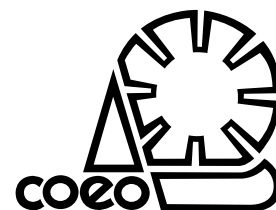


# Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION  
Summer 2012, 24 (4)



bandit  
of  
chicka-  
dees



Jar of  
nuthatches



host  
of



sparrows

aerie of eagles • aerie of hawks • ascension of larks • exhaltation of larks • band  
of jays • bevy of doves, quails and swans • bouquet of pheasants • brace of duck  
brood of chickens, turkeys • building of rooks • bury of crows • cast of hawks  
chain of bobolinks • charm of finches • hummingbirds • chattering of thrushes  
chicks • clypeus of chickadees • colony of guillemots, penguins • insinuations • com  
ots • congregation of plovers • conspiracy of ravens • convocation of par  
cote of doves • huddle of penguins • coveys of pheasants • goshawk  
deceit of lapwings • descent of woodpeckers • dote of doves  
flocks of ducks • gaggle of geese • hedge of herons • herd of caribou, reindeer  
lame • imitation of swans • mob of emus • murder of crows • murmuration of  
startlings • muster of peacocks, storks • ostentation of peacocks • paddling of ducks  
parcel of penguins • party of jays • peep of chickens • pitying of turtle doves • plump  
of wildfowl, waterfowl • raft of ducks • school of jays • sedge of bitterns, cranes

# 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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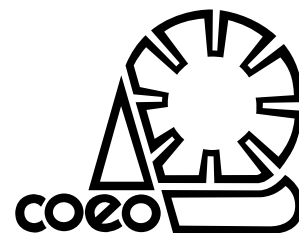
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THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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This summer issue of *Pathways* finds the *Pathways* editorial board thinking well into 2013/14. The upcoming fall issue will revisit place-based education themes. Our winter 2013 issue will showcase COEO's 40th anniversary conference, and after that we are excited to take a fresh look at possible themes and avenues to pursue. Please feel free to send along suggestions for topics and general ideas you would like to see or advance yourself. We can create new columns particularly if YOU want to take it on. We can solicit guest editors or guest article writers for specific themes. We would enjoy having a "letter to the editor" column. Involvement is always welcome. Some suggestions might better fit the COEO newsletter, but send along ideas for 2013/14. We will have an editorial "think tank" in place for the fall to consider directions wide and narrow.

As for this issue, we are pleased to have gathered and edited papers from the 2010 Mara-Burnside River Wilderness Expedition Conference. Yes, conference! No Ballroom A at a Sheraton Hotel. Not that that doesn't work, but as you'll see reflected in the articles within, the added intimacy of a canoe trip pushes the collegial rapport and personal learning to new heights. It is hoped that the writings included here will serve to offer readers a glimpse into this special gathering. It is furthered hoped that this issue of *Pathways* will inspire others to organize and promote something similar. Finally, thanks to our Beyond Our Borders writers. In this issue, there is a feeling that we all have so much to learn from each other.

Bob Henderson

**Sketch Pad** – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Donna Griffin-Smith (pages 2, 5, 7, 8, 14, 26 and 27) and Joy Dertinger (cover and pages 32, 35 and 36.)





The President's View column affords me the opportunity to acknowledge and thank those members of COEO who graciously volunteer their time to help support and grow our organization. Typically I have done this in the autumn issue of *Pathways*, after our annual conference, AGM and selection of a new Board of Directors. At that time, I have been able to welcome new volunteers as well as recognize the efforts of individuals who have contributed so much during the past membership year. I have decided to break with that convention here, as I would like to take this opportunity to fully express the organization's gratitude to one of its most longstanding volunteers—Grant Linney.

Only just recently has Grant made the decision to step back from his volunteer appointments within COEO, and although the Board of Directors was disappointed to hear that we would be losing the talents of such a dedicated individual, we were all well aware of Grant's other commitments and his desire for more flexibility and freedom during his retirement. And so, the board has thanked Grant for his years of service to COEO and reorganized several of its priorities to insure that the duties he oversaw continued to be maintained.

Certainly many of you know of Grant's long-time facilitation of COEO's monthly electronic newsletter (puns and editorial digressions included at no extra cost), however some may not be aware of Grant's other contributions to COEO over the years. These have included the following:

- Board Treasurer in the 1980s, including the regaining of COEO's corporate as well as charitable status
- Board President for two years. During this time he initiated the monthly electronic newsletter, took a major role in revamping the COEO website and, with the input of others, re-articulated the organizations goals, values and role in advocacy
- Past President for three years
- Official monitor and email responder to [info@coeo.org](mailto:info@coeo.org)
- Guest Editor, *Pathways*, Voices from Outside Our Profession
- Author, numerous *Pathways* articles
- Presenter, numerous COEO conferences
- Author, three opinion editorials (two in the *Globe & Mail*; one in the *Toronto*

*Star*) extolling the virtues of outdoor environmental education

Over the years, Grant was behind a number of achievements for the betterment of COEO:

- Together with Barrie Martin, Grant was responsible for getting a two-year Provincial Trillium Grant, which enabled, among other things, the hiring of Andrea Foster (COEO's first paid employee)
- Grant oversaw the enactment of much of this Trillium Grant, designed to raise the profile of outdoor environmental education and COEO within the province
- Grant and Andrea Foster co-wrote *Reconnecting Children through Outdoor Education: A Research Summary*, which has received positive feedback on provincial, national and international levels
- Grant was also part of a The Ontario Working Group for Environmental Education, a coalition that met with then Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, during the development of the *Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future* document.

When organizations like COEO lose the services of dedicated volunteers it is sometimes difficult to fill the voids that are created. Fortunately, our community is one with many active and involved members and the loss of one volunteer only often results in an opportunity for someone else to get involved. COEO recently created the position of Volunteer Coordinator within the Board of Directors to assist interested individuals with finding the right type of task, duty or commitment within the organization. Members interested in volunteering can send an email to COEO's Volunteer Coordinator, Wes Onofrio at [volunteercoordinator@coeo.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@coeo.org). Wes is always eager to hear from you and ready to assist in matching volunteers to the right project or task.

Grant's passion for outdoor environmental education and dedication to COEO is highly commendable, and has and will continue to inspire others to do the same. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the COEO membership, thank you Grant for all that you have done.

Kyle Clarke

## Conference as Journey: Honouring our Pedagogical Roots

*By Morten Asfeldt and Simon Beames*

Most of us have spent many days and thousands of dollars attending academic conferences around the world, only to find ourselves sitting in ballrooms, listening to speakers and watching PowerPoint presentations. In most cases, this conference format represents a profound pedagogical contradiction for outdoor and experiential educators. This paper examines this contradiction and shares the story of an alternative conference design aimed at honouring the dominant pedagogy of outdoor and experiential education.

### The Contradiction

Central to outdoor and experiential education is the belief that students should engage and experience the subject of study (Dewey, 1938). Ideally, students are presented with problems relevant to their daily lives, and that subsequently draw their interest. In the process of seeking resolutions to their problems, learners find themselves engaged in an ongoing cycle of thinking, doing and reflecting as they propose and test solutions (Kolb, 1984). This process requires students to activate all of their senses and, regardless of whether they discover a solution to their immediate problem, the experience provides a foundation for further learning (Dewey, 1938).

The contradiction that often arises from traditional academic conference participation is that we are forced to abandon the pedagogical essence that makes outdoor and experiential education so effective and that drives us to devote whole careers to creating lively learning experiences for our students. With this tension in mind, the two of us set out to test an alternative conference structure. We exchanged ballrooms for a bug-tent, buses for canoes, cityscapes for tundra landscapes and static presentations to large audiences for interactive sessions with an intimate group. And we required presenters to root their theories and

presentations in practice. Ultimately, our goal was as follows:

To gather an international group of academics who use wilderness educational expeditions as a part of their teaching to share a specific element of their practice along with its underpinning theoretical foundations. Ultimately, the “conference as journey” [aimed] to provide a forum for rich discussion about the varying international practices of wilderness educational expeditions. (excerpted from conference material)

### Conference as Journey Overview

To achieve this aim, we gathered 14 delegates from Canada, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Scotland and Sweden and traveled together by canoe down a Canadian Arctic river for 14 days. Participants each submitted a paper that was reviewed and circulated prior to the event. They each then engaged the group in an expedition “practice” (or practical session), and facilitated a discussion of the theoretical foundations of that practice. It was our belief that this design would provide a forum for deep and meaningful scholarly conversation, effectively combine theory with practice, arm delegates with practical ideas ready for use, build relationships for collaborative teaching and research, and expand our understanding and effective use of educational expeditions.

With these goals and unique format, several questions were raised in our minds: Would our colleagues be able to find 16–18 days to participate? Would the cost be prohibitive? Would the structure work well? Would so many strong personalities be able to function effectively as a group? Would we build lasting relationships that would lead to future collaborations? On reflection it seems clear that we can answer all of these questions with a resounding “yes.” The conference was a grand success and our goals and expectations were far exceeded.

### Traditional Academic Conferences

Research suggests that common goals of conventional academic conferences include engaging in scholarly conversations, being exposed to new colleagues and ideas, and sharing and receiving feedback on research and scholarly work (Behrens, 2008; Major, 2006). Recurrent shortcomings include the lack of meaningful scholarly conversations, poor session attendance, too little time for discussion following presentations, presenters simply reading their papers to an audience (which leads to decreased participant engagement), too much formality, session fatigue, break-time discussions that focus predominantly on “where to eat” and “what to see,” and the high environmental cost associated with conference hosting by way of fossil fuel consumption (energy used for travel, accommodations, presentation equipment, and so on) and other resource consumption (programs, cups, swag and bottled water, among other things) (Behrens, 2008; Major, 2006).

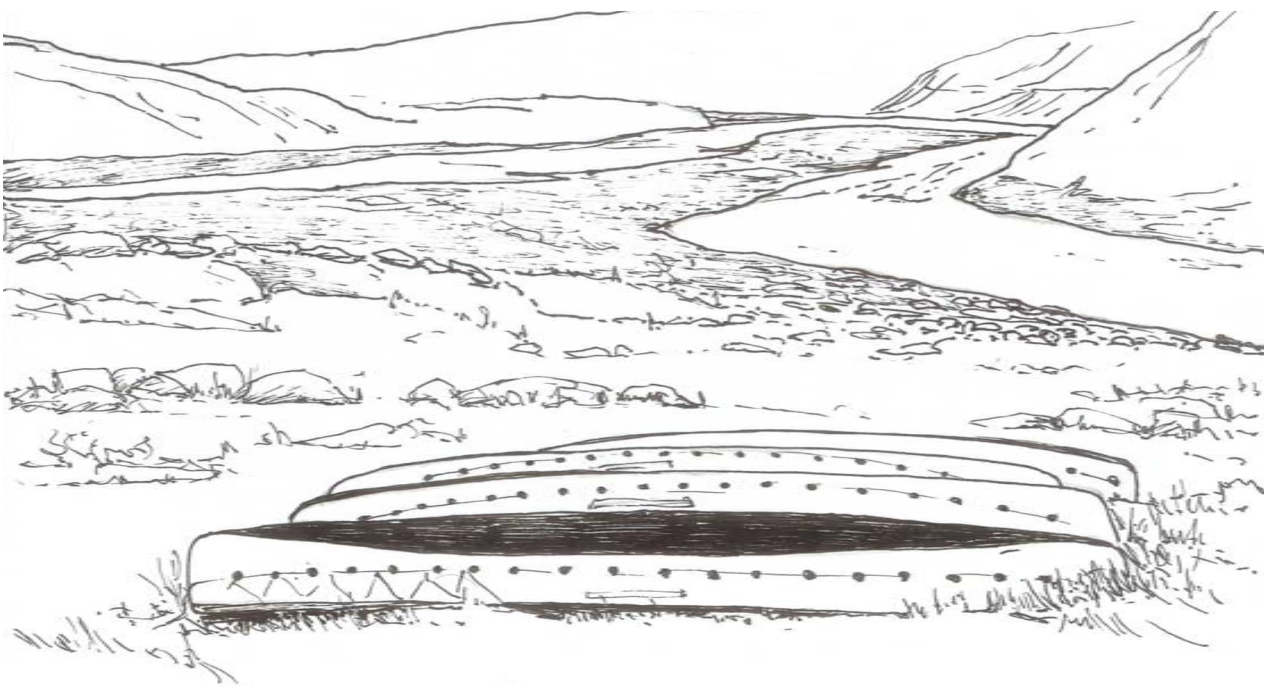
To improve conferences, Barton (2005), Behrens (2008), and Major (2006) suggest that presenters should be interactive and aim to increase attendee involvement, refrain from reading their papers, include

a “useful” or “practical” component that can be implemented in teaching or research, decrease presentation time and increase discussion time, and make a priority of sharing conference insights and ideas with colleagues back home.

### Conference as Journey Assessment

While our “conference as journey” shared many goals of traditional academic conferences, it also had the potential to succumb to the everyday limitations (as noted above), as well as some that were unique to the intense small group experience and unpredictable nature of wilderness travel. To more deeply understand the strengths and weaknesses of our approach, we sought post-conference feedback from our delegates.

Reported strengths of the conference included the abundance of meaningful conversations, ample time for discussion (both formal and informal), the building of strong relationships (both personally and professionally), effective blending of theory and practice, the opportunity to read all presenter papers beforehand, and traveling as a group in the wilderness, which added a unique and vital richness to the discussions.



Weaknesses included constantly negotiating the tension between the demands of travel and the time for formal discussion of papers (more time could have been used for each), not having enough time to explore the place, the significant time and money commitment, the limited number of attendees (potential to be an elitist experience), and the carbon emissions associated with flying to and from the conference.

Overall, delegates universally reported that the conference as journey was a rewarding experience and that their motivations for participation were met. Furthermore, they indicated that the structure successfully addressed a number of inadequacies of traditional conferences (e.g., meaningful scholarly conversations, adequate time for these formal and informal discussions, a high level of delegate engagement, excellent collegial and personal relationship building, and an effective blending of theory and practice). In addition, delegates claimed that the combined conference and expedition design added a high degree of authenticity and relevance to the learning; it made the learning “real” and honoured the pedagogical foundations that guide outdoor and experiential education.

### Conference Recommendations

Based on the literature related to academic conferences, our experience of this alternative set-up, and the feedback from participants, we make the following recommendations for future attempts to organize similar educational gatherings:

- choose expedition routes carefully to reduce tension between the need for travel and the desire to do other things
- build-in time to have formal discussions and explore the place you are in
- limit the group size to preserve intimacy within the group (14 is likely the maximum)

To allow for increased opportunities for relationship-building and informal discussions,

- make presenters’ papers available prior to the conference
- have a pre-established plan for disseminating conference insights and ideas to the practitioners and academics
- make conscious efforts to reduce environmental costs.

Finally, all conference organizers should ask themselves if the experience is worth traveling for (Behrens, 2008). In some cases, it may be that a large portion of the discussion and interaction can take place much closer to home, with consumption associated with time, money and fossil fuels being greatly reduced. In other cases, as with our conference as journey canoe expedition, the experience may be so central to the aims of the event that it would be impossible to reach these aims any other way.

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*Simon Beames teaches education at the University of Edinburgh.*



## Compassionate Senses of Place: Reflections from the River

By Deb Schrader

On the summer solstice of June 2010, a time of constant Arctic light, 14 conference delegates gathered in Yellowknife to fly further north past the tree line, and to a lake downstream of the frozen headwaters of the Mara River. We unloaded colourful piles of canoes, food and gear barrels and daypacks, waved goodbye to the pilots, marvelled in the music of the lake ice crystals amidst pure quiet, and then got to work building boats, sorting gear, setting camp and cooking supper. My senses opened quickly to the locale as I tried to make meaning in this alien landscape. Distant rocks shifted into barren ground caribou, lingering grizzly scent caught my nose, hillsides radiated Arctic lupine blue, and flowering Labrador tea perfumed my sleep. Appreciation was acknowledged. Maybe it was day three when we reminded ourselves of the academic nature of this trip, once the simply consumptive life on a river—eating, paddling, meeting each other and packing up—felt routine. And so we began to present papers and move in further conversation both in and out of canoes for many days.

My own presentation explored sense of place. Basso (1996) considers that sense of place is a “commonplace occurrence . . . an ordinary way of engaging one’s surroundings and finding them significant” (p. 83). It is both an individual and collective relationship between landscape and people, a nebulous combining of senses and knowledge with place character. This exploration was prompted by my own sense of place that I have with the Rocky Mountains. The relationship is beyond rational as I am most often a visitor in that place. I “come from” the prairies. And yet it persists, mingling emotion and knowing and being.

On the canoe trip conference, I asked my fellow travellers this:

1. Do you have a sense of place? If so, how would you describe it? Could you tell a story that captures it?



2. How does your sense of place shape or contribute to your teaching practice?

Each person answered thoughtfully, some tear-filled, some pragmatic, some connected to research interests and most referred to childhood experiences—special times and people.

*“I have a sense of connection.”*

*“Nature is my real home. I never feel strange in a nature environment and the meaning of the place I interpret through plants, animals and birds.”*

*“My deepest connections to places are through the people I was with.”*

*“Anytime I go to this sort of place I feel comfortable, instantly.”*

*“A coming home feeling.”*

*“I smell—I’m home.”*

*"I have a deep emotional contact with that place—its part of me, really under my skin."*

*"I've been made by that landscape."*

The responses describe a great and silent power between self, others and the Earth, as the places we inhabit and the stories we tell about them inform, shape and connect us. The romance and reality of our conference group in that place—the caribou, muskox, bear and wolf encounters, our "aloneness," the long days, the unique understandings of different people, the abundance—explored and expressed growing a sense of place from the ordinary into the significant. Rilke once wrote, I live my life in widening circles. Nurturing one's sense of place could seem to widen the circle of human compassion, connecting to others and to Earthly systems. My own circles continue to be expanded

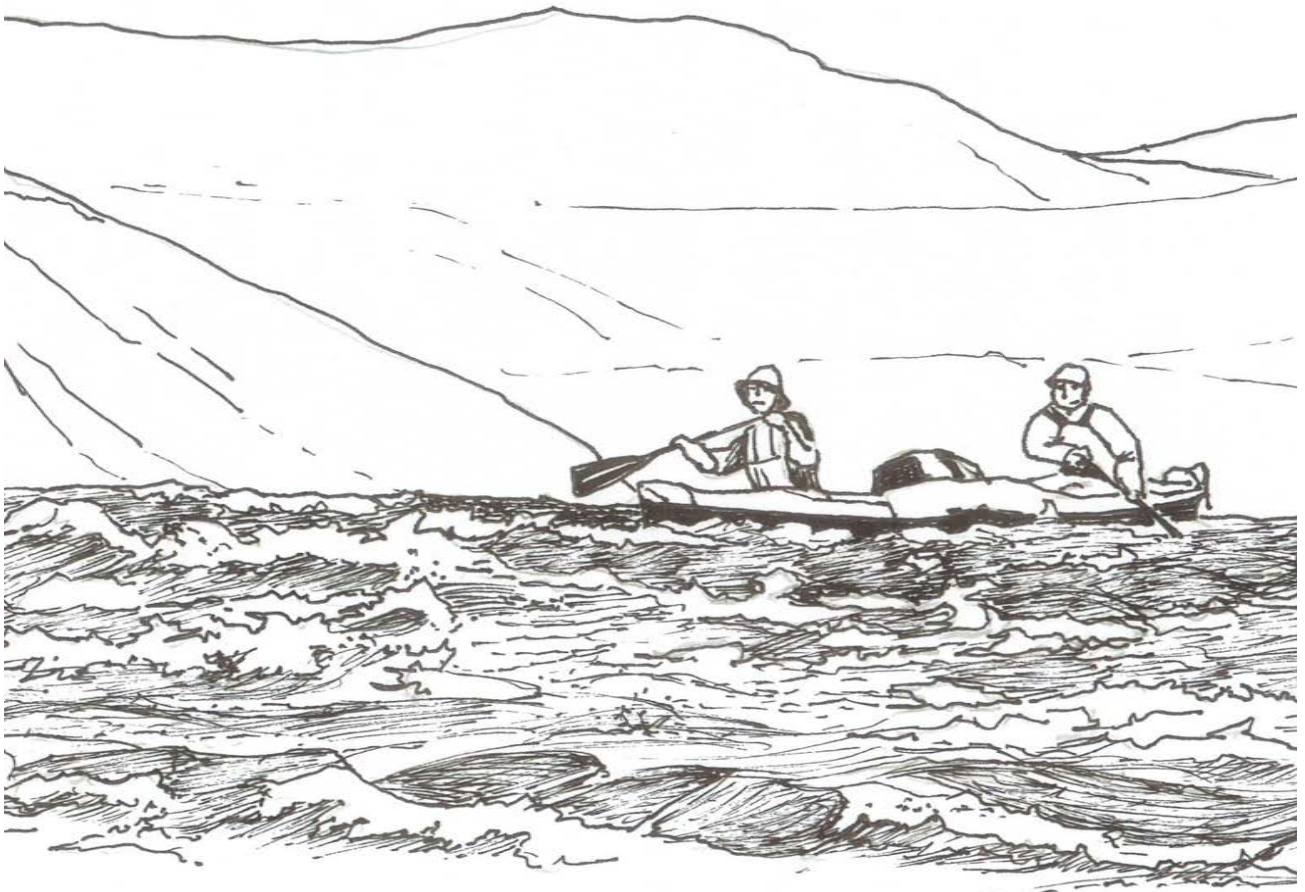
and shaped by the story of a conference on a river, of people and place.

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*Deb Schrader is completing her PhD at the University of Alberta concerning food systems and sustainability.*



# Transitions and Transference: The “Ins and Outs” of Wilderness Educational Expeditions

By Pat Maher

When I think back to all the wilderness educational expeditions I’ve led, one thing sticks out in my mind: While I know these were amazing experiences for the students (primarily university undergraduates), could I have done more to help them transition into the experience and out again afterwards? Many times I, and I presume others, speak to the way that these sort of educational expeditions transform students—they’re often touted as once-in-a-lifetime events. But how do we know what transitions and transference happen? How do we connect these seemingly singular (and often isolated) events with the many years of “real life”?

This notion of transference was one aspect of my doctoral research when I worked with a group of graduate students who visited the Ross Sea region of Antarctica (see Maher, 2010). I’ve continued to contemplate transference during three expeditions to Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands), one on the Stikine River and another in the Antarctic. All of these subsequent expeditions were run as field courses at the University of Northern British Columbia. In this article I try to draw out theory as well as examples and lessons from practice that I feel are potentially valuable in re-shaping the way we, as educators/instructors/mentors, conceptualize transition and transference in our programs in the future.

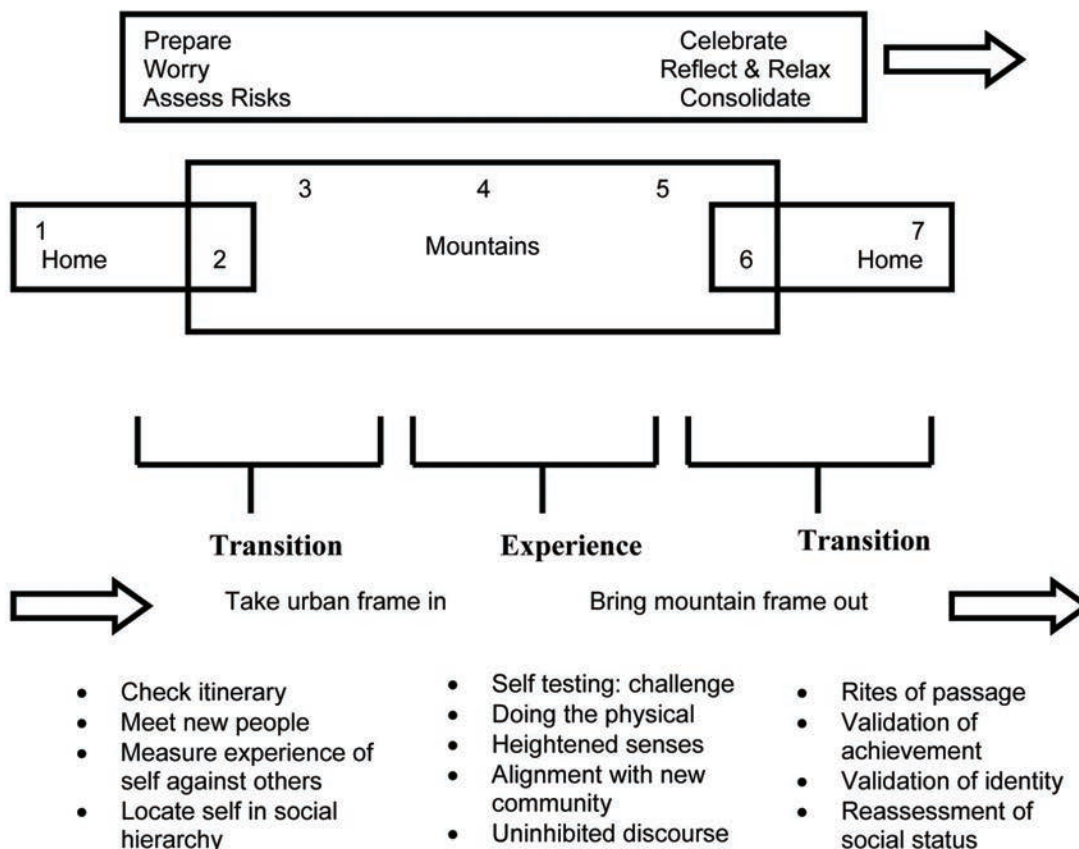
## A Wee Glance at Theory

Turner (1986) discusses the word “experience” with regard to its Greek and Latin roots, those being linkages to fear and peril. From these roots, Knapp writes that “in one sense, all of our interactions with the environment are experiments. We can never completely know—or accurately predict—the outcomes of our actions” (1992, p. 24). Caine and Caine contend that “life immerses us in some type of experience, every moment of our lives, much as water surrounds a fish” (1991, p. 104). These quotes seem to

support the argument that expeditions are far from singular, disconnected experiences, but rather are inextricably linked to a “real life” future at home. Not surprisingly then, many wilderness programs purport to create behavioural and attitudinal change in individuals in their home environments. In fact it is home that is the place where individuals (or their families or teachers) may desire the most evidence of transference—especially in terms of meaningful action and behaviour around topics such as sustainability.

Studies of the recreation, leisure and tourism experience have argued that “an experience” should not be considered as one dimensional, but as a multi-phase entity (see Hammitt, 1980; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001). The experience on-site interacts with and is influenced by many pre-visit (anticipation) and post-visit (recollection) factors. Characterising a complex and multi-faceted wilderness expedition as an experience, particularly an extraordinary one, is therefore problematic. Furthermore, few studies have tracked holistic experiences such as a typical wilderness expedition to remote settings. To contemplate the transference that can occur in conjunction with experience then, we need to more carefully consider the complexity of experience. While a full inquiry into the nature of experience is far beyond the scope of this paper, an overview of some conceptualizations of experience may help when thinking about transference.

As defined by early recreation theory (see Clawson & Knetsch, 1966), experience is thought to comprise five sequential phases: 1) anticipation; 2) travel to site; 3) on-site activity; 4) return travel home; and 5) recollection. The dynamic nature of experience is also well cited in literature from psychology and experiential education. Beedie and Hudson’s (2003) model of adventure tourism in mountain



**Figure 1: The extraordinary experience. (Adapted from Beedie & Hudson, 2003, p. 629)**

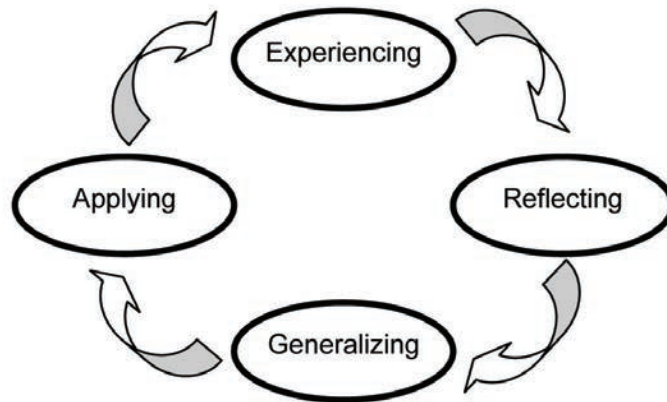
locations conceptualises this “extraordinary experience” (see Figure 1).

This model describes a continuum of recreational experience based on mountains acting as a “special place away from home” with a series of transitions to and from the mountains. Aspects of this model include taking in an urban frame, that includes worry, preparation and assessment of risk, and leaving with a mountain frame, comprising celebration, reflection and relaxation, and consolidation. This leaving signals to the potential benefits or transformation that may be derived from the experience.

Beedie and Hudson’s (2003) model is unfortunately uniformly positive, whereas

experiences in the mountains or elsewhere may not always be as such. Abrahams (1986) also recognised that experiences, no matter how extraordinary, are in fact made up of a number of ordinary acts, and perhaps an anthology of such acts needs to look at the way the ordinary acts coexist. Arnould and Price (1993) also used the terminology extraordinary experience to describe a “newness” of perception and process gained. There is a long theoretical history of examining experience across fields such as sociology, psychology, wilderness management, tourism, recreation and leisure. What I’ve noted above is but a scratch of the surface. However, the key is turning this theory into educational practice. How do we develop curriculum, or even simply





**Figure 2: A simplified version of Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle**

activities, that allow us to infuse wilderness educational expeditions with a greater sense of real life, or take an extraordinary experience such as a wilderness educational experience, learn from it and apply those learnings to our lives in other situations?

None of this is rocket science to outdoor educators. It is directly in line with John Dewey's thinking that, "when we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences" (1916, p. 163). Many outdoor educators are at least somewhat familiar with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (see Figure 2), which describes four phases of experiential learning as experience, reflection, generalization and application. Aldous Huxley (as cited in Henton (1996, p. 39)) insightfully articulated the importance of actively processing and subsequently acting upon an experience: "Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you." Huxley makes a point for examining experience beyond one temporal moment, similar to the multi-phase/extraordinary approach. I believe his statement is a key to justifying wilderness educational expeditions. Yet while many of us know and use Kolb's (1984) cycle, we quite often forget the front and back ends to it, forget how it may relate to the cycles of others and society, and forget that we may need to assist students in dealing with the transitions.

### Creating Practices to Suit

At the end of the day, the key question is this: How do we create practices to match the theory, and essentially to assist what we know "is" and "should/could be" happening? From my experience with the expeditions I have worked with at UNBC and in other places, the transition into experience is far easier to effectively facilitate than is transference of learning to new situations post-expedition. This transition in can simply be a discussion early on—a discussion of what changes there will be on expedition, what affordances there are not, what connections this wilderness educational experience will have with home, and what differences there are.

Some of this entry transition is simply good expedition planning, such as knowing your participants' background stories. During transition into the expedition experience, this information might need to be brought out for all to hear, particularly in higher education settings. The fact that Tina has only paddled twice but was taught by her father, that John is afraid of paddling because he nearly drowned once while swimming, and that Sarah has worked at a paddling-focused summer camp for 10 years serve to shape a trip on the Anywhere River. The same could be said for many other parameters or examples. The whole picture of transition—missing partners, feeling sick

from expedition food, having a certain set of skills, and so on—transfers to the expedition itself. An effective wilderness expedition leader is not only aware of all of this sort of information, but intuitively understands how these factors may influence the trip and what he or she needs to do with the shared or private information in order to shape the experience of participants to be positive and educative.

Transference of participants' learnings from expedition experiences to post-expedition life is a different beast all together, mainly because expedition leaders do not always have the opportunity to interact with participants in their daily lives once the course ends. As facilitators our influence on student experience usually ends once the participants leave the course. As such we often find ourselves in the situation of trying to address the application of learning to new situations before participants actually encounter those new situations.

The practice I will outline now is one example of how an expedition leader could set up some authentic post-course communication or engagement with participants prior to their departure from the course in order to facilitate the process of transference. I presented this activity to other wilderness educators during the Mara-Burnside conference in 2010. It is a simple exercise, easy to run and just one idea. The practice is as follows:

1. More than halfway through the expedition (perhaps the last few days) sit the group down.
2. Initiate a discussion recalling all the good things that have happened, all the points to remember, all the key catalyzing moments and so on.
3. Pull out a stack of postcards and distribute one to each participant. [In the case of the 2010 conference, all my postcards were of Yellowknife, the location we had started, so just seeing the picture when it would later arrive in the mail would have an impact.]

4. Have the group divide off into pairs and then have the pairs discuss the most important things they want to take away from the expedition. [In my own case in 2010 those were to 1) slow down, 2) watch life, but experience it to its fullest, 3) avoid getting caught up in day-to-day minutia—the academic lifestyle.☺]
5. Ask each person in a pair to record these things for their partner by writing the postcard to that effect. As the facilitator, be sure to do this for yourself as well.
6. Once all the pairs are done, collect the postcards and, if you wish, open to a large group discussion for any last thoughts.
7. Get the postcards home safely—and remember where you put them until the agreed upon mailing date. [For the 2010 conference it was six months later when I put all those postcards in the mail.]

For me, just pulling those postcards out of the box I had kept them in before dropping them into the mail gave me a significant sense of reconnection. It reminded me of what was important during the conference-canoe trip—the reflective conversations around the campfire, thoughts that came to mind while I was sweating on the portage trail, unanswered questions posed by my paddling partner. When I re-read the postcards I thought about how those “ah ha” moments from the canoe trip had become relevant in other areas of my life as an educator and where I might still have transference and learning to go. I saw the picture of Yellowknife on the postcards, but also thought back to where I was on the river when my partner wrote the postcard and thought about him too. While sitting in my desk chair at the office I experienced a poignant reconnection to place and time.

### Conclusions

To conclude, transference is a complex process that significantly influences what we learn from our experiences. It is more than a unique consideration for our students;

we, as instructors and experienced outdoor educators, should also become skilled at considering our own transference processes before we go into the field. With a new son (now 18 months), I think about the risks of wilderness expeditions a lot more than before. Many of my colleagues and I always seem to bring in popular cultural nuances to an experience—quotes from a movie, song lyrics stuck in our heads. And then those shape what our expedition is like.

When we return from expedition we are immediately hit with popular culture and real life again—emails to check, news to catch up on and the like. However, we've had some sort of experience that we've learned from, though we may not know what we've learned until months or years later. We need that postcard to arrive so that we remember our need to still connect to that learning, whenever it may come.

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## **Group Journaling: A Tool for Reflection, Fun and Group Development**

*By Morten Asfeldt*

Personal journaling is common practice in outdoor programs and is an important means of reflection and meaning-making. For over 20 years I have used group journals to promote reflection and understanding, raise important questions, explore difficult issues, develop writing and speaking skills, and enhance group development. I first discovered group journaling on a 28-day Coppermine River expedition with friends and have since used it on personal, student and commercial expeditions.



To begin the practice, invite participants to take turns writing in the group journal; this can be voluntary or required depending on your group. During a group gathering near the beginning of the first day of the expedition, explain the group journal process and seek a volunteer to write about the first day; you can give as much or as little direction on what and how to write as appropriate for the group and expedition goals. At this point, which I find best done in front of the whole group in a fun and ceremonial fashion, give the writer a hardcover journal that will be passed from writer to writer through the expedition.

to the group. I prefer to do this as a part of a morning ritual that I maintain throughout the expedition after the canoes or backpacks are packed and the group is ready to go. My ritual often includes an overview of the day, a map talk and some sort of "thought for the day." After the group journal reading, ask for another volunteer to write. If no volunteers come forward, you can have the person who read give the journal to any member who has not written or play a game to determine who is next. Either way, have fun with the "passing of the journal."

Once the expedition is over distribute a copy of the journal to all members. This can be as simple as photocopying the journal or compiling typed journal entries with photos, maps, menus, and other information from the expedition.

Group journal entries have included prose, poetry, art, songs and skits. They can be hilarious beyond imagination, deeply emotional and filled with insight. At times, issues are identified that you may want to address such as meaningful insights, new areas of interest and group tensions. In some cases, issues and ideas raised have had significant influence on the focus and structure of the remainder of the expedition.

From time to time there are people who are reluctant to write because they may be uncomfortable sharing their writing or speaking in public. Support these people as needed. After most journal readings there is considerable celebration and applause from the group as the practice becomes an integral part of the day. In fact, when I have forgotten to make time for the journal reading the group is quick to remind me: "We aren't going anywhere until we have the journal reading."

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## An Absent Body in a Present Landscape

By Jens Marcussen

*On a calm section of the Mara River, seven red canoes are zigzagging around, and it looks like the paddlers have no skills. The truth is that half of the group is paddling blind. It is an exercise in which the purpose is to start a process of reflection on the embodied experience during a wilderness educational expedition.*

### Understanding the Embodied Experience on a Educational Wilderness Experience

The wilderness expedition experience will always be a confluence of emotional, cognitive and bodily processes. I want to show that the body is an important but often forgotten part of the wilderness expedition experience. Using the phenomenological approach, we can try to understand the body as a subject instead of an object, or sometimes both at the same time. We talk about being our body and having a body. In a phenomenological lifeworld analysis, it is possible to use some of these fractions according to the body: embodiment (meanings related to one's own sense of one's body), and spatiality (sense of place, space and bodily scope and possibilities) (Ashworth, 2003, 2006).

In society, the focus on the body is often polarised. Sometimes, there is an extreme focus on the thin and fit body as a symbol of success and control, and a symbol of the opposite when the body is fat and unfit. From that perspective, the body becomes an object we can count and measure. On the other hand, bodily work and manual transport have almost disappeared from our society. Our everyday lives become more and more sedentary and people have lost the ability to sense their own bodies. We can say, then, that the body is often forgotten in everyday life. I discuss here how embodiment is an important part of the wilderness expedition experience, as well as suggest ways to help participants on such an expedition increase their sense of their own bodies, space and bodily scope and possibilities.

When we describe outdoor education and its pedagogic potential, we often talk about personal and social development, leadership and of course a number of "hard" skills. It is not common to talk about the development of a sense of one's own body and the body experience as part of the expedition experience. Sometimes having a sense of one's own body is highlighted as an issue, though that is mostly in relation to when we teach hard skills.

In sports with elements of competition there is often a quantifying of the body that can lead to negative experiences for some people and low self-esteem with respect to their bodies. In a wilderness expedition, it is possible to work with an approach to the body that is different from what people experience in sports and everyday life. The embodied experience can also be a negative one on a wilderness expedition if a person feel limited by their body during the entire expedition. Nevertheless, I think there are many opportunities to give people new, different and, it is hoped, positive experiences with their bodies on educational wilderness expeditions.

Even though we do not want to maintain a constant focus on the body and training, we can use outdoor life to learn something about our own bodies. Outdoor life involves the body, and as a facilitator we must create situations in which we can stimulate the participants to understand and explore their own bodies. We can try to create a positive focus on the body by asking about the experiences of the body. For instance, how do I use my body when I paddle a canoe? Why do I get warm when I do this? How do I get good balance when I climb? And how does the expedition experience in general affect our body conditions? We have to shift the focus of the body away from thinking about it in terms of its size and limitations towards what we can do with it and the possibilities it gives us in nature. We must try to facilitate conceptualizing the body in outdoor life as something meaningful and positive.

### The Reflection Process

It can be difficult to express a bodily experience because people are unfamiliar with talking about and reflecting on their own bodies. Learning from an experience involves reflecting upon that experience (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). Boud et al. (1985) describe reflection as an activity in which people “recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (p. 19).

What we want to achieve with the reflection process can be diverse. It can be a process in which we work with an understanding of the embodied experience on a wilderness expedition to better understand the sense of our own body, as well as a sense of place, space, bodily scope and possibilities. Below I describe two exercises I developed that serve to encourage such an experience.

One way we can initiate reflections on the body is to begin with a concrete experience, such as an exercise in which the participants are paddling blind and need to develop a sense of their own bodies according to the canoe and their surroundings. For this exercise, the canoes are put together in pairs, with the canoeist in front paddling blind and the one behind giving directions about going either left or right. The purpose of this is to promote reflection on ways the body is part of the wilderness expedition experience and how body awareness develops through such an expedition. While I used canoeing as an example to begin the reflection process, a diversity of exercises designed to encourage reflections on the body experience were interspersed throughout the expedition.

I also tried to initiate a discussion/ reflection on ways we can help participants on a wilderness educational expedition to increase the sense of their own bodies, space, bodily scope and possibilities. If we want participants to reflect on their own body experience, some may find it easier to write about privately than to deliver an oral description to the entire group. The first time I delivered this, participants shared their thoughts immediately following

the canoe exercise described above. The reaction among the participants was that it was a positive experience that stimulated an increase in body awareness. Some participants mentioned that they used senses other than sight to paddle on a straight course such as the feeling of the sun and wind on their faces and the sound from the other canoes. We also talk about the use of the exercise when we work with instructions in paddling and the use of the different strokes. This type of exercise can help to achieve better boat control to ensure that the strokes are done by intuition instead of analysis and rules.

### Theories to Explain the Embodied Experience in Wilderness Educational Expeditions

To understand and describe the development in bodily experiences on wilderness expeditions from a phenomenological perspective, it is obvious to turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his work with body phenomenology (2004). Additionally, however, I use terms from Dreyfus’ (2004b) “The Five-stage Model of Adult Skill Acquisition” and Drew Leder’s *The Absent Body* (1990).

According to van Manen, “Phenomenology is a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence—sober in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications” (2007, p. 1). But what can this reflection do to our practice? Why is phenomenology useful for those of us who work in the outdoors? Heidegger warns that phenomenology “never makes things easier, but only more difficult” (2000, p. 12). And, further, “Nothing comes of philosophy . . . You can’t do anything with it” (Heidegger, 2000, p. 13). Yet he offers a counterquestion: “Even if we can’t do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something *with us*, provided that we engage ourselves with it?” (Heidegger, 2000, p. 13).

So as I see it, phenomenology can be one perspective that adds something to the

process of reflection according to the learning done among the participants. According to the outdoor education literature, we as leaders can increase participant learning by facilitating the reflective process (Knapp, 1999).

The pitfall in the processing sessions as I experienced it was that people only use terms from physiology to describe their body experience, and describe the body as an object. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body is a unit that seeks meaning and to surpass, which takes place through both reflection and action. Merleau-Ponty maintains that the body does not contain an “either/or,” but instead a “both/and.” The body is both subject and object, not only in relation to others, but also in relation to itself. We see and are seen (Duesund, 2008).

A classical example from Merleau-Ponty is one in which he describes the blind man and his stick and how the stick connects him to the world, and that it is difficult to say where the limits are between the stick, the body and the world:

The blind man’s stick has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch, and providing a parallel to sight (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 143).

Similarly, the participants paddling blind are exploring the limits between their bodies and their surroundings. We cannot see our own body or the canoe as an object, but we can sense the world through our body and act on a pre-reflective level. Normally, sight is the primary mode of world disclosure, and the body’s status is that of a natural background (Leder, 1990). In this exercise, the body is the primary mode of world disclosure; in this instance sight is blocked out so that we can understand the paddle and the canoe, as the blind man does with his stick. In this exercise, we have achieved a total incorporation of the canoe and the paddle. According to Leder, “To incorporate a tool is to redesign one’s extended body until its extremities expressly mesh with the world”

(1990, p. 34). Hence, this exercise is a way to explore the zone object and subject, and dialectic body–world relation.

With reference to Merleau-Ponty, there are two situations that damage the existential relation to the life–world and inhibit “the intentional arc” (Dreyfus, 2004a). One is if one gives strictly rational attention to the body. The other is the case of illness. In these situations the body becomes objectified, and the body is felt as an obstacle to taking part in the world in a subjective way. The attention to the body on a wilderness expedition will probably change over the course of the expedition, from strictly rational attention due to new and challenging surroundings, to a more optimal body–environment relationship, which allows us to take part in the world in a subjective way. We recognize this when the participants talk about the body needing to rediscover movements in the daily routine at the beginning of the trip.

*“The experience we receive will be greatly influenced by the body dimension.”*

When Drew Leder (1990) uses the term “the absent body,” he refers to the ways we can experience our bodies as being absent or present. He describes one body dimension as “the ecstatic body.” The ecstatic body forgets its own body because it is preoccupied with something else. This forgetting is decisive if we are to be able to fully live in the world. The body is present in an absent way (Duesund, 1995, p.41). The type of wilderness expedition experience we receive will probably be greatly influenced by the body dimension. Perhaps it is possible to experience the body as ecstatic during the entire expedition and as preoccupied with the wilderness and the expedition context. Can we then say that the body becomes absent in a positive way? Or maybe the body will first become absent after we have become familiar with the wilderness and the way we travel through the landscape. Why

is it interesting for us from a pedagogical perspective whether the body becomes absent in a present way? Because there are an increasing number of young people who struggle with their own bodies, whether due to obesity, eating disorders or low self-confidence caused by low bodily competencies. For these individuals it might be considered a positive development to experience a situation in which the body becomes absent in a present way (Duesund and Skårderud, 2003).

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## Exploring Material Culture in the Barrenlands

By Zabe MacEachren

Although I love winter camping (in forested regions where I can have a fire) and hold the Inuit culture in great regard (from all I have obtained from reading and movies), thinking about material culture in a northern landscape referred to as barren constitutes a daunting lesson. I wondered, when a landscape is barren is it possible at all for someone to find material, make useful items and survive? So it was I joined the Mara River Expedition with a group of fellow outdoor educators and ventured for my first time into the far north, the landscape commonly known as the barrenlands.

As part of this travelling conference we were all asked to do two things: One, write an article that would be read by everyone so it could be discussed on trip and two, create a practice others could engage in during the trip. My practice was to challenge everyone to find the material to make a serviceable device to catch a fish—like a fishhook. Devising such a little item seemed simple, but was not. In the barrenlands nothing is simple, unless perhaps one is well versed in the landscape having been raised in a culture that directly supports itself from its immediate surroundings. None of us were Inuit. We were all very dependent upon our modern clothing to protect us from the rain and insects. We brought all our food from the city and the few fish we caught resulted from the use of fishing gear made of modern synthetic materials. We travelled in an invisible bubble that made us dependent on a far-away landscape. As a person who studies material culture (specifically how we engage with the land through the making process), I discovered that venturing into the barrenlands with a simple quest to make a small thing like a fish hook can end miserably.

Throughout the trip, I witnessed my peers pick up rocks, antlers, bones and so on, trying to determine if they could somehow be transformed into a suitable tool, perhaps with an edge or hook. As a person who has done all her canoe travels in forested

regions, it was challenging to wrap my head around the idea that no trees means no wood bigger than your thumb. The bones and antlers we found were from previous caribou migrations; both harden as they dry, thus making them difficult to carve and shape into a tool. Despite my fascination with making things, I did not want to spend all my free time in this landscape scraping and sanding down an old bone or antler in an attempt to make a fish hook. My desire to find something in the landscape that could become a valuable item for our trip was only realized after both our large cooking spoons had broken. I managed to find a plant with strong roots that could be worked like spruce roots to provide a flat edge when wrapping the handle back onto the spoon portion. This repair was serviceable. While it prevented some burnt fingers when preparing dinner, for me it engendered the cold, hard realization that none of us would survive very long in this landscape without the bubble of modern, highly manufactured contrivances. Although we all loved the beauty of the place, one slip might well have left us in peril.

Our trip ended at Bathurst lodge. It was here my appreciation for the handwork skills of the Inuit culture soared. On the walls of the lodge was evidence, material culture, pieces of the landscape reworked into the tools and devices needed to either survive or thrive in this landscape. Despite the land's barrenness to my eyes, here was evidence that to an Inuit hunter's eye all their material needs could be satisfied if they had some ingenuity. Long bows were not carved of wood but carefully crafted (laminated to be exact) out of shorter animal parts, like muskox horns. Ingenious, really ingenious, perhaps beyond ingenious. I thought about my favourite story of a craft. It involves an Inuit man shaping a knife out of his own excrement, letting it freeze, sharpening it with polished spit and using this knife to survive and build upon all the rest of his material needs (Davies, p. 194). The Inuit excelled at awareness by noticing small details in

the landscape and construction methods, because they had to in order to survive.

Staring at these Inuit-made items I began to realize that today survival can be correlated with purchasing power, versus former times when survival was based upon the self-empowerment one achieves by knowing where to look for and how to work with a material. After our trip I read further about the Inuit culture. I wanted to learn more about the relationship between people and a barren landscape. Some books offered me an account of the hardship the culture endured after contact (Coccola & King, 1989) while another shared personal accounts of past lives lived in the area I had travelled (Sperry, 2005). Collignon (2006) and Kleinfeld (1971) both offered perspectives on the way the Inuit language “increases the speakers’ attentiveness to memory, visual forms and patterns. This results as each speaker shares their understanding of something by stringing together localizers (integral parts of words) to create sentences that convey.” Collignon (2006, p. 157) explains how, to the Inuit, lecturing is considered rude as it does not allow people to make sense of what they experience through having to formulate their own description. In experiential education this is referred to as processing, or reflection. Kleinfeld expands the understanding of Inuit education further by exploring the way ecological demands made by a particular environment combine with the group’s cultural adaptations to these demands and results in the population developing specific types of cognitive abilities. I don’t know Inuktitut (Inuit language), but these two authors have opened a window for me to begin to recognize how this “barren” landscape taught the Inuit to be aware of every detail around them, to excel when working with technology and their hands, and ultimately to survive. This deeper awareness and knowledge is embedded in the learning process of Inuktitut speakers. It also means that those who find the term “barren land” appropriate to describe this landscape—perhaps tourists, outdoor travellers and even some outdoor educators—may be missing a critical understanding.

Traveling in the barrenlands with an understanding of material culture is humbling to say the least. It is easy to want to feel part of such an incredibly beautiful landscape. Seeing thousands upon thousands of caribou wandering through this land it is hard not to think of plenitude. But once these large herds move on, only rocks and small plants remain. Our trip was dependent upon airplanes, synthetic material and the industrial outside world. To forget this would be foolish, arrogant and disrespectful of the wildlife that lives there all year. I would love to go back, but if I do, I will be darned sure to pack well, tread carefully and really look for the small details. The land may be barren of the many material items I need to survive, but this means it is full of opportunities to explore and learn in a new, subtle, but-not-so-barren way.

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## The Practice of Sharing a Historical Muse

By Bob Henderson

Sharing an imaginative energy for the storied landscape is one kind of pedagogical passion. I had taken on the challenge of offering this particular passion to my fellow travellers. With students, the practice of peppering a trip with a historical muse involves focussed readings, in the moment stories, planned ceremonies and rituals and, of course, campfire storytelling sessions (Henderson, 2008). Some of all of this was shared on the Mara-Burnside.

When starting out on the trail, a reading by 1836 explorer George Back can help bring on a mimetic feeling of excitement and anxiety. As he began his river trip down the Great Fish River (later renamed the Back River), George Back (2005) wrote the following:

There is something exciting in the first start, even upon an ordinary journey. The bustle of preparation—the act of departing, which seems like a decided step taken—the prospect of change, and consequent stretching out of the imagination—have at all times the effect of stirring the blood, and giving a quicker motion to the spirits. It may be conceived then with what sensations I set forth on my journey into the Arctic wilderness. I had escaped from the wretchedness of a dreary and disastrous winter—from scenes and tales of suffering and death—from wearisome inaction and monotony—from disappointment and heart-sickening care. Before me were novelty and enterprise; hope, curiosity, and the love of adventure were my companions; and even the prospect of difficulties and dangers to be encountered, with the responsibility inseparable from command, instead of damping rather heightened the enjoyment of the moment. In turning my back on the Fort, I felt my breast lightened, and my spirit, as it were, set free again; and with a quick step, Mr. King and I (for my companion seemed to share in the feeling) went on our way rejoicing. (pp. 256–257)

The passage is followed by the general account of the 1836 trip. I suggest that as one learns the stories (people and event) of the immediate terrain of travel and the general area, then the trip can be more a pilgrimage than a series of days of highs and lows, exciting challenges and mundane routine. It isn't the strongest person who endures, it is the person filled up or swelling with the knowledge and spirit of the place. Phaedrur, the traveller in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, failed in his pilgrimage efforts: "He speculated that the other pilgrims, the ones who reached the mountain, probably sensed the holiness of the mountain so intensely that each footstep was an act of devotion, an act of submission to this holiness" (Pirsig, 1974, p. 205). Holiness perhaps, devotion certainly: the place explored as a muse through time can channel the best of travel energy and spirit.

Later on in the trip when an outstanding traveller's challenge arises, it is wise to return to the George Back "starting out" quote. This was done before our group's five-kilometre Burnside River Canyon portage. Once the "act of devotion" idea is revisited, I read a portage passage from another Arctic traveller, P.G. Downes (1943). A sample of the long passage follows here:

Packing over the portages has a peculiar limiting and brutalizing effect on the mind. Personally, I found myself becoming less averse to it. . . . There is an odd, savage, masochistic joy in finding yourself able to pile on more and more until you can just stagger to your feet. As you trudge on, unable to turn your head to right or left, unable to lift your eyes more than a few feet from the ground, the whole world begins to shrink into a focus of pain and short gasps of breath; the deadening pressure of the strap on the top of your head seems to be forcing it down through your shoulder blades. . . . Instead of a desire to rest, a furious impatience begins to fire you with dull sullen rage. The crushing weight, after a while, sets up

a rhythm with the pounding of the blood in your ears, and to break this oppressive thundering you alter your pace to a faster shuffle. . . . At the end of the trail, you slowly crouch down until the bottom of the load touches the ground. Bent over backward, you stare up into the sky and carefully remove the top of the load from the back of our neck. . . . You feel curiously light. . . .

There are few sweeter words to the man of the North than: "By God, there is a man that can pack!" The North is so crushing, it gives away before the ineptitude of man so slightly, its rewards are so withheld, that these small conceits are magnified out of all proportion and are warming wine to the spirit." (Downes, 1943, pp. 136–137)

At the portage completion we gather for a portage ceremony. A thimble full of rum is distributed in turn. Each tripper is knighted, as it were, with a paddle touched to each shoulder with the line, "By God, there's a Man/Woman who can pack," proclaimed as each one downs the rum with enthusiasm. It is explained that the voyageurs of the Canadian fur trade were rewarded in a similar fashion following landmark events.

*"It is not romanticism, but rather a widening of reality."*

While the portage passage/voyageur ceremony represents a staged event, another strategy to bring the storied landscape alive is a more random peppering of stories, where the context matches or where an entertainment moment would be valued. (I am always reading the group and terrain for the tacit knowledge of suitability for the historic muse.)

If the mystic of wildlife is mentioned, it might be a time to share the George Grinnell (1996) passage: "What Art [Moffat] had understood, and what we had not, is that God is not he who kills and eats, but that

which is killed and is eaten" (p. 99).

If the value of campfire is noted, I might choose to draw from the reading kit, in this case Peter Browning's (1989) fire passage:

Fire was not only comfort and convenience and necessity, it was a means by which we felt that we were masters of the situation. . . . what John and I needed was the symbol and not the actuality of power, and for this the small comfort of a modest fire served quite well. (p. 22)

As one's knowledge of travel literature develops, the possibility abounds to share this pedagogical passion. A challenge is not to over do it; tacit knowing is also being developed.

The American poet, Wallace Stevens (1942), has written of imagination: "Imagination is a liberty of the mind, a power of the mind and over the possibilities of things. . . . we have it, because we don't have enough without it" (p. 138/150). To imagine, we have openness to ideas. It starts with an imaginative spark of possibility. The possibility is that the stories of the place, and indeed the stories we create in the present, become alive and bring meaning to time, then and now. The theory is that the historical muse is a solid part of place-responsive pedagogy, that a storied landscape leads beyond meaning to caring and perhaps acting on behalf of the place. All this is a sincere step towards cultivating ecological consciousness—a part of an educative process. That is the theory.

The practice is to pepper the trail with stories, rituals/ceremonies, and readings that, for those that grab onto the imaginative spark of possibility, will render the past as a felt experience. It is not romanticism, but rather a widening of reality. The practice can lead to, in theory, what novelist James David Duncan (1985) explores in *The River Why*. He writes of characters with "native intelligence:"

. . . it evolves as the native involves himself in his region. A non-native awakes in the morning in a body in a



bed in a room in a building on a street in a county in a state in a nation. A native awakes in the center of a little cosmos—or a big one, if his intelligence is vast—and he wears this cosmos like a robe, senses the barely perceptible shiftings, migrations, moods and machinations of its creatures, its growing green things, its earth and sky. (Duncan, 1985, pp. 53–54)

The big cosmos I aspired to develop and share was the storied landscape of the barren grounds. Franklin's Arctic Land Expedition of 1819–21 was a primary source.<sup>1</sup> Some might have felt that imaginative spark. Others were always more imaginatively driven towards the animals, the landforms, the body in motion. All of these attentions were shared amongst our group in organized sessions and informal moments. There was a happy air of eclecticism with our group. Much talent, much knowledge, much to share by way of theory and practice. We were, in the words of educator David Orr (1992), "re-educating people [ourselves] in the art of living well where they are" (p. 130).

## Note:

1. See the four journals from the First Franklin Arctic Land Expedition, 1819–22:

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## The Conscious Use (or Avoidance) of Metaphor in Outdoor Adventure Education

By Simon Beames

Facilitated discussion before, during and after experiences is widely accepted practice in the field of outdoor adventure education (Gass, 1990; Greenaway, 1993; Priest & Gass, 1997; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988). These facilitated sessions refer “to the organised discussion, prior to or after an activity, that has the intention of enabling participants to generalise what they have learnt to other life settings” (Brown, 2002, p. 101).

Much of the literature appears to house the assumption that individual learning may be considerably restricted if participants’ experiences are not processed with the help of an external facilitator, as they may not be able to make sufficiently clear connections between program activities and their daily lives on their own (Knapp, 1999; Luckner & Nadler, 1997; Schoel et al., 1988). This business of making clear connections between program and home is central to courses with personal and social development as their principal aim, yet this fundamental concept of transfer lacks convincing support in the literature and has been described as outdoor adventure education’s Achilles’ heel (Brown, 2010).

It is within the broad themes of facilitation and processing that the discourse surrounding the use of metaphors as a means of helping participants make greater sense of their experiences exists. In this paper, through an examination of the relevant metaphor literature, I examine the possibilities and pitfalls of outdoor instructors using metaphors to enhance their course facilitation in non-therapeutic contexts. The title of the paper is a play on the title of Stephen Bacon’s seminal 1983 book, *The Conscious Use of Metaphor in Outward Bound*.

My interest in learning more deeply about metaphors stems from the numerous times I used personal and group metaphors during my early career as an adventure-based

outdoor educator. This practice was entirely uncritical and was largely informed by observing reviewing sessions led by more experienced senior instructors—none of whom were qualified counsellors or licensed therapists. My concern surrounding the unconsidered use of metaphors by outdoor instructors has been so great that I have not deliberately used any kind of metaphors in my practice in at least ten years—principally because I suspected they may have as much potential to harm as they do to help.

### Metaphor Literature

The outdoor education-related literature on using metaphors is, of course, located within a much greater corpus of writing in the field of linguistics. Knowles and Moon (2006) view metaphors as “instances of non-literal language that involve some kind of comparison or identification: if interpreted literally, they would be nonsensical, impossible, or untrue” (p. 5). Widely regarded as the seminal book on metaphors, *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 2003) is based on the assumption that “metaphor is pervasive everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action” (p. 3). Indeed, no one raises an eyebrow when people refer to computers having “viruses” or colleagues being “on the same page.” For Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are primarily about sense-making and language is merely a way this complex process can be revealed.

Knowles and Moon (2006) state that metaphors employ concrete images to communicate abstract ideas that are difficult to explain. For example, “if we want to fully understand an abstract concept [e.g., love], we are better off using another concept that is more concrete, physical, or tangible [e.g., a building]” (Kovecses, 2010, p. 7). Similarly, Gass (1991) explains how metaphoric transfer happens when “parallel processes in one learning situation become analogous

to learning in another different, yet similar situation" (p. 6). These quotes lend considerable rationale for this investigation into metaphors and outdoor adventure education. If, as Knowles and Moon posit, we might not understand many things in our lives "except with the help of metaphorical models or analogies" (p. 4), it then behooves outdoor educators to better understand how they might facilitate this process more deliberately for the participants with whom they are working.

### Metaphors by the People and for the People

My initial interrogation of the literature on metaphor indicates that it can bear two particular distinctions: First, metaphors can be generated by participants or determined by facilitators. It may be that self-generated metaphors are more powerful, meaningful and personally relevant than those determined by instructors. Instructor-determined metaphors appear to be particularly suited to courses with specifically prescribed learning outcomes, such as with therapeutic programs (cf. Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Gass, 1991) or development training programs.

Second, metaphors can be used on an individual basis and with groups. I would argue that caution should be exercised when using metaphors to describe other individuals' attributes, except within groups possessing a collectively high degree of trust and where all members are interested in receiving this kind of rather personal feedback. When individuals are given metaphors by others (e.g., Fred is like a rusty chain on a bicycle) this can serve as a form of direct feedback on their behaviour. In some contexts this may be desirable and in others it may be entirely unjustifiable, as the potential for emotional harm is considerably heightened. Group metaphors, on the other hand, can be used to explore behaviour during the course, or to consider the group's interactions after the course. The latter is particularly suited to teams that will be working together after the course finishes (e.g., back in the office).

### Metaphors in Practice, on the River

During our paddling trip, my "official" metaphor session took place on the fifth of 14 days. At this point in the journey, I reasoned, people would have settled into their own routines of living on the tundra and would be able to concentrate on a more cerebral task; setting up tents, packing canoes and going to the bathroom had become routine and we had found a pleasant rhythm with each other and the land. I asked members to describe the group's functioning by relating it to some kind of entity (e.g., a sea-going vessel, a computer, a bicycle).

When the activity was introduced after breakfast, ideas such as a canoe, a soccer team and a herd of caribou were suggested as suitable metaphors for us conference delegates. We did not decide on our group metaphor there and then; rather, we revisited the question that night after finishing our shepherd's pie. As we were on the tundra and had come across hundreds and hundreds of caribou so far, there was no disagreement to the proposal that we adopt the herd of caribou as the metaphor for our group. We were now 14 *rangifer tarandus* that were free to go and graze on lichen—as the metaphor goes. What was remarkable was how our adoption of the herd of caribou metaphor directly influenced the way the group interacted over the following nine days.

### Sleeping Bull, Wolverines and Metaphors for Landscape

The day after my metaphor session we found ourselves with some free time before dinner. Some people elected to explore the surrounding landscape, some wrote in their journals, others fished and some slept. Despite being deliberately woken three times, one of our group members—our leader, as it turned out—was so much enjoying his nap that he missed dinner entirely. The group member who read out the next morning's group journal entry reflected on the night before and how "Sleeping Bull" had to eat his dinner cold. With that, a moniker was born, and our leader was called

Sleeping Bull by the rest of the “herd” for the remainder of the journey. This, however, was only the beginning of the fun, as others who distinguished themselves in unique and distinct ways were often dubbed “Snoring Bull,” “Portaging Bull” or whatever name was topical.

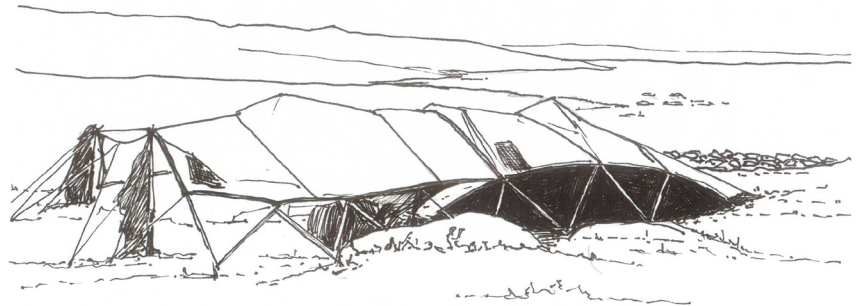
Five days after the initial generation of the caribou herd metaphor, I posed two questions over stoned wheat thins and peanut butter: What dangers threaten caribou? And what nurtures caribou? Among the answers were wolverines and luscious lichen, respectively. I then enquired if there were any wolverines lurking around our group. Was there anything out there that could harm us—anything that we should be wary of?

One person offered that a “wolverine” could be our somewhat relaxed attitudes towards washing hands before eating. Not washing hands could lead to the spreading of illness (e.g., gastrointestinal sickness, colds and so on). Clearly, sickness could harm our herd of caribou and should be prevented. Examples of lichen that would sustain our herd could be helping the kitchen crew in the morning, once one’s personal kit was packed, and being sure to say please and thank-you around camp, so that we did not take each others’ goodwill for granted.

One night after dinner, the point was raised that my crude categorization of metaphors included those for people and for activities, but not for the land. For example, if people could be animals, and expeditions like challenges in our daily lives, what could this landscape represent to us? Is it like a warm and comforting blanket or like a scary film that constantly elicits feelings of anxiety?

This discussion showed me how perhaps I had been unwittingly perpetuating a very limited view of how metaphors can be employed as a means of processing

experiences. After all, if I believe that part of my job as an outdoor educator is to help learners make connections to the landscape through which they are travelling, and if I believe that metaphors can be a useful means of more deeply understanding our experiences, then wasn’t I missing something rather obvious? It is entirely supportable, then, that encouraging individuals to construct a metaphor for the landscape may enable them to more deeply understand their own connection to it.



### Final Thoughts

As the bow of my canoe reached the brackish water of Bathurst Inlet, I found myself agreeing with Stephen Bacon (1983) in that there is room for outdoor educators to consciously use metaphors. After all, it seems undeniable that the caribou herd metaphor enabled us to discuss the ways in which we interacted in camp and on the water, and in ways that were different and complementary to our normal ways of communicating. The caveat, of course, is that there are kinds of “metaphor pedagogy” (e.g., instructor determined, participants generating for other participants) that may be best avoided in conventional outdoor education contexts.

Finally, there appears to be much scope for individuals using personal metaphors to explore their relationship with the landscape through which they are travelling. For me, the river’s shores were open, welcoming and life affirming. Ironically, it was this so-called “barren” landscape that filled me with pleasure, awe and peace.



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# Learning from a Distressed Loon

By Hans Gelter

This is a story about a loon, a skinny dip in a tundra pond, and a wilderness camp that had to be moved.

The story starts with the unique “Conference on Wilderness Educational Expeditions: International Perspectives and Practices,” which took place from June 27 to July 13, 2010. The conference comprised 14 outdoor educators from Canada, Scotland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Japan participating in a 250 km-long canoe expedition on the Mara and Burnside Rivers in Nunavut. A common subject for most of the conference presentations was interconnectedness with place and nature. Such presentations included activities such as handicraft from natural material, quiet solo moments, reflections on the concepts of wind and water, playing games, blind paddling and group metaphors.

### The Incident

Our expedition ended with a five kilometre portage at Burnside Falls. The first to reach the end of our portage and our camp site, I decided to take a quick swim in a small pond before the others arrived. Upon entering the pond I became aware of a distressed Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*), a circumpolar species familiar to me from Sweden. A usually quiet species that breeds in small tundra ponds, it clearly communicated that I had trespassed beyond its comfort zone. Aware of its behaviour I hurried to wash myself and quickly leave the loon pond. While the rest of the expedition arrived and started to raise camp, the loon mate made several attempts to land in the pond, sweeping over the camp with its goose-like flight-cackle, while the female in the pond answered with a crow-like croaking call. Each time the male gave up and left. When people came too close to the pond the loon either submerged or took off from the pond, but quickly returned again. The distressed loon made me raise my own tent a safe distance from the loon pond, but, despite the distress displayed by the loon, four of

the seven camp tents were raised very close to the pond, the nearest only a few metres away. I decided to investigate further to determine the reason for the loon’s distress.

I walked along the waterline of the pond and quickly found the exposed loon nest with two eggs, just a few metres away from a tent. Making my colleagues aware of the situation, it was decided to move the four closest tents away from the pond. Given that many hours had passed since my dip in the pond, the damage was probably already done. In the cold weather the eggs would have cooled down to a fatal level as neither of the parent loons could incubate the eggs due to our camp business. Our ignorance of the incident probably killed the loon chicks in their eggs. This may be of minor ecological significance, as only about 30% of loon eggs hatch and usually a replacement clutch are laid after egg loss (Camp, 1977). The loon eggs could just as well have been taken by wolves or ravens, and natives previously gathered loon eggs for food. However, our misbehaviour made us uncomfortable, and when breaking the camp the next day, to ease our guilty consciences, we made great efforts to not further disturb the loons when passing the pond with our gear.

### Theoretical and Practical Consequences

Despite its ecological insignificance, the loon incident had a pedagogic significance. As the basic theme of the conference was “connecting to place” and “interconnecting to nature,” one might expect our expert group of outdoor educators to “walk our talk” concerning how to behave in nature. However, it made me wonder to see how we tramped on flowers and ignored the warnings of white-crowned sparrows when passing near their hidden ground nests; some in the group even followed a rough-legged hawk to get a better photograph, despite its warning calls and flight displays to communicate we had come too close to its nest.

David Selby (1996) suggested that education programs need a harmonization of “message” and “medium” through the insight that “the medium is the message.” It’s not what you say, but what you do that is important, especially in outdoor education. We talked during the trip about how to connect to nature and the landscape, yet were unable to “read” the language of nature and its obvious signs. Clearly there was a gap between the message and the medium. I wrote in my notebook: “. . . a lesson for all of us to be observant and aware of our behaviour and ways of being in nature—a skill that is central to friluftsliv. As Nansen said; “Friluftsliv is to be at home in nature,” not to be a tourist. At home you know all the things and their way, while a tourist is only superficially acquainted with the place.”

Were we merely “tourists” on the tundra, or were we at home? Was nature only an arena for our conference and of instrumental value in our fulfillment as outdoor educators, or were we at home learning our different ways of being at home, and respecting the intrinsic values of nature?

During the canoe trip I often reflected on the cultural differences between the Scandinavian way of friluftsliv (Gelter, 2000) and the Anglo-American way of outdoor education/activities; in my experience the latter is more explicitly oriented towards socialisation, mastering activities, and leadership, while the value of being skillful in interpreting and understanding nature is regarded more as an implicit, positive outcome of being in nature. While I truly enjoyed the social skills of my Canadian and Scottish friends, at times this group socialisation in its various forms took over the experience of more modest communication by nature.

Outdoor education often is oriented towards, in Selby’s terms, traditional knowledge-oriented processes of learning about (the outdoors), the skill acquisition process of learning for (outdoor activities, personal and social development), and learning in or through (activities in nature). But this loon incident would add another learning process

central to genuine friluftsliv—learning from nature, letting phenomenon in nature speak and tell their stories, and showing respect for nature’s messages. Due to our involvement with our social and outdoor activities, we didn’t listen to nature, to the loon and what it had to say to us about our behaviour. We became imprisoned in an anthropocentric trap that disconnected us from the surroundings. We were tourists in nature.

Surveying textbooks on outdoor leadership and outdoor experiential learning, I found subjects such as environmental awareness, minimizing impact, landfulness, place-based learning, environmental stewardship, and ecological literacy, but very little about learning from nature and the skill of subjective interconnectedness with nature. Could the traditional anthropocentric focus on technical, social and personal dimensions in outdoor education explain the loon incident and my experienced gap between theory and praxis in connecting to the land?

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## Outdoor Education in Finland: Old Experiential Method in a New Concept

By Seppo Karppinen (Translated by Marja Korkala)

In this article I present an overview of outdoor education in Finland. Every culture has its own words and meanings to express health, wellbeing and relationship with nature. This applies to Finns, too. I deal with the meaning for the word “Erä,” which is a traditional concept of life in wilderness in Finland. However today Erä has been exchanged for the modern word referring to outdoor education—“Seikkailukasvatus.” In terms of wilderness, Finland is a European superpower. With 77% forest cover and 188,000 lakes, its wilderness terrain is exceeded only by Russia. In addition, it has the seventh largest territory on the continent, and yet only Iceland and Norway are less sparsely populated. As a result, there are good reasons to suppose that in these circumstances outdoor life and environment have played, and in the future will continue to play, a central role in Finnish mentality, thinking, semantics, practice, survival and prosperity. Through outdoor education we have many advantages to find balance between attitudes and resources for the public wellbeing in our modern society.

### Back to Outdoor Basics

Outdoor life and outdoor adventure activities within wilderness are rooted in the very beginning of Finnish history (Kalevala, 1828/1922/2005). As far back as the Middle Ages there has been reference to Erä. In English, Erä (pronounced *eh-ra*) means wilderness life in an uninhabited area, surviving rough challenges and being part of Mother Nature and close to the natural environment with fresh waters and wild beasts (Vahtola, 2003).

Since 1866, as Finland’s society and educational system developed, outdoor physical activities, and experiential and environmental education have been a part of formal education. Today as we emphasize the combination of outdoor, adventure and education activities, so too there is a shift from speaking of Erä to referring to

Seikkailukasvatus, which means outdoor adventure education. It has a somewhat human-made or sophisticated role in society, especially in social and youth work, recreation as well as in therapeutic and educational processes. To modern people it has become an artificial avenue for seeking the freedom, connection and joy of identification with free nature.

Finland’s modern outdoor education, Seikkailukasvatus, has its basics in the Erä tradition, but especially mental experience, transfer and the process called reflection during or after the activities have an important role in the outdoor education process (Csíkszentmihályi, 2005; Ewert & Garvey, 2007). For example, according to Berger and Luckmann (1995), people construct their reality through language and its interpretations, which provide the fundamental superimposition of logic for the objectified social worlds. Understanding the experiential learning model of John Dewey (1937/1951) is useful in evaluating, testing out and making use of the main components of outdoor education (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 2000) or therapeutic processes (Gass, 1993). General experiential learning theories, ideas and approaches have had a considerable influence on it (Kolb, 1984; Kraft & Sakofs, 1985; Reiners, 1995).

### Forests and Lakes: Worshipped Icons of Finnish Experiential Outdoor Life

In general, Finnish national landscapes have two central elements: forests and watercourses. Erämaa (pronounced *eh-ra-maa*) refers to “hunting ground, a remote and uninhabited area.” This customary Finnish concept of wilderness with large old-growth forests has retained its place in the Finnish mind as a model for a real forest, even though such areas of wilderness have been diminished to now comprise only a fraction of the total forested area (Voionmaa, 1947). A scene of an inland lake is still the most



admired landscape in all four seasons. It is, of course, even preferable that these two main elements are both included in the same view. To some the most worshipped icon of the national scenery has been of a clear blue summer lake in the embrace of +30° C weather and thick green forest, viewed from above while perched high on a granite cliff. To another, the ideal is winter time where it might be -30° C, all the lakes are frozen and covered with thick ice, and white powder snow can be seen all around. Still, the most meaningful mental experience could be seeing the midnight sun in the summer or the northern lights—aurora borealis—in the coldest and darkest winter season.

### **Same Concept, Different Semantics**

Erä can be translated into English as “outdoor life,” German as “wildnis/ draussen/in freien natur leben,” French as “plein air,” and Norwegian/Swedish/Danish as “friluftsliv.” Almost every culture has its own meaning to express health, wellbeing and relationship with nature. Another interesting word is “miyupimaatisiin,” which comes from the Cree of James Bay in Canada (Henderson, 2006). As mentioned before in Finnish semantics we use the word *Seikkailukasvatus* (*Seikkailu* = adventure and *kasvatus* = education; in German the equivalent is “Erlebnispädagogik”) to describe the synonymous word for “outdoor Erä education” (Reiners, 1995).

### **Outdoor Education Today in Finland**

Today, 1,000 years after the Middle Ages, sport hunters demonstrate practical Erä culture at its best. One must apply and pay for a membership to fish or hunt in private waters, rivers or hunting grounds (Vilkuna, 1950). However, a great number of people are longing to simply discover physical recreation, social entertainment and even mental therapy in a natural environment. Outdoor education has become an important branch of travelling business, focusing to low-speed activities such as privacy, rest, peace and silence. Modern people look for ways to escape from the hectic urban life of technology and timetables. Most Finns

living in towns enjoy staying at their cabins or villas by the waters or in the countryside, especially on summer weekends. For them it means life with good company and activities: outdoor camping and reflecting sitting by an open fire, trekking, hiking, excursions and enjoying the fruits of forests, such as collecting mushrooms or berries.

The official educative or pedagogical meanings of Erä are basic outdoor skills such as fishing, trekking, skiing, skating or just surviving in the natural environment, the protection of natural environment, sustainability and Everyman’s Right policy. In non-formal education it seems that the modern ideas of outdoor adventure education and therapy, such as “using deliberate adventurous experiences to create learning and changes in individuals and groups” (Priest, 1999, xiii; Gass, 1993, 5) are naturally included in the modern Erä process. In branches like therapy, youth work and social work, outdoor education is a powerful method to rehabilitate self images and to prevent youth and adolescents from exclusion. Still, outdoor adventure therapy has not yet been accepted as an *official* method of therapy in the system of national medical treatment.

### **Finnish Outdoor Education in the Future**

In Finland there are institutes and college courses for studying practical outdoor life/ activities, Erä guiding. The leading institute is in Tornio, Northern Finland, near the Arctic Circle, where there are outdoor adventure courses based on activities like kayaking, climbing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, camping and so on. Students learn many technical skills, but more importantly, while performing activities they gain knowledge of the main principles and goals of adventure education. These courses focus on three important things: group skills, environmental skills and individual growth. All these skills are taught to students during the course (for more information, see [www.humak.fi/en/current/news](http://www.humak.fi/en/current/news)). Unfortunately there is not any academic syllabus or university level curriculum for pursuing outdoor education

as an academic subject (Telemäki & Bowles, 2001; Karppinen, 1998, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011). In our universities experiential education, outdoor education, adventure education and environmental education curriculums are subsections within the Faculty of Education and Pedagogics. In the absence of special scholars and scientists it is difficult to initiate academic research in this area; at the moment very few academic master theses have been completed on outdoor experiential (adventure) education.

### Conclusion

In 2004 individuals involved in Finnish experiential learning and outdoor education organized a non-political, non-profit and non-commercial working group dedicated to experiential education and to the students, social workers, youth workers, therapists, teachers, educators and practitioners who

make use of its practice and philosophy. This working group aims to increase general awareness of modern outdoor education methods, maintain a comprehensive and up-to date description of the current state of experiential outdoor education, enhance co-operation

between various groups working in the field of experiential education and learning, distribute information about research and development in the respective fields, and share

new ideas and international trends or innovations. The working group gets together a few times a year. There is an annual national meeting once a year in January, when over 150 people from all

over the country arrive to attend a two-day meeting on Finnish outdoor education. In 2013 the meeting takes place in Rovaniemi, Lapland. (For more information, visit the website—also available in English—at [www.seikkailukasvatus.fi](http://www.seikkailukasvatus.fi))

In summary, outdoor education in Finland has a great tradition and forms the basis of Erä life; its modern alternative—Seikkailukasvatus—fits into Finnish culture, education and therapeutic needs; and finally there are a lot of educators and practitioners who are dedicated to strike a balance between attitudes and resources for the sake of public health, wellbeing and good, all of which is possible through outdoor education.

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# Being Part of Something Bigger than Yourself

By Amir Fishman

Canada, like other Western countries, is an individualistic society (Hofstede, 2007). We thrive on competition. Yet as outdoor educators, therapists, guides and the like, we typically promote the opposite—we encourage teamwork, interpersonal cooperation and inter-team trust, amongst other things (Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997; Williams, 2003). These qualities are pillars in Japan's culture and belief system (Hofstede, 2007). I believe that outdoor professionals can learn a lot from the Japanese. In this article, I discuss some of the lessons I learned during my most recent experience in Japan and share how it has influenced my beliefs with respect to how an outdoor organization can operate.

## The Experience

In June 2011, I travelled to Minami-Furano, a city in central Hokkaido, Japan, where I would complete a two-and-a-half-month unpaid internship at the not-for-profit organization Donkoro Outdoor School. This organization was, by far, the most organized, most efficient and most well-run organization I had ever worked for.

## The Lessons

The underlying objective at Donkoro Outdoor School was to create an environment where individuals realize they are a part of something bigger than themselves. As a result of this approach, I witnessed people willing to work together and endure tasks they might otherwise find unpleasant in order to do their part in producing the best final product (be it a trip, a lesson or a video).

## Cheers to Good Work

Whenever a group completed a program, each person would say to every other, "Otsukare-sama-deshita," which translates as "Cheers to good work." After the clients had left, the staff would say it to one another. When the staff returned to the home base, the

office staff would say it to the returning staff. At the end of the day, all staff would say it to an individual departing staff member as they left for home.

It is incredible how uplifting that type of phrase can be. To me, it indicated I was valued and my work was recognized. Moreover, it confirmed that whatever task I performed was seen as an essential contribution towards the bigger picture, regardless of how small or mundane. Without staff leaving the base to guide, there'd be no program; without staff staying at the base and maintaining equipment, the program couldn't run. This was one of the biggest differences I noted between North American and Japanese culture; in Japan, no one was "just" a cook or "just" a driver—everyone was important and valued.

## Confront without coddling

One of the most shocking and impressive things I witnessed and experienced was the direct, blunt and unemotional criticisms a guide would receive if they made a substantial error or were acting in a way that was counterproductive to the goal of the activity. There was neither anything aggressive about the approach nor was anything stated too delicately. What I appreciated most was that passive-aggressive tactics were never used, and once that particular discussion ended there wasn't the slightest bit of hostility from either party.

The point of the discussion was neither about being sensitive to a particular individual's feelings, nor was it about beating an individual into submission. It was about addressing an issue that, if repeated, would negatively affect the communal end product. This approach was objective and methodical: This is what you did wrong; here's how we do it. This method is very different from the standard "Here's a positive, here's a negative, and here's another positive" approach I've seen promoted in the West. This one might take some practice, but if



used effectively it can be very powerful.

## Throw away inter-group competition

Coming from a highly competitive environment, when I first arrived I remember feeling a need to prove myself as a competent guide and outdoors person. I tried to show my grit whenever given the opportunity to talk about myself. I quickly realized two things: I was the only person doing this and everyone I worked with had skills that far surpassed mine. Once I realized that nobody cared to try and fit me into some sort of hierarchy of skill levels, I began looking at my fellow coworkers as mentors. From that point forwards, I calmly and happily received any advice given to me. It was truly amazing to never feel animosity or jealousy because of another person's skill level and to simply admire their talents. It was incredibly valuable to be completely receptive to the words of wisdom passed to me by those older and more experienced.

## Have communal meals

Every day meals were prepared by the office staff while the guides were out; all staff always ate together. There was something very rewarding about finishing a job and then coming back to the office for a nice "home-cooked" meal. It also gave everyone a chance to socialize, step away from their particular jobs and simply rejuvenate. It's as the idiom states: A family who eats together stays together.

## Conclusion

The point of this article is simple: Aim to create a culture within your organization that is group oriented rather than individual oriented. This is easier to do with organizations in the process of being formed than with those already established. With that said, social norms and culture can change; it may simply take a little longer and require a fair bit of persistence from those in charge. The above mentioned ideas were simply a starting point. Every organization is different and should work towards developing its own ways of creating a group-

oriented culture.

While every day was not necessarily always pleasant, I finished every day feeling content. The beautiful location, the novelty of the situation and simply being abroad contributed to that happiness, but there was something more. When I reflect on my experience, I remember the light-hearted communal meals; I remember the appreciation I both gave and received; I remember being surrounded by individuals whose skills far surpassed mine, but never once feeling as though my skill level was looked down upon. The group-oriented culture that the staff at Donkoro had created helped shape one of the most influential experiences of my life.

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## Reading the Trail

By Bob Henderson

Beames, S., Higgins, P. and Nicol, R. (2012). *Learning outside the classroom: Theory and guidelines for practice*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780415893626

Wattchow, B. and Brown, M. (2011). *A pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world*. Clayton, Victoria (Australia): Monash University. ISBN 9780980651249.

Two new books recently published deserve special attention. They remind us that “no one lives in the world in general” (Clifford Geertz in Wattchow and Brown, 2011, 88). In outdoor education, our curricular is moving in a direction closer to home as in neighbourhood, not as in globe. Two works—*A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor Education for a Changing World* and *Learning Outside the Classroom: Theory and Guidelines for Practice*—share an important characteristic: extreme relevance for practitioners. Both books shine brightly as examples of the Kurt Lewin adage, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

In the last decade, two trends / initiatives / movements have grabbed hold in mainstream schooling within outdoor education. They are an attention to place-based / place-responsive pedagogy and curricula enhancement field trips in schools’ backyards and neighbourhoods. We are not so much abandoning the distant landscape as adventure-arena curriculum as we are widening the playing field to encourage the closer-to-home place responsive pedagogy. To this end, these two books strongly support each other. Theory and practice (conceptualizing and doing) are well balanced in both texts. Both books are rich in case studies (or stories of practice) and guidelines to fully inform those working in the field.

In both books we find an encouragement for teachers to become creators of curriculum rather than dispensers of a prescribed curriculum (see, for example, Beames et al., 2012, 111). Both books are attentive to content and process. For Wattchow and Brown the content is the role of and importance of

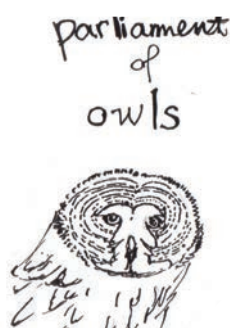
place in our lives, plus the complementary weaving of story for a “responsiveness” to place. For Beames et al., the content is the closer-to-home field trip. The process in both cases leaves one with the feeling and encouragement that there is no excuse to not do “place,” to not do the “school / neighbourhood field trip.” Hence both books are inspiring. There is enthusiasm here—the best kind—the kind well grounded in solid theory and practice principles and guidelines. For example, chapter seven in Beames et al., “Administration and risk management” is a wise succinct treatment on how to approach risk management. With off-site checklists, consent forms / incident reporting and other guidelines, one should feel prepared to move forward with confidence. In Wattchow and Brown, Chapter four offers an international overview of research where “place” is central to outdoor education literature and Chapter eight follows the curriculum activities and sequencing of one identified place-responsive educator. Both books provide a full package aware of the trials teachers face in mainstream schooling to simply get kids out the door and into the outdoors.

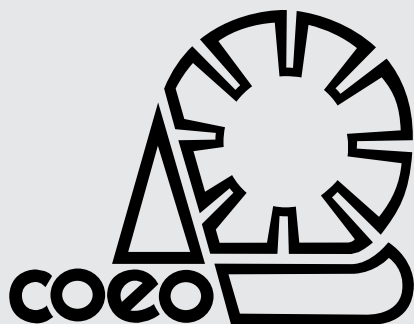
Different in style but complementary in content, together these texts comprise sound pathways to follow into our emerging “nature-deficit disordered” cultural consciousness.

There are challenges aplenty but we can read and act ourselves into positive directions.

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Bob Henderson recently retired from years of teaching outdoor education at McMaster University and is a long-time contributor to Pathways.





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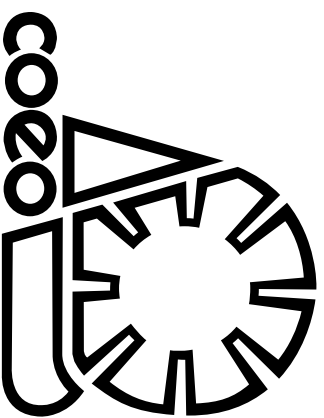
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