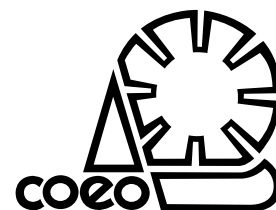


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION
Fall 2013, 26(1)



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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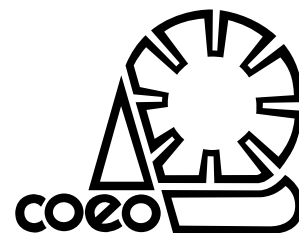
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Connie Kavanagh

Since writing my first feature article for *Pathways* in 2011, "Living Divided No More: A Journey into Health in the 21st Century," I have envisioned an issue of the journal dedicated to looking at the connections and relationships between health and outdoor experiential education (OEE). While it has taken me a few years, I am excited to finally present you with that issue.

To me, this special issue of *Pathways* is important because increasingly schools, educators, and activity-based programs are tasked with addressing health concerns. Every year valuable resources are put towards developing health resource kits, programs and curricula, and even OEE programs and educators use health as a key platform for promotion. Yet, often little time is spent critically reflecting on how we define, teach and practice ideas of health. In other words, what do we mean by health? Many would acknowledge that being healthy is a desirable goal, but why? What does it mean to be healthy? How do we know when we have achieved health? Or perhaps health eludes precise definition and defies quantification? Should it be left to the individual to develop her or his own meaning of health and how to live a healthy life? Doing so would require people to understand the ways in which we "learn health" within a socio-cultural and political context. While such a task is far beyond

the 36 pages of this issue, each article and column contained herein adds to a growing conversation about the relationships between health and OEE.

The articles gathered between these covers go beyond addressing common health topics such as physical activity and healthy eating. The authors endeavour to elicit a larger conversation about health and OEE. Readers will not only learn about current research and contentious topics, such as weight-based oppression and death education, but will also be exposed to personal narratives that serve to make the research come to life. From the journey of Gail Kuhl, who eloquently writes about how illness changed her path as an outdoor educator to an outdoor artist, to the embodied snowboarding experiences of Jennifer Wigglesworth, from the place-based learning of Alexa Scully to the fingertip reflections of Erika Bailey whose surfing accident helped her reflect on the power of healing and freedom, readers will gain a deep awareness of the personal connections between health and OEE.

Erin Cameron is currently completing her PhD and is contract lecturing in the areas of health promotion, outdoor education, health education and physical education at Lakehead University.

Editor's Note: A special thank you to Ben Blakey for his insightful comments and editorial work on this issue. Ben Blakey is in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He will graduate in April 2014 with a junior/intermediate specialization, an English teachable and a research thesis focusing on the integration of nature in teacher education.

Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Gail Kuhl (cover, and pages 4, 8, 15, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28 and 32), Ken Thornburn (page 31) and Katie Sweet (pages 5, 13, 16, 20, 27, 29, 32, 34 and 36.) To learn more about Gail's journey as an artist, read her article on pages 4–5. To see her art in colour visit her Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WinterSkyBlockprints>.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who left the fall conference feeling rejuvenated and inspired to try out some new activities and strategies! COEO is very appreciative of the welcoming folks at Glen Bernard Camp who opened up their beautiful space to host a very well attended conference. Margot Peck and Chris Ockenden greeted everyone with smiles at the registration desk. The streams of Forest Schools, Adventure Education, Storytelling and Fun and Games were a hit and drew many new members to check them out. Conference co-chairs Shane Kramer and Biz Ahrens and stream leaders Kelly McKinney, Lindsay Cornell, Patrick Byrne and Bonnie Anderson did a wonderful job organizing meaningful workshops. Thank you to the range of presenters who shared their expertise! The sunshine, warm weather, changing colours of the leaves and fantastic company also contributed to yet another successful COEO conference.

I am very excited to step into the role of COEO President for the 2013–2014 term! This is a very exciting time for outdoor education, including the potential for influencing the curriculum of expanded pre-service training to be offered to future teachers in the province, as well as participating in the Ministry of Education's "Next Phase of Education" strategic planning process.

I have big shoes to fill, following Kyle Clarke who has dedicated so much time and talent to promoting the growth of COEO during his three-year term as President. My aim is to build on my experience as Vice President and previously as a Director at Large to further contribute and personally grow alongside the council. I offer the board experience I am gaining in my current teaching position at the Norval Outdoor School, the outdoor campus belonging to Upper Canada College. My graduate research conducted while attending Trent University, entitled "Evaluating Integrated Environmental Education Within an Ontario School Board," focused on the Specialist High Skills Major – The Environment program whereby outdoor education was a

component of the credit package. Previous employment with Outward Bound and volunteering as a chaperone with outdoor education programming offered within the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board have also helped to fuel my passion for outdoor education.

I would like to take this time to thank our outgoing board members, Zabe MacEachren, Stephen Nash, Tobin Day and Sam Allard, who have all made great contributions to the Board of Directors and will be missed. I would also like to welcome new board members, as well as our first Student Representatives who will be liaising between COEO and their post-secondary institutions.

