" both types of participants. Pete Allison and his colleagues (2011) offer an explanation as to why students might feel "a sense of isolation:" after a prolonged outdoor experience:

The expedition and the various subgroups inevitably develop their own culture and when students return to the UK they have reported a sense of isolation that is contrasting to their experience on expedition. We refer to this as "expedition reverse culture shock." (Allison, Davis-Berman & Berman, p. 13)

However, the students themselves reported that they were

more "chilled out," tolerant of others, less judgmental, pursuing opportunities for further travel and considering life to involve a mass of opportunities and endless options. In summary, it appears that people take the intense learning experiences of the group, who they did not know before the expedition, into their home community to inform their "way of being" in the world. (Allison et al., 2011, p. 11)

Again, these findings are similar to those in the KUS-Projekt, where the accompanied transition from youth to adulthood emerges to be the major pedagogic topos after three cruises (2008–2010) have been scientifically examined.

Are Wilderness Programs Pathogenic?

To continue this exploration a little further, it is interesting that Lawrence-Wood and Raymond *pathologize* the experience of outdoor instructors at the end of a course, describing their feelings as "psychological adjustment symptoms," while these same experiences when attributed to students are welcomed as "pedagogical effects" of the programs.

It is the very idea of an outdoor program in a pedagogical setting to find analogous structures in the experiential education field

(i.e., what Stephen Bacon calls “isomorphic framing”) (Bacon 1983) where behaviour patterns are practised in a course that shall (in theory) outlast the program duration and become effective in the chosen “real-life” situation. But if those behaviour patterns become effective, I would assume that the participants feel “different,” that they have also “difficulties in adjusting back to normal life,” and they even have to change “normality” for the “abnormal,” trained, new pattern.

Researchers and practitioners can count on the positive outcome of their outdoor programs, as Hattie, Neill and Richards show in their meta-analysis comparing 1,728 effect sizes drawn from 151 unique samples from 96 studies. They state that in “remarkable contrast to most educational research, these short-term or immediate gains were followed by substantial additional gains between the end of the program and follow-up assessments” (Hattie et al., 1997, 43). Negative results are rarely reported; when they are it is only indirectly as non-achievements of the set goal.

The Danger of Being *Out There*

In my past experience as National Director of Program and Safety at Outward Bound Germany I have spent many a day out in the field in staff-training expeditions. There I witnessed various effects that suggest underlying pathological post-course psychological adjustment symptoms as experienced by the participants; the results were significant, including the end of marriages, jobs quit and living habits altered. Going into the wilds is dangerous, and not only because we are exposed to rapids, cliffs or avalanches. Going into the wilds brings us face-to-face with the scrubs and weeds of our selves; the armour of our personality is torn apart by the group we are bound to for weeks on end with little privacy and less comfort. We might experience something being out there that challenges our whole lives.

In addition to major life shifts, there are also small habits we may have to adjust after a

long wilderness experience. After weeks of abstaining from a shower, do you return to taking one daily upon returning to your regular life?

You’ve experienced how much effort and energy it takes to melt snow with your Primus and prepare tea (using a single tea bag for the third time). And you’ve enjoyed your supper in a snow shelter – both of which you prepared yourself and looked forward to the whole day. In light of this, what do you think when you see others consuming fast food on the subway, or toting a Starbucks cup in hand amidst running errands?

Standing at the airport, wearing the same clothes you’ve had on for weeks and carrying your expedition gear, do you feel a little alienated amongst all those business people in their grey suits totally engaged with their smartphones?

The Joy of Being *in Nature*

Recent field research I have conducted in Norway on concepts of meaning of nature experiences suggests that people seek the wilds to gain some distance from their “normal life.” Participants of wilderness expeditions ascribe cathartic qualities to the experience of being in or going into nature. In the beauty of the landscape, the simplicity of their daily tasks, and the little weight they carry on their shoulders (and I take it that they are metaphorical here and not referring to their literally heavy backpacks), they experience “the real life” in contrast to “back home” where distress resulting from everyday routines and duties seems to diminish the quality of their lives.

This “domestic” quality of “free nature” is the substratum of Nils Faarlund’s characterisation of “nature as the home of culture” (Faarlund, Dahle & Jensen, 2005). Whereas most adventure-seekers go “out” to come back “in” again and see wilderness trips as a welcome time out of their normal lives, the Norwegian guardian of the traditional “friluftsliv” (the untranslatable Norwegian word for being in nature)

points at the anthropological value of being “inside” nature:

As the Norwegian tradition of friluftsliv is about identity, expensive equipment, long approaches, arenas and indoor training are not needed. It is about touching and being touched by free Nature and thus the threshold for taking part is low. What is needed does not cost money nor has it any impact on free Nature. Leave no trace, make no noise and choose your way according to your experience! And remember—friluftsliv also has a value in itself!” (Faarlund et al., 2005, 395).

And it might well be that this very value is so deeply rooted in our selves and in our phylogenetic history that we cannot but suffer from a hangover when we return from the field and should consider it rather as a gift. In the end the personal attitudes of both participants and staff in wilderness programs will determine whether they experience readjustment symptoms after a program’s end. Instead of feeling “sick” we should rather be glad about the little itch we feel after wilderness experiences, for this helps us to become open to nature’s concerns as the home of our culture. It reminds us of what is really important in life and creates within us a healthy distance from our so-called civilized lifestyles.

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First Encounters

By Bonnie Anderson

Students will have the opportunity to role play the first encounters between the European trade groups of the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Trading Company and of the local area First Nations groups—the Ojibwas and the Mohawks.

Equipment needed:

- four pylons
- two sets each of European and First Nations trading cards
- two sets each of European and First Nations behaviour cards
- two sets each of trade items and value lists
- a copy of the essay “Reversing History” from Thom Henley’s *Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions*

Time:

1 to 1 ½ hours (total time)

Summary:

This activity will help students realize that not all people share the same values, customs and social skills and will explore ways simple trading can be established between two distinct societies.

Introduction (5–10 minutes)

When two cultures with different languages and/or cultures meet, challenges can arise. When First Nations and Europeans first met they didn’t speak a common language. When the Europeans took lacey handkerchiefs out of their pockets to blow their noses and then proceeded to fold them up carefully and put them back into their pockets, the First Nations people thought that snout was something sacred that “white men” cherished.

Ask the students to think of similar examples (e.g., chewing gum but not swallowing it, ways people dress in different schools, such as wearing cereal box backpacks, and so on). Discuss the understanding of new ideas (as opposed to racism).

Dividing into groups and culture training (15–20 minutes)

The object of the game is to engage in trading. This can be tricky in the absence of a common language or shared social values between the two groups. Divide the class into four groups—two trading companies and two tribes. Assign each group a private village or trading ship space where they can freely talk amongst themselves and not be overheard by the other groups.

At this time, give each group a list of the cultural values they must incorporate when they conduct a trade. Ensure each group has enough time to learn their adopted culture for the game before they begin trading goods with other groups. Also give the students a list of items to trade and a sack of trading cards. Instruct the group to decide what items they will value the most and what items they are willing to trade. Encourage them to consider the extent to which another group will want the items they have available for trade. Explain to students that, during trading, they are allowed to use gestures and any sounds to communicate, but are prohibited from using any known actual language. Groups may want to practice this before trading starts and set codes for certain items for trade.

Actual trading (three five-minute rounds for a total of 15–20 minutes)

Once each group has had time to decide what and how they will trade, they come together for three five-minute trading sessions. The trades take place in a neutral trading area that is big enough to accommodate each of the groups as distinct societies and still allow them to interact. Groups can only show the description side of the trade cards to the other group.

After each round, students will go back to their private areas to discuss what happened and how to better facilitate the trading. The teacher’s role here is to observe and referee

Behaviour Traits: The Hudson Bay and North West Trading Companies

- You are aggressive traders.
- You are clever and try to figure out the best deal there is.
- Men dominate in all trade negotiations.
- You show a willingness to trade by
 - a good firm hand shake
 - direct eye contact
 - possibly a friendly pat on the back
- You will try to get as much as you can from these people.
- You view the First Nations as uneducated savages.
- In your eyes, the First Nations culture is significantly less advanced than your own.

Behaviour Traits: The Mohawk and the Ojibwa

- Your society is matriarchal. The elder woman is the leader.
- Only she can engage in the direct act of trading.
- Others can only bring traders to her.
- Her signal to be willing to trade is to wave her hand between herself and the person she wants to do business with (the action is like shooing a fly away)
- To show wanting a trade item, a frown and shaking of head side to side is used. Disagreement is shown by a toothy grin and nodding up and down.
- No one gives direct eye contact.
- No one outside the tribe can touch the elder woman.
- Touching the elder results in banishment from the group. She cannot be contaminated by others.
- You trade as a group to benefit the entire community.
- You are reluctant to trade away sacred items that the elder woman has made for the group. (As a group decide on which two items the elder woman has made.)
- You are peaceful people.

if groups get out of hand or forget the non-verbal communication aspect of trade.

Note: It is acceptable to devise strategies; some groups may decide to modify their customs to help the trade process.

Debriefing (20–30 minutes)

There are three parts to the debriefing process: cultural values, trading goods and personal differences.

Cultural Values: When the trading is over, send groups back to their private areas. Have each group try to determine the culture and values of the other groups. Bring the groups together to discuss how they trading went. Have the First Nations groups describe what

they think are the values of the Europeans. Have the Europeans describe what they believe to be the values of the First Nations. Then have each group read off their actual values from the lists.

Teacher's Note: Most often each group develops a dislike for the others. It rarely happens that there is a level of understanding between groups with some successful trading completed.

Trading Goods: If the groups managed to trade some goods, pass out the point value cards. Have each group assess the value of the items they have traded for, against what they thought the goods were worth. Ask the group the following questions:

1. Did you get the items that you hoped you would?
2. How did you determine the value of your goods for trade?
3. What did each trading group contribute to each culture?
4. Were these contributions positive or negative?

Personal Differences: Have students share their experiences. If there are some actions of concern, have the other group share the reasons behind their actions. Ask the groups where these types of differences, conflicts and disparate understandings can be seen today.

List of Trade Items

- Alcohol: powerful stimulant that makes the user feel good
- Beans: nutritious vegetable that can be eaten fresh or dried for storage
- Blankets: inexpensive woven materials that provide extra warmth in cold seasons
- Bright fabrics: brightly coloured materials for making clothing; colours are much brighter than native dyes
- Canoe: lightweight means of water transportation
- Copper pots: lightweight strong pots that last longer and are in many ways superior to clay pottery
- Corn: farm crops that are easy to store; sweet tasting seeds are very valuable
- Flour: an easily stored and preserved lightweight food source
- Fur trade: skilled partners in acquisition of valuable furs of various types
- Glass jewellery: colourful decorative items that can be worn or given as a gift
- Global knowledge: information about the surrounding world that extends far beyond your personal experience
- Guns: powerful device for hunting or warfare capable of killing at great distances
- Horses: fast, powerful means of transportation; valuable for hunting and for people on the move
- Impressive clothing: novel and unique clothing capable of impressing fellow clansmen
- Iron tools: very strong tools that cut better and stay sharp longer than those made of stone and bone
- Knowledge and respect for nature: the ability to enjoy and appreciate a harsh environment
- Lacrosse: an energetic team game.
- Maple syrup: sweet liquid extracted from native plants, also used for making candy
- Military alliance: provision of strong support against enemies with powerful tools
- Mirrors: bright objects used for decoration and signalling
- Pemmican: a lightweight, easy to store source of protein
- Potato: a staple food; good energy source; easy to grow in harsh climates
- Prunes and raisins: extremely sweet preserved fruit; nutritious and lightweight
- Pumpkin and squash: large fruit; seeds and shell are good to eat
- Snowshoes: vital tool for winter transportation in dense bush
- Survival skills: skills to allow survival in harsh lands and weather conditions
- Tobacco: plant used in social, political and religious practices
- Toboggan: device for moving heavy loads over snow in winter
- Tomato: medium fruit; very nutritious; good tasting
- Trading partners: trade partnership allowing you to be middlemen carrying goods from partner to other tribes for great profit
- Turkey: domestic animal good to eat
- Wilderness navigation: knowledge of land, lakes, rivers, coastlines, and so on
- Writing: a skill allowing you to record information and pass it on with greater reliability than spoken words.

Extensions for back in the classroom

1. Review the norms of specific tribal cultures and compare them to your own.
2. Read "Reversing History" in Thom Henley's book, *Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions*. It offers insight on the influence of the Europeans on the First Nations community.
3. Research the fur trade. Check for biases to see who helped whom.

4. Discuss current land claim problems. Talk about how a lack of common cultural values with treaties could create some of those problems.

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Bonnie Anderson is an outdoor education field instructor with the Peel District School Board.

List of Trade Item Values			
EUROPEANS		FIRST NATIONS	
iron tools	15	corn	15
glass jewellery	20	pumpkin and squash	2
copper pots	25	potato	15
guns	20	snowshoes	20
blankets	15	maple syrup	3
horses	12	tomato	5
flour	5	turkey	2
alcohol	-3	canoe	15
prunes and raisins	5	toboggan	10
bright fabrics	4	wilderness navigation	15
global knowledge	2	survival skills	25
mirrors	3	pemmican	5
writing	5	tobacco	-3
military alliance	10	lacrosse	2
clothing	3	respect	5
trading partnership	25	fur trade	25
		beans	5
TOTAL 166		TOTAL 166	

Finding My Way

By Zsuzsi Fodor

My biggest insight after a nine-day canoe trip in Temagami this past summer was that, in the simple space of the bush, we formed complex relationships. The same can be said about the kitchen.

—Author's Journal

The year of that canoe trip was the year I began to learn about the environment in a deep and meaningful way. It was the year I challenged who I thought I was, found a life's passion, and learned about food. I did not have a lot of spare time that year.

The events of that year were set in motion by a course I took with Bob Henderson and Deb Schrader at McMaster University in Hamilton elusively titled "Canadian Environmental Inquiry." (It really should be renamed to something along the lines of "Becoming Increasingly Perplexed by the World and Finding Your Place in It.") Bob and Deb were, not coincidentally, two of the guides leading the trip I took to Temagami, as well as the advisors I chose for my undergraduate experiential education thesis. They are also two people I like to call my mentors and friends.

I was deeply flattered by Bob's request a year ago to write something for an upcoming issue of *Pathways*. His stipulations were characteristically open-ended, though he knew about my all-consuming passion for food having witnessed its evolution. The most directed guidance I got from Bob was to bring my work to an outdoor environmental education audience.

My work is multifaceted but broadly centered on urban food systems and matters of improving their justice, inclusiveness and ecological integrity. I hope that the ways in which this work is relevant to an outdoor environmental education audience are somewhat obvious. I have to commend the contributors to the Summer 2009 issue of *Pathways* for making some of these connections by sharing examples of wonderful work that is being done, largely

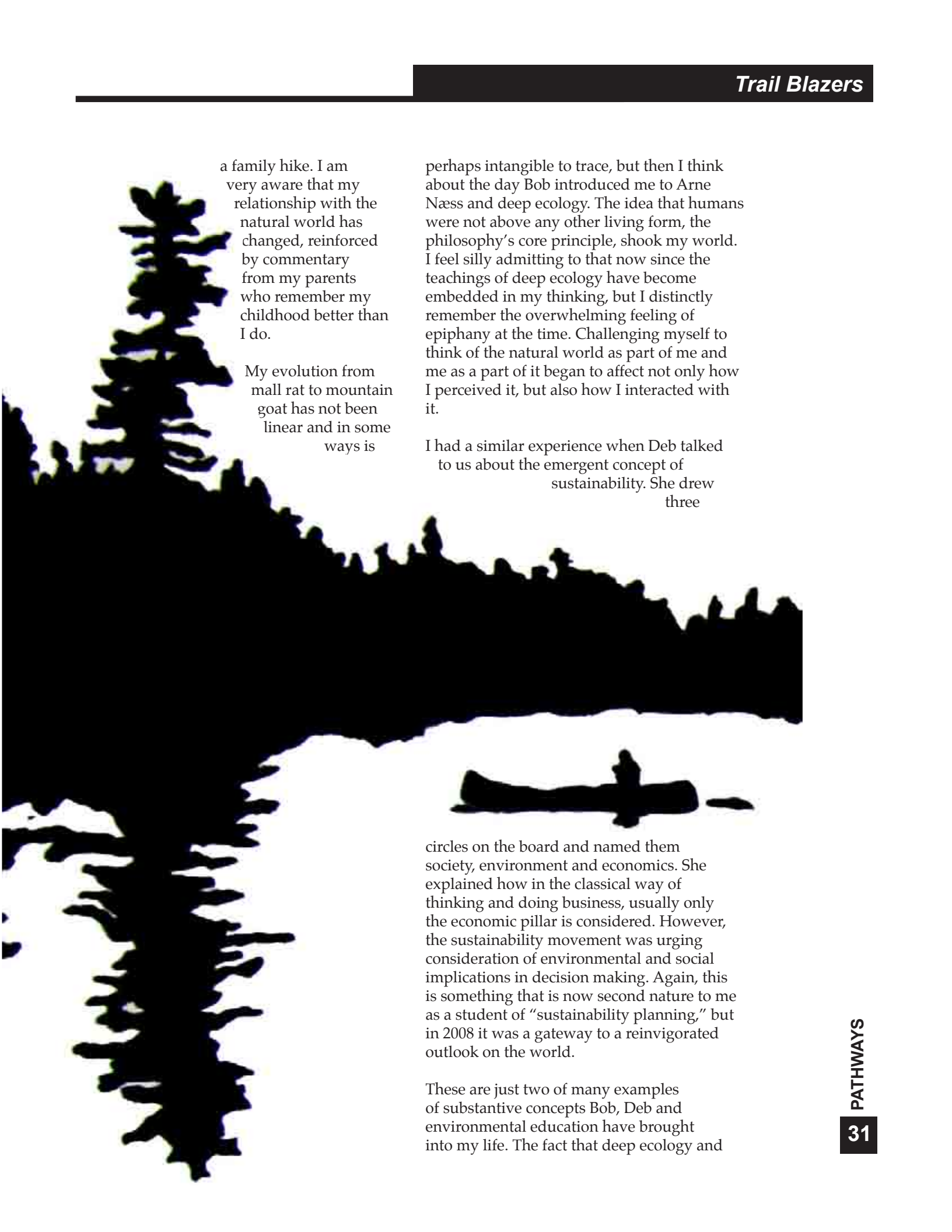
for youth within the formal school system, around food education.

My first thought regarding my *Pathways* contribution was to expand on what the 2009 summer issue brought forth and to offer further cases of where and how people are connecting to each other, their communities, themselves, their history and culture, and the Earth through food—the guiding reasons for why I do the work that I do. But then I decided I would rather talk about how I got to where I am, because no matter how entrenched I become in food systems work, I cannot ignore that I am where I am today because of my exposure to three influences: outdoor environmental education, Bob and Deb.

I hope you accept what might appear as self-indulgence instead as a "case study" of how outdoor environmental education and two of its educators helped me find my way as a young adult in my third year of university. This is a story I have not yet really explored for myself, let alone told, but it is the best way I can think of to share my work and myself with you, the outdoor education audience.

It is important for me to begin by acknowledging that connotations of the suburban life, or in my case pseudo-suburban as we technically lived within the city limits, were my reality. I grew up in North York, a community in Toronto's north end, in a cookie-cutter house within a walled community, a contemporary translation of the medieval European walled city. I was driven everywhere until I started periodically taking public transit in high school; I could not give you the names of any of the kids who lived on my street; and I had no real interest in being outdoors or tuning myself with the natural world. I was happiest in the mall and scoffed at the idea of going on walks, bike rides or, worst of all, the dreaded family road trip.

Just recently, my mom called me her little mountain goat as I fearlessly scaled the terrain, racing ahead of everybody on



a family hike. I am very aware that my relationship with the natural world has changed, reinforced by commentary from my parents who remember my childhood better than I do.

My evolution from mall rat to mountain goat has not been linear and in some ways is

perhaps intangible to trace, but then I think about the day Bob introduced me to Arne Næss and deep ecology. The idea that humans were not above any other living form, the philosophy's core principle, shook my world. I feel silly admitting to that now since the teachings of deep ecology have become embedded in my thinking, but I distinctly remember the overwhelming feeling of epiphany at the time. Challenging myself to think of the natural world as part of me and me as a part of it began to affect not only how I perceived it, but also how I interacted with it.

I had a similar experience when Deb talked to us about the emergent concept of sustainability. She drew three

circles on the board and named them society, environment and economics. She explained how in the classical way of thinking and doing business, usually only the economic pillar is considered. However, the sustainability movement was urging consideration of environmental and social implications in decision making. Again, this is something that is now second nature to me as a student of "sustainability planning," but in 2008 it was a gateway to a reinvigorated outlook on the world.

These are just two of many examples of substantive concepts Bob, Deb and environmental education have brought into my life. The fact that deep ecology and

sustainability now shape my worldview and direct my actions is probably telling enough. What was so profound for me—even more than the teaching of such concepts from the outdoor environmental education repertoire—was being in a space informed by them.

The first day of class, Bob sat us down outside in a circle and explained that he did not attach much value to marks. We were there to learn, inquire, discover and be passionate. Marks were an afterthought, an administrative requirement that failingly attempted to quantify the unquantifiable. It was the first time I was in a formal education context that was truly about learning and nourishing the whole being: mind, body and soul.

The space that was created within the course allowed my classmates and me to get to know one another in new ways. We were each other's co-learners and co-teachers. Bob and Deb considered themselves a part of this group and never put on the face of an expert or authority. The reality was that we had really complex wicked issues and ideas before us to discuss and not one of us had any answers, but as a collective we could begin to piece some together.

I did struggle with certain self-consciousnesses. These were founded by my perceived inexperience with the natural world given that I had not yet been "out there," outside of my city life on an Odyssean canoe trip—what I upheld as the pinnacle of outdoor environmental experience. This made me feel like a fraud in the outdoor environmental context, as if my experiences were not legitimate. An essay by Elan Shapiro entitled "Back-Home Pilgrimage" that I read while writing my environmental autobiography for the course was instrumental in getting me out of this funk. On the topic of overcoming his "pilgrimage shock syndrome" following an Odyssean excursion he says,

The excursions I wanted to undertake could not replace the expansiveness, the primal nurturing and the rebalancing provided by an extended pilgrimage. They could, however, perform the equally vital role of

re-establishing the sacred connection between my deep self and the whole of creation where I live—in this body, in this neighbourhood, with these friends and neighbours, through this houseplant or pet. And they could help me locate the seeds of personality and planetary transformation in the quality of my moment-to-moment encounters with my surroundings and my companions, not later on, but today. (Shapiro, 1996, p. 209)

Shapiro's words enabled me to recognize my experiences as legitimate and helped me reconfigure what I perceived to be spaces of outdoor environmental experience and education, that these could be any space; they were the grass growing through the sidewalk cracks, a bike ride through Hamilton's industrial sector, or a trip to the grocery store. These were all spaces I had frequented and were places in which to become increasingly perplexed by the world and within which to find my place. They were not "out there" and in fact belonged to my everyday.

Bob and Deb had taken us on numerous field trips throughout the course that introduced me to Hamilton, the place I called home. In offering us these direct experiences, they were saying to celebrate and get to know where you are. This city and region is our classroom. This framework is largely what spurred my passion for working on food system issues.

After getting to know Bob and Deb, I without hesitation registered for their experiential education thesis course. I decided to explore the food movement in Hamilton as my experiential component and became quite embedded in it. I was getting to deeply know the place I called home and finding an identity for myself within it beyond the "student" label.

There are many reasons why I found my calling through food, one of the most significant of which was what I saw as an opportunity to create harmony between my newfound care and love for the natural world and my city girl roots. That is one of the most beautiful things to me: that although the way the dominant food system currently operates in cities allows us to forget that food

intimately connects us to the natural world, it unquestionably does.

In August of the summer after completing Canadian Environmental Inquiry, I went with Bob and Deb on a canoe trip in the Temagami area—my Odyssean adventure at last. It was everything I could have hoped for and more. Every evening, we would do a round of thorns and roses—lowlights and highlights of the day we just shared. My final rose, my biggest insight, was that in the simple space of the bush, we formed complex relationships. The same can be said about the kitchen, or any other space where food is grown, prepared, consumed or celebrated. As I reflect more on what I gained from having outdoor environmental education become a part of my life, the more parallels I am drawing with my food work.

The first and most meaningful of these parallels is the question of space and what characterizes a space where deep and honest relationships are forged, whether they are with the self, others, an open lake or a tomato plant. I felt much the same way during a community kitchen session, a Hamilton food initiative I took on, as I did in Temagami because of how I witnessed and participated in human interactions. In both cases, there was such a strong sense of aliveness, care, sincerity, laughter and story. People did not seem to have their guards up; they inquired into one another's lives and spoke about topics that held importance for them.

Food is also a way to evolve a sense of place, a phrase I became aware of through my environmental education. I am getting into a rhythm of developing my sense of place through food wherever I go by visiting farmers' markets, places where food is grown, and places where food is inaccessible, and by asking questions such as, What can be grown here? Who is growing it? What are the food cultures and rituals of this place? Outdoor environmental education, Bob and Deb introduced me to the value, and maybe even the necessity, of getting to know and develop a sense of place through whatever methods speak to us. For some, that might be on a

canoe; for others, it might be by touring its farmland or another set of means altogether.

This brings me to the last parallel: experiences to do with food and with the natural world are deeply intimate as well as amazing connectors. They are personal and, even when we have them in a group, they are still our own. There is, however, some universal quality to them. If I told you about how succulent a fresh Ontario tomato is right off the vine, you might smile and salivate at the thought of the coming harvest. Start telling me about your most triumphant portage and for me memories of "the swamp" from our Temagami trip come flooding back. We did not have these experiences together, but they connect us.

It is hard for me to imagine what values I would hold and what I would be doing with my time, personally and professionally, if the doors to the outdoor environmental education world had not been opened to me. Bob and Deb created and facilitated spaces and opportunities over the two years I was their student that enabled me to develop a sense of who I am and what I am meant to do. I learned so much from just observing how they are in the world, living out their passion and spreading their joy. I am so grateful to them and to you, the outdoor environmental education audience, who every day lead by example, inspire, and invigorate your students, whether they be in grade school or well into university, to find their way.

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Zsuzsi Fodor is a Master of Community Development, Social Planning, and Food Systems Planning student at the University of British Columbia in beautiful Vancouver where she is gradually developing a new sense of place.

The Postcard Closure

By Simon Beames and Bob Henderson

We were scratching our heads, wondering how best to offer a closure activity on the last evening of a successful ski tour. We wanted something open to interpretation, that wouldn't take a lot of time, and that was light in spirit. This high-functioning group, we thought, demanded a casual yet necessary closure debrief. With some discussion of possible activities from our backpacket bags of tricks, Simon had an idea. It worked. It was new to me. It is likely written up in a variety of activity books, though any specific reference is long lost to Simon. We'll call it "The Postcard Closure."

requirement of bringing the group together for one last "meaning-making" session at the end of their journey.

Of course, you can play with postcard content to suit the group and individuals. Statements can be tailored to focus on personal and social issues or on elements of place and connections to landscape. For example, adding statements like "Living with the group taught me _____" or "Travelling on this ancient route showed me _____" can add emphasis to a course's intended outcomes.

Hey, just back from a Norway ski tour. I shall never forget the _____. It was _____. Learning _____ is something I'm quite pleased about. One thing is for sure, and that is that I will _____ in the future.

I am sure grateful for _____.

Cheers,

P.S. forgot to tell you that _____!

Have a set of trip route postcards (or postcards from the region). Index cards are fine, too, though less charismatic. After presenting a template postcard that is full of blank spaces, participants will then copy the text and fill in the blanks with their own words. Once everyone has finished we do a "go around" and everyone shares their card. For the ski group that we mentioned, here was the card:

Within our group that relaxed evening, students answered the postcard questions with a wonderful mixture of humour, serious thoughts and playful insights. Of course, one or two had no idea what to say. All of this felt right from an instructor's standpoint. The closure allowed for a degree of openness to personalities and expressions. It was not forced, but it did fulfill that all-important

The Postcard Closure is meant to offer an informal/casual approach when the circle-up, trip-end, sharing discussion just doesn't suit the group. This activity can, of course, also serve as simple day-end or class/ field trip-end closure. So, keep the postcards coming!

Simon Beames is an outdoor educator who spends a great deal of time behind computer screen in Scotland. Bob Henderson is an outdoor educator now gazing over the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Humour as an Outdoor Educator's Tool

By Daniel Tziatis

When I was a child, my parents were full of corny Mom and Dad jokes. Although lacking in hilarity, the funny part was how loud they laughed at their own punch lines. Many years later I still remember these jokes; it seems that they are permanently ingrained in my head. It is said humour leads to laughter and laughing releases a chemical called dopamine in your brain. When dopamine is released it provides a feeling of enjoyment and motivates us as humans to start or continue doing certain activities. Dopamine is released into the brain by naturally rewarding experiences such as food, sex and laughter. This pre-programmed reward system makes sure that people do eat, do desire to procreate, and basically survive. Without enough dopamine, people feel tired, depressed and experience a lack of drive and motivation (Pate, 1999).

The release of dopamine connects strongly with humour itself. Making humorous connections with people causes the body to physically react in a positive manner. This positive reaction causes a person to feel relaxed and happy. Due to this relaxation, people are more likely to retain the information that has been shared (Andrew, 1999). Simply put, humour causes laughter, which causes the release of dopamine, which causes happiness and relaxation, which causes the increase in information retention.

Throughout my outdoor experiences I can clearly remember the lessons that humorous people have taught me. When I was nine, my snowboard instructor taught me how to effectively use a banana bar. He explained that I needed to place the banana-shaped device behind my left knee and it would pull me to the top of the hill, almost like a tee bar. While he was demonstrating his technique, he was doing a dance while being pulled up the hill.

I can remember when my supervisor at summer camp was helping me communicate with a camper who was non-verbal and had special needs. The camper used hand signals to communicate with others. Having a hard

time remembering what each hand signal meant, my supervisor composed a song with hand actions that helped me remember the meaning of each action.

I can even remember my uncle first teaching me to ski at the age of four. As he was teaching me the proper "pizza pie" skiing technique, he was skiing backwards while holding my hips so I didn't soar down the hill; every time we made eye contact, he made a funny face at me.

All of these experiences made me laugh, and made me laugh hard enough that I can still remember them close to 20 years later. Why is it that I can remember the lesson on using a banana bar when I was nine, but it's hard to remember last week's readings in school?

Surprisingly, it has to do with humour.

Humour has a major impact on education and specifically on outdoor education. Research suggests that humour creates an atmosphere where learning is more likely to occur. As discussed, humour leads to positive attitudes. If students have a positive attitude towards a task and towards their leaders, the students are more likely to approach the task with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm encourages memory retention (Powell & Andresen, 1985). More importantly, when used in an educational setting, humour has the ability to create a culture of trust between instructor and student. This culture of trust lowers stress levels and, as exemplified above, increases memory retention. Humour can also help in the creation of an optimal learning environment. Most importantly, humour plays a large role in planting information into the long-term memory of the brain by reducing stress (Morrison, 2008).

So, knowing that humour is important, and that it plays a large role in facilitating learning, how can we use humour to achieve our facilitator objectives or learner outcomes? Considerable research has been conducted to understand the relationship between an

instructor's use of humour and learning outcomes. Humour is useful in facilitating attention, motivation and comprehension (Kher, Molstad & Donahue, 1999). Hill (1988) found that students were able to improve retention when an instructor used humorous examples and anecdotes. The use of humour makes it easier for students to recall information (Hill, 1988).

Many times in outdoor education we use risk to facilitate learning. Often paired with risk is a hefty amount of risk management, such as briefing the participants on the safety of climbing high ropes adventure courses, explaining effective techniques for mountain biking, and safe practices for canoeing. It is considered to be a faux pas to use humour in these lessons. These lessons are viewed as serious; most instructors are scared that if they use humour in a serious lesson or context, participants will not take the lesson seriously and will potentially harm themselves. But within reason, humour has resulted in many educational benefits, including memory retention and comprehension. As outdoor educators, we can increase the level of comprehension of important lessons simply by including a joke, or even pointing fun at ourselves as leaders. Perhaps the next time you teach a group of participants how to group belay at a climbing wall, you can include a funny story of a previous group that you had who did not follow the proper rules of belaying. Funny stories or anecdotes from your past will grab the attention of a group and, with any luck, will make the participants laugh.

Through my experiences, humour in outdoor education has been quite evident as a skill, rather than a tool. In my opinion, people who

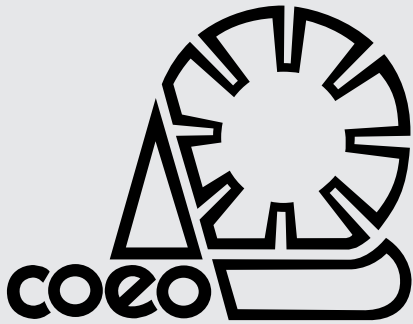
are funny are viewed as skilled—skilled in the sense of having the ability to be quick on their feet and make people laugh. So how about we change our perception of humour? I suggest we change it in a way that makes it a tool rather than a skill, a tool to help exemplify learning, a tool to help teach participants an important lesson and a tool to increase idea comprehension, all of which are important aspects of being an effective outdoor educator.

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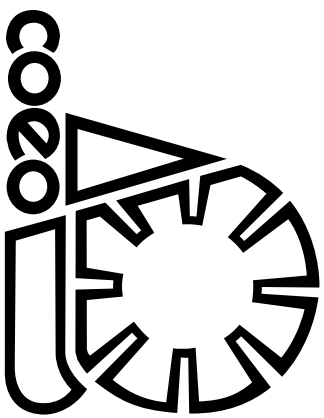
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