Planning for Make Peace with Winter (MPWW) 2014 is already well underway. Karen O'Krafka, chair of MPWW and Director at Large would love to hear from anyone interested in becoming part of the organizing committee. Our host site this year is Camp Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre, which is located is located 26 km (approximately 30 minutes) northeast of Peterborough. It is sure to be another amazing weekend packed full of professional development, experiential learning and winter fun. What better place for that to happen than 186 acres of stunning waterfront property that features forests, fields, wetlands and extensive trails? If you have a winter-related learning activity, game, craft or skill you'd like to share with others, the call for workshop proposals has been issued. The still-growing conference committee is hoping to see many members register for this great event.

Whether it be helping out with conferences, or supporting COEO in any other way, we welcome you to contact COEO's Volunteer Coordinator, Ruthie Annis at volunteercoordinator@coeo.org. She has a year under her belt, matching volunteers to the right project, and will be happy to hear from you!

Allyson Brown

Connecting With Nature Through Art

By Gail Kuhl

*"Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and
kiss the ground." Rumi*

As far back as I can remember I knew my life's work/career would involve natural, outdoor environments. My passion for natural history and outdoor recreation has been lifelong. I studied Outdoor Recreation and Natural Science during my undergraduate days, and within months of graduating began my full-time career as an outdoor/adventure educator. At first this often meant working seasonally and moving from one outdoor centre to another. My career includes working in the mountains of North Carolina with high school students, in Northern Michigan at an outdoor education centre for fifth and sixth graders, in the Lake District in England for Outward Bound, and for six years at the Minnesota Outward Bound School (Voyageur Outward Bound) as a summer and winter instructor guiding educational wilderness trips, training sled dogs and leading staff trainings. I spent hundreds of days (probably more than 1,000, in fact) either serving as a guide or undertaking personal trips in wilderness environments. I was sure I'd be a "lifer," working in outdoor education in some form indefinitely.

But then an unexpected wrench changed my plans. It came in the form of a severe mononucleosis infection. I was 32 years old and, within a week, went from being able to portage a boat a kilometre without a break, manoeuvre a 500 lb dog sled down a

wooded trail, and run ten miles, to barely being able to walk up a small slope without multiple breaks. Unfortunately, the mono triggered a disabling immune disease from which I have never recovered.

Illness ended my career as an outdoor educator pretty quickly. I could no longer lead wilderness expeditions or even go on one. Some days it was challenging just to walk 100 metres or complete a small errand, let alone canoe, portage a boat, or carry a pack. As a result, I felt disconnected from the land and cut off from my daily interaction with wilder natural environments. For a few years I tried periodically forcing myself beyond my capabilities to keep participating in outdoor activities, but I was unable to manage, and these efforts exacerbated the illness. I felt both sad and angry that I could no longer work in outdoor adventure education or for that matter camp, canoe, hike, run, swim, dogsled, ski, climb and so on. My body had betrayed me.



It took a lot of years to realize I couldn't deny, block out or suppress that part of me that needed to connect with nature. People would tell me to "find new hobbies" or assert that "outdoor adventure is a privilege—you were lucky to have done what you did, so be happy with that." But eventually I realized that my passion and need for connection with wildness was not going away, no matter how hard I tried to quash it. Mostly homebound, I started to find small ways to connect. I hung some bird feeders, planted a small native plants garden, and, when I was well enough, started exploring "urban wilderness." Because they were few and far between, each little outing became precious. My world which had once felt so big was now often relegated to one room, so when I did get out, for example, for an hour to sit by a local creek, my senses felt bombarded – the sounds were louder, sights more colourful and vibrant, smells more potent. Since I couldn't be active I had to sit, and was able tune into all sorts of small details of the world around me: the veins on a leaf, the various gurgles of the creek, the sunlight through the branches of a tree. I would return home, lie in bed, and feel the imprint of these rare moments outdoors in nature.

And then they started emerging in images. Capturing my brief forays into nature became a focus. At an art clinic with friends, I'd been introduced to linoleum block printing¹ and I used that medium to try to express these moments outdoors. I realized that through creating art, I could sometimes capture small pieces of my recent experiences in nature, as well as memories from all those days, months and years travelling on the land.

I am not a trained artist and usually not even a good one. But for me, creating art is a means to connect with nature and my local wild environments. It is an outlet for expressing my passion for the flora, fauna and landscapes around me, particularly those where I have had the privilege to travel and live. In my case, through printmaking, I observe the natural world with a different set of eyes, taking note

especially of textures, colours, light and patterns as well as the spirit of the land and its inhabitants, which I then try to capture in my prints.

As it has for me, I believe art can be a unique and powerful avenue for exploring and reflecting on the world around us. It has potential as a tool for outdoor educators

and, relevantly, can reach both those who are fully abled and those who are not. For example, I know of one woman who is bedbound, and connects to nature by photographing and writing about the animals she sees through her bedroom window. The possibilities are endless (nature journaling, photography, painting, drawing, drama, writing, poetry, music, film). Opportunities for learning occur throughout the process: first "seeing" and/or experiencing nature, then interpreting and reflecting on what one experiences through their chosen artistic medium, next creating the art, and then, more often than not, sharing it—seeing it again through the eyes of others.

Note:

¹ Block or relief printing is an ancient technique that involves carving with tools into a block of some kind (wood, linoleum and so on). After carving, ink is rolled onto the block and pressure is applied to create an image. Usually, each colour in a print represents a different carving.



Gail Kuhl is a former outdoor educator/wilderness guide. Presently, she is a PhD candidate in education at Lakehead University. Her research will focus on the perspectives of educators who work at programs dedicated to wolves and wolf conservation.

Learning New Ways: Transcending Outdoor Environmental Education

By Mitch McLarnon

Since Richard Louv coined the term “nature-deficit disorder” in 2006, policy makers, academics and parents have for the most part agreed that children are spending less time exposed to nature than ever before (Suzuki, Mason, & McConnell, 2007). Lack of time in nature has been linked to a decrease in healthy living, overall happiness and “eco-literacy” (Capra, 2009, p. 245), all of which contribute to general well being.¹ What does this mean for outdoor environmental education (OEE)? Several policy documents in Canada and abroad support the initiative of taking learning outdoors (Boyd, 2012), however, are we aware of the argued mental and physical health benefits of doing so? What about the educational benefits? This article will focus on recent literature reviews, research and applicable theories from a few disciplines that link outdoor education to many different health benefits.

Biophilia

Much of the literature surrounding health and engagement with nature begins by exploring E.O. Wilson’s premise of biophilia. The biophilia hypothesis states that human beings have an innate affinity for life, the natural world and all living things (Wilson, 1984). While this model is often used in research, it has been argued that this particular theory has not been subjected to adequate empirical testing (Day, Theurer, Dykstra & Doyle, 2012). Many established and emerging academic disciplines (outdoor/environmental education; deep ecology; environmental psychology/epidemiology) support increased exposure to nature.

I contend that much of outdoor education literature has primarily focused on the physical health benefits of outdoor activity, and has not outlined the many argued mental health benefits. While personal and social development (PSD) may have some

overlap with mental health and certain OEE programs, much of the PSD research has been heavily criticized (Brookes, 2003; Brown, 2008). After all, is character building a mental health benefit? The following sections will delve into different reviews of literature and research from an array of fields to outline some of the potential health benefits of OEE.

Relevant Psychology Literature

Even limited exposure to nature may improve cognitive abilities, such as attention and memory (Hartig et al., 2003). For example, research in university students, breast cancer patients, low-income housing residents, and elderly persons (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008; Cimprich & Ronis, 2003; Kuo, 2001; Ottosson & Grahn, 2005) support the positive impact of nature on cognition. Moreover, different research suggests that exposure to a natural environment can have a restorative effect on attention abilities (Kaplan 1985; 2005).

As the research and field of psychology started taking testing outdoors, a new discipline of environmental psychology (eco-psychology) emerged to measure the interplay between humans and their environments (Gifford, 2007). While it is impossible to summarize all of the research of this ever-growing field, the basis in environmental psychology literature posits that different surroundings have different effects on humans and a natural environment is conducive for holistic healthy living (de Groot, Berg & Steg, 2012).

Health Benefits and Overall Well-Being

McCurdy, Winterbottom, Mehta and Roberts (2010) argue that children can benefit both mentally and physically from time spent in nature. The authors reviewed current evidence relating to how outdoor play in natural settings positively affects children.

According to their findings, increased exposure to nature promotes physical activity, which helps with obesity, type 2 diabetes, asthma, pain reduction and vitamin D deficiency. In terms of mental health, McCurdy et al. (2010) contend that exposure to nature can improve children's ADHD symptoms, depression, stress and emotional well-being. In addition to these benefits, McCurdy et al. (2010) suggest that experiences in nature can potentially combat myopia, which, among other factors, may be exacerbated by time spent in front of illuminated screens such as computers and televisions. While there are many potential health benefits related to time spent in the natural world, little is known about how much time children are spending in nature to obtain benefits.

Environmental Education and Educational Benefits

The field of environmental education has shown that exposure to nature, when integrated into the school curriculum has positive educational, psychological and health outcomes for children. A recent review of relevant literature on these themes conducted by Cristie and Higgins (2012) provides a good starting point for investigation. For example, Lieberman and Hoody (1998) found that pupils subjected to an integrated environmental program performed better on standardized tests such as reading, writing, math, science and social science than students who did not participate. Student achievements on standardized tests were higher for students exposed to environmental education programs than those who encountered a conventional system of education (Bartosh, Tudor, Fergusson & Taylor, 2006). The authors explored attainment in math, reading, writing and sciences.

Interestingly, a similar study by Crowder (2010) suggests that students prefer learning in high quality learning environments, which refers to lessons taking place in an outdoor natural environment. Exposure to the natural world enhances theoretical understanding of core subjects. Perhaps

natural environments are conducive for attention, which can augment the educational experience. Furthermore, Higgins (2009) states that sensory experiences in an outdoor environment are beneficial and influential to the learning process. Similarly, James and Bixler (2008) measured the effects of a three-day residential environmental program for 20 gifted eight- to eleven-year-olds and reported that being in a natural setting encouraged sensory experiences and social interactions. The above-mentioned studies address how children may benefit educationally from exposure to nature, however, there is little empirical research that explores where and how children are being exposed to nature outside of these environmental programs.

Applicable Research

A project piloted by Marziana and Maulan (2012) explored children's preferences in nature by employing a "photo projective method" (p. 327) and analyzing the photographs accordingly. Their study had approximately 20 child participants equipped with cameras. The subjects were instructed to take photographs of their preferred settings. Interestingly, a large majority of photos depicted images that were part of a natural ecosystem (e.g., wild animals, flora, water bodies). The authors followed up their photo analysis method with interviews, which revealed that children find nature very beautiful but at times are apprehensive or frightened of it.

A larger study conducted by Alerby (2000) attempted to gather information on how children perceived the "environment" through drawings and oral communication. The findings suggest that while children are aware of environmental degradation, half of the drawings were scenes of nature with a positive outlook. The author remarks that there are many nuances within this theme. These nuances reveal that the individual preferences of children require further inquiry, and, conceivably, how children define the "environment" is under researched. This study is interesting because

the findings conflict with those of Marziana and Maulan (2012), who found that children fear nature. These polarizing conclusions may highlight the need for a more objective, interdisciplinary approach to this topic. Taken together, these studies indicate a need to continue to assess children's time spent in nature and their attitudes about nature, as research is suggesting that there is a disengagement from nature as exposure to technology increases (Louv, 2008).

This negativity or helplessness associated with environmental degradation has been termed ecophobia (Sobel, 1996), which in turn may have serious implications for children's advocacy for conservation of the natural world. Other authors have noticed a similar trend in children's attitudes elsewhere (Barraza, 1999; Barrett & Barrett Hacking, 2003; Hicks & Holden, 2007).

This is in keeping with Louv (2008), who contends that children are becoming more fearful of the natural world as they are gradually spending less time immersed in nature. While urbanization may contribute to this pattern (Statistics Canada, 2006), this further highlights the issue of environmental attitudes of young people. It is argued that without meaningful connections and sensory experiences with nature, there will be an absence of environmental stewardship for future generations (Arsenio & Gold, 2006).

Summary

Based on the array of research reviewed in this article, it appears that when humans experience and are exposed to nature, their well-being is enhanced (McCurdy et al., 2010). However, children are spending less

time in nature and are becoming fearful of contact with it (Mariziana & Maulan, 2012). Due to this withdrawal, children are lacking the environmental experiences that lead to environmental stewardship (Arsenio & Gold, 2006). While current research is attempting to address the intersections between the physical and mental health benefits associated with OEE, there are still many questions left unanswered. How much time do we need to spend in nature to get these aforementioned benefits? How can we develop environmental stewardship in the next generation of youngsters? It should be noted that there is a high degree of skepticism that appears to be characteristic in research that has positive findings when relating nature and well-being (Day et al., 2012). Thus, emerging research should be encouraged to be suspect of findings, good and bad.



As OEE continues to mature as an academic discipline, there is a major research opportunity to collaborate and involve other fields of study. As the interrelations between subjects, curriculums and learning become more prevalent, research methods should reflect the nature of the information sought. Given that learning is becoming cross

curricular, I suggest that to capture data on such complex issues, an interdisciplinary approach with a mixed-method design will be well suited to measure all aspects.

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Note:

¹Well-being is a term often used in health and epidemiology. For the purpose of this paper well-being is defined as: 'The presence of the highest possible quality of life on its breadth of expression, focused on but not exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture' CIW (2012, p. 5)

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Fat Pedagogy and Outdoor Education

By Connie Russell, Erin Cameron, Teresa Socha and Hannah McNinch

A newspaper headline blares, “Fatties Cause Global Warming” (Jackson, 2009). That fat people are now being demonized in environmental circles likely comes as no surprise to those writing about fat shaming and stigmatization. Obesity discourse is becoming common in environmental writing, including outdoor education. As teachers and researchers working in outdoor education, environmental education, health promotion and physical education, we have struggled with body image and have experienced, reproduced and resisted weight-based oppression. We thus begin by sharing our own personal narratives.

Hannah: *I was a teaching assistant for a BEd outdoor education course and a student in an MEd outdoor education course; there was not a single fat participant in either and the topic of fostering an inclusive environment for all body sizes was never discussed. The complete lack of, and disregard for, size diversity perpetuates an assumption that the outdoors is a place only for bodies deemed fit and able. I had a classmate tell me that I could not be “outdoorsy” because I did not “look the part.” My personal experience of feeling targeted made me appreciate that this could be one reason for the lack of fat representation in the field. It also reminded me of my school physical education experiences where teachers cultivated a jock culture and ranked students according to their athletic ability.*

In high school, I was fat and developed serious self-hatred as I was taught that my weight was the measure of my worth. I opted out of outdoor activities because I thought I was too big to participate. While I loved canoeing, I started avoiding the activity because I was afraid I might slow everyone else down or sink the boat. I enjoyed climbing trees but was taunted that I would get stuck in a tree, so I stopped. I never objected to or thought critically about my exclusion from activities; I simply accepted it.

In my third year of university, I lost a significant amount of weight. I was proud of this weight loss and loved the positive attention I was receiving for it. I enthusiastically continued losing weight, despite feeling nauseous if I stood up quickly. It was not until my MEd when I encountered fat studies that I realized what I had been subjecting myself to and how the education system had failed me. I originally planned to conduct thesis research on school health promotion to prevent obesity, but now have a new focus: fat bullying of girls in school. I want to alert other educators to the implications of fat oppression and develop strategies for preventing fat bullying. If weight-based oppression continues within education, I fear other youth may avoid the outdoors as I did and then miss opportunities to foster appreciation of, and connection to, the natural world.

Teresa: *As a privileged, slim, athletic teenager and young adult, I unconsciously succumbed to pressure to attain and maintain the “ideal” body while, at the same time, resisted being seen as weak; I wanted to be slim as a stick and as strong as a man. I had bought into the biomedical perspective of thinking of my body as a machine. Anything could be fixed and achieved with a few more gruelling workouts and the occasional purging after meals. I measured and monitored everything: my weight, workout distance, and time, and also my being against what were, at times, unachievable standards. If a guy could portage a canoe, so could I, plus run the portage at the same time. If a guy could carry a heavy pack, I too could carry more than half my body weight up 1,800 feet on a Friday night. As a student in kinesiology, my body was further schooled through anatomy and physiology, biomechanics, motor development, psychology and nutrition.*

In time, however, I came to understand how I was reproducing a limited perspective of health and wellness in my teaching and research. My journey toward (un)learning and (re)constructing my embodied self and my professional beliefs and actions began some time ago with the birth of my daughter. I threw away my bathroom scale; I wanted my daughter to

have a healthy relationship with food, physical activity and her body. To be successful, I too had to change. Undoubtedly, it will be a lifelong journey. I am now fuelled by my experiences with resistance to critical approaches in my teacher education courses in health and physical education, primarily from students with a jock mentality who, like me, learned the hidden curriculum all too well.

Erin: Growing up, I was active and involved in many different activities. I particularly loved sports. In fact, I was told that someday I would be a great athlete and I believed it, so much so that when I began to achieve national and international acclaim, I not only accepted but embraced the regulation, disciplining, degradation and monitoring of my body. I endured public weigh-ins where standing on the scale became a measure of my value and worth as a person and where I was at times celebrated and at other times shamed. Everything I did and everything I was became measured, objectified and individualized.

Nutritionists calculated my calories-in-calories-burned ratio and physiologists calculated my power-to-weight ratio (the amount of power I was able to generate per pound of body weight). These numbers were then used to assert my potential success or failure as a person. Worse yet was the way coaches employed these numbers and expressed them through animal characterizations, likening my large body size to an elephant, hippo or whale. Not only did this rhetoric of anti-fat sentiment of animality work towards devaluing me as a human being, it devalued non-human animals as well.

It wasn't until I retired from sport and began my BEd, majoring in physical education and environmental education, that I began to feel uncomfortable with the privileging of fit, thin, strong, trainable and able bodies and the marginalization of all other body types. I came to understand that no body is immune to weight-based oppression. With 13% body fat, I was by all accounts underweight, but within the context of competitive sport I was deemed to be fat. Due to the fat oppression I faced as an elite athlete and the harmful discourses I witnessed within health and physical education, I now identify as a fat activist committed to

addressing weight-based oppression. As a result, my doctoral research is focused on identifying teaching strategies to address discrimination based on size. I want to help create safe learning spaces for all students, regardless of size, and promote anti-bullying practices that disrupt fat intolerance and discrimination.

Connie: I have been fat all my life. I look back now at photographs and marvel at the fact that I was usually only carrying a few extra pounds more than most, but those pounds mattered in a fatphobic culture. Being fat became an unwanted but integral part of my identity, with profound impacts. One coping mechanism was to emphasize my intellect over my body, which served me quite well in school. Another was to drop physical education class as soon as I could, after Grade 9. While I enjoyed team sports and was pretty good at them given I was a "tomboy," I despised track and field, gymnastics and the annual Participaction activities that included public weigh-ins. Some of my phys ed teachers and coaches engaged in what would now be called fat bullying. My experience, alas, is not unique.

Years later, during graduate studies, my research on nature experience led me to outdoor education. I started to attend conferences in the field and felt that old shame as I found myself surrounded by "hard bodies" in snug outdoor gear. As I began to publish and people came to know me from my writing alone, things became awkward as I often discerned surprise on the faces of people meeting me for the first time; my body simply did not meet their expectations.

It has taken me a long time to have the courage to write this paper; thankfully, things have shifted for me. I am older and more comfortable with my body now and I am relieved to find that the "facts" I had internalized despite them being untrue in my case (e.g., fat people eat more, are less active, are less healthy) are actually contested in the research. There are more of us now, in all shapes and sizes, working in a variety of fields, naming the oppression that we have experienced or witnessed. How exciting!

Obesity Discourse

Public health messages about physical activity and fitness permeate our society. The Body Mass Index (BMI), a ratio of weight to height that classifies people into distinct categories (underweight, normal weight, overweight and obese) is ubiquitous. While medically dubious (Anderson, 2012), those classified as “overweight” or “obese” by the BMI are routinely pressured to achieve “normal” weight; notably, those deemed “underweight” rarely face the same pressure. The BMI plays part in what has been called “dominant obesity discourse,” a framework of thought, talk, and action where a “size matters” message fuels narratives that suppress discussion of other dimensions of health (Gard & Wright, 2005). Erin and Teresa’s experiences attest to how this discourse impacts everyone, not just those who would commonly be deemed fat.

Obesity has been a hot topic in popular and scholarly venues since the late 1990s and the rhetoric has grown increasingly hyperbolic: the “global epidemic” of “globesity” (WHO, 2012) is “as big a threat as global warming and bird flu” (Anon, 2006, ¶ 2). Gard (2011) poignantly describes this obsession: “The obesity research community has managed to convince a significant percentage of the population that they should think and worry a great deal about their own and other people’s body weight” (p. 5).

Obesity discourse has turned fatness into a disease and a pandemic upon which we all must wage war. It is framed as an individual’s problem; as such, fat people, particularly women, are demonized as weak, lazy and indulgent. As Hannah and Connie’s narratives illustrate, to not attain the “ideal” body is to invite social sanctions including weight-based bullying, harassment, stigmatization, discrimination, and even violence (Evans, Davies, & Rich, 2010). A growing number of scholars are challenging obesity discourse, claiming it ignores the historical, cultural, social and political roots of obesity and perpetuates questionable “facts” such as body fat being

unhealthy, that more people today are obese than in the past, and that today’s youth will have shorter lifespans than their elders because of obesity (Rail et al., 2010). Encouragingly, critical writing has even started to appear in Canadian popular media (Anon, 2013).

“Fatties Cause Global Warming”

Despite these critiques, we nonetheless have noticed an increase in obesity discourse in environmental writing; what follows is merely a smattering of recent literature that blames fat people for environmental problems. In the article that inspired the “Fatties Cause Global Warming” headline, Edwards and Roberts (2009) argue that obesity is a grave environmental problem. In their epidemiological model, they calculated that fat people require 19% more food energy than “normal” people. They also assert that “[w]alking is an effort for heavier people [so they] ... replace walking trips with motorized transport” (p. 1138) in bigger cars that use more fuel. They conclude that “maintenance of a healthy BMI has important environmental benefits in terms of lower [greenhouse gas] emissions” (p. 1140). Many reporters jumped on this research. For example, Jackson (2009) wrote, “Moving about in a heavy body is like driving in a gas guzzler” (¶ 1) and “scientists say providing extra grub for them to guzzle adds to carbon emissions that heat up the world, melting polar ice caps, raising sea levels and killing rain forests” (¶ 1).

There were many scathing critiques of the research. Gallar (2010) wrote: “Concluding that obesity worsens climate change is as absurd as defending that poverty and malnutrition help prevent this change” (p. 1398). Gorrie (2009) called the research “nonsense” and noted, “The study wouldn’t be worth comment except that, as the news coverage demonstrates, it contributes to



unfair stereotyping of obese people and is yet another example of silly research that can make genuine concern about climate change seem ridiculous" (¶ 1). Despite the critiques, the Edwards and Roberts' study has inspired much writing describing obesity as an environmental catastrophe, including Egger and Swinburn's (2010) *Planet Obesity: How We're Eating Ourselves and the Planet to Death*.

Outdoor education is not immune to obesity discourse, although mostly it is used in a throwaway line about childhood obesity being one of the dire consequences of lessening contact with nature. For Louv (2008), however, it is more than an offhand remark. In his popular *Last Child in the Woods*, the obesity "epidemic" and "crisis" is mentioned throughout and used to promote the book. While we too share his concern about the amount and quality of children's time outside, we find his use of obesity discourse problematic and unnecessary.

Another example is an article by Strife (2010). Like others, she links "obesity mitigation strategies to climate change solutions" (p. 181) and then asserts a new role for environmental education: "Given the alarming health trends of depression, obesity, ADHD, and cognitive disabilities facing people in the United States, the implementation of EE in all forms is critical not only for the ecological health of the planet, but for the well-being of today's society" (p. 188). Apparently, the fat, those with mental health challenges, and people with various (dis)abilities do not contribute to society. Environmental irresponsibility is now another source of shame.

Towards a Fat Pedagogy in Outdoor Education

What might be done to address weight-based oppression in outdoor education? Obviously, a first step is to no longer use obesity discourse. A second is questioning how we might be excluding fat children and youth.

As well, examining the ways that weight-based oppression and other oppressions

intersect could be helpful. For example, in our teaching, we have found food to be an excellent entrée to all sorts of interconnected issues, including ethics (treatment of animals), social justice (food security, labour conditions), globalization (migrant workers, transport, industrialized food production), place (what grows here, 100 mile diet), and climate change (what might or might not be able to grow here, impacts of meat eating). Adding fat studies into the mix offers another important dimension.

Finally, both environmental education and the "fight against fat" often rely on crisis discourse. Some have noted the "moral panic" associated with obesity discourse, especially in calls to "save our children" (Campos et al., 2006). There also has been some attention to crisis discourse in environmental education. Kelsey and Armstrong (2012) note the "growing concern about children's emotional responses to 'doom and gloom'" (p. 188) and assert that we "need to let go of a 'shame and blame' approach to environmental messaging" (p. 191). While we admit that we still feel a sense of urgency around climate change, our explorations in fat pedagogy have reminded us to ponder the emotional dimensions of education.

To conclude, outdoor education reinforces weight-based oppression when we marginalize fat learners and when we name obesity as one of the dire consequences of less time spent outside. There are rich opportunities for being more inclusive. As our own narratives illustrate, this is important for all of us, not just those living in bodies currently deemed fat.

Acknowledgements

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Dying to Know: Thoughts on Death Education

By Kathy Kortés-Miller

*"We are not free to choose whether anyone will learn about death, though we have some choice about how they will learn."
Michael Simpson (1979)*

Learning About Death

Death holds a significant place in society despite that, for most, it is not a direct or first-hand experience. Education that has resulted in the death awareness movement has challenged people to develop an acknowledgement of their personal mortality. For many, this acknowledgement is important for living a meaningful life (Wass, 2006). Informal education about death occurs regularly throughout our daily lives in the context of "teachable moments, the unplanned life events from which important lessons can be drawn" (Kastenbaum, 2007, p. 483). These moments may include personal experiences, the death of a pet, spontaneous discussion in a school classroom, or widely experienced events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, school shootings or deaths of famous people. Interactions with nature and the outdoors can also offer poignant "teachable moments" allowing children to ask questions and reflect on dead insects, birds, animals and other things found in our natural environment. This can facilitate learning that death is a natural part of life and basic to all living things (Crenshaw, 2007). The attitudes we hold about dying and death and the knowledge we possess about this life event are reflected in the language we use, arts and music, mass media to which we are exposed, and ways we view the natural world surrounding us (DeSpelder and Strickland, 2009).

The intention of the inclusion of death within education is one of primary prevention (DeSpelder and Strickland, 2009). Although education will not prevent death as a normative life event, it will work to prevent some of the negative side effects of not understanding dying and death. Some of these negative side effects could include

anxiety, depression, fear, complicated grieving, loss of meaning and associated physical reactions. Through educating about death students of all ages can be informed about dying, death and related experiences to reduce a sense of unfamiliarity (DeSpelder and Strickland, 2009; Wass, 2004; Morgan, 1995; Eddy and Alles, 1983) or fear of the unknown. Perceiving death education as a primary prevention allows for opportunities to begin engaging in the important discussions around the meaning of death and quality of life that guide our living until we die.

Our understanding of dying and death is also influenced by our family, peer group, religion and culture (Hadad, 2009). The family setting is often where an individual's primary socializations and most intense experiences of a lifetime occur, of which death is one such experience (Leming and Dickenson, 2007). When asked about individuals' first exposure to death, university students often respond that their parents were their first teachers of dying and death, and that their observations of their parents' responses greatly influenced their understanding of what to think about and how to react to death (Leming and Dickenson, 2007). The average age at which a child has their first experience with death is eight (Hadad, 2009). Through mediation, reassurance and emotional support, parents have a fundamental role in helping children understand, evaluate and manage their experiences with death (Wass, 2006). What parents say to a child and what they do in their presence facilitates the child's discovery in understanding the world around them (Hadad, 2009). Messages received from interpersonal communication around us, most notably from our family and friends, influence our attitudes towards death and how we feel about the attitudes of others (Shiappa, Gregg and Hewes, 2004).

In today's society, elderly family members often spend their last days living in nursing

homes, hospitals or extended care facilities. As a result, most family members are not active, physical, or hands-on care-providers involved in the dying process of their elders (DeSpelder and Strickland, 2009). Families are no longer learning about dying and death through the provision of care of their loved ones in the home. The prevalence of loss and death in the lives of children is increasing through exposure to divorce, school violence and the preponderance of television violence, yet parents are avoiding communication with children about death since they often find themselves without support or guidance on how to engage in these discussions (Northcott and Wilson, 2001).

of death and their own families' reactions (Hadad, 2009). As death is no longer a part of most people's daily life in today's society the media has become a primary source for learning about how death occurs, as well as what emotions and behaviours are expected from those affected by death (Hadad, 2009).

Why Teach About Death?

Education is a force for change. It is the medium by which information is communicated and understanding enhanced. Education directly influences attitudes and values and can assist in defining, strengthening or modifying them. It also

attempts to recognize the diversity of emotions experienced within the learning process and allows for better management of these feelings (Wass, 2006).

It has often been said that we live in a death denying and death defying society (Weisman, 1972; Kastenbaum, 1981; Rosenburg, 1983; Northcott and Wilson, 2001), but this may be an over-simplification (Corr, 2006). Death intrudes rudely on our lives and thoughts (Kastenbaum, 1981) and cannot be denied. It is intrinsic to the human condition and has been thus recognized throughout history (Aries, 1981). People of all age groups have both conscious and unconscious attitudes about their own



As a child grows older and moves out into the world, the impact of other socializing sources becomes greater alongside the influence of their peers. Children learn from other children as well as other families' attitudes, beliefs and reactions around dying and death, and as a result they may begin to question their own understanding

death and the death of those they love. Many of us find ourselves unprepared to cope with death's intrusion on our lives as all too often we choose to ignore death until our "number is up" (Kastenbaum, 1981, p.7). Yet through examination of death individuals may develop a greater appreciation for, understanding of and

reverence for life (Eddy and Alles, 1983). Just as death will touch us all, death education can be accessible to all. It can address the learning needs of people of all ages, it can be formal or informal, and it can be provided in a variety of manners from families to educational institutions.

Worthy of note is the idea of avoiding the topic of death within education; the absence of death education still communicates a message and a teaching of sorts. The action of “not doing” perpetuates the status quo, endorsing denial as well as communicating attitudes and fears that can be harmful to our sense of being (Attig, 1992).

Most people appear to be unaware that death education is occurring in our society without our acknowledgement through the media, religion and arts. By not actively employing death education in our systems of learning we are sending a message that dying and death are events to be feared and ignored. We are not preparing ourselves to care for one another when we inevitably face our own death.

Goals for Death Education

Due to the fact that death, dying, and bereavement are fundamental aspects of the human experience, education about these topics should be an essential part of the academic course curriculum at all levels (Corr et al., 1994). The overarching goals of death education prioritize both “the acquisition of knowledge and development of self-understanding and clarification of values, meanings, and attitudes toward death” (Wass, 2004). It is important that death educators “do not pretend that death education can take place on a purely intellectual or academic plane” (Attig, 1981, p.171) but rather recognize that it is a human experience impacting how we live in the world around us. A primary focus of death education is to support individuals in dealing with the inevitability of their own death and the death of others in a meaningful way. As long as death continues to be an unknown or a mystery, there will always be some fear attached to it. The goal

of death education therefore is not to remove this fear, as some variation of it will always be present, but rather to explore ways in which individuals can incorporate this fear into their lives effectively and respectfully (Miller and Rotatori, 1986).

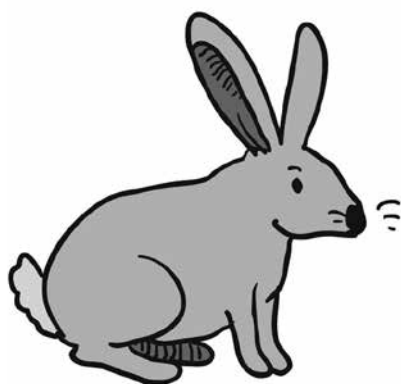
Concluding Thoughts

Only some people have the opportunity to be educated about death by those who are actively engaged in the process of dying. Death education is needed so that when it's our turn to die, we have already begun to grapple with our understanding and integration of the meaning of our dying in our life. In all of its diverse forms including formal, informal, academic, public and cultural, and via the media, religion, art and our use of language, death education serves to provide us the materials with which to gain insight, guide personal reflection, and make meaning of the world around us. This will help us cope more effectively and develop a greater understanding of our own dying and the deaths of those we love. Death education can support us as individuals, consumers, caregivers and citizens of society to make informed decisions about the implications of death throughout our lives. We need to be provided with death education across our lifespan, as we are all dying to know.

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Outdoor Education for Right Relation

By Alexa Scully

The autumn winds are coming up quickly here—here being my new/old place of teaching. I am working for the Faculty of Education at the Orillia Campus of Lakehead University. Here is the territory of the Chippewa Tri-Council. Here is Williams Treaty Territory. This morning, I spent three hours at the Atherly Narrows between Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe, learning about the 5,000 year-old fish fences—“mnjikaning” in Anishinaabemowin—from Chippewa Elder Mark Douglas. The outdoor education class and I had intended to go canoeing through the narrows after the talk, but, as I mentioned, and as they do at this time of year, the winds came up, and we were contented to listen and learn from Mark. We were told that this place is a special place, a gathering place. We were underneath a highway bridge, on cobblestones, right by the water, and were joined and conjoined often by many different waterfowl and other birds. In the urban, waterside, special gathering place, we attended to the land and learned in a good way, in a way that fosters right relation and well-being.

I am a White, Celtic settler and an apprentice ally. I am a PhD student and a teacher-educator, teaching several courses in Aboriginal education and outdoor experiential education. I came to this work through an unusual route: I was, for many years, an outdoor educator and wilderness canoe trip guide in a couple of organizations. Now, as an educator of teachers who will work in both formal and non-formal educational settings, I have a responsibility and an opportunity to change the way that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people are learned from and about in the Ontario education system. I am committed to teaching and learning in this field guided by the principle of “relational accountability” (Steinhauer, 2002), that is, recognizing the ways in which I am answerable or responsible to the peoples and communities with which I am in relation (involved with), and acting

in a way that respects and honours these relationships. I see myself as implicated in a relationship with the peoples and the lands of Canada, as a citizen, as a treaty partner, and as someone who cares profoundly about the lands of Canada. Fostering and exposing these relationships is a foundational part of how outdoor and place-based education contribute to the well-being of Canadian learners as citizens, as treaty partners, as human components of ecological communities.

I attended and then worked at the Taylor Statten Camps in Algonquin Park, in the northern part of southern Ontario, in Canada, from 1984 until 2009, participating in and then leading canoe trips and working as an outdoor educator in Algonquin, Temagami and Quetico. I also worked for a few other organizations, including the Canadian Ecology Centre on the Mattawa River, northwest of Algonquin Park, in Samuel de Champlain Park. In my work, and in decolonizing my own perspective, I identify these places as the traditional territories of the First Nations of the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn (the Ottawa Valley—Algonquin and Samuel de Champlain Park), the Algonquin of Ontario collective, currently involved in the Algonquin Land Claim, the Anishinaabe of Zhingwaako Zaaga’igan and Mille Lacs (Quetico Park and the Boundary Waters) of the Norwest Angle Treaty 3, and Temagami and many other Anishinaabe nations in the Muskoka region, and the Mohawk of Wahta (Muskoka) in the Robinson Huron and Williams Treaty regions, as well as unceded territories. This information is not well communicated in the organizations in which I have worked and lived. I see this as a huge opportunity to add to the understanding of citizenship and of grounded well-being in the many and diverse contexts of education that make up outdoor education; in urban, rural and wilderness contexts, and in the many contexts in between.



In my many years as a canoe-trip participant and as a guide, I had several significant experiences that have given foundation to my perception of the power and importance of learning from and about the Indigenous peoples of the lands I have travelled through. As Root (2009) and Lowan (2009) have argued, there is a great need to honour and respect the Indigenous knowledges generated by the lands in which outdoor education takes place, both in support of Indigenous resurgence, and because these knowledges are profoundly connective to those lands and communities. The blindness of outdoor education to these knowledges is a further violence of colonization in service of the neoliberal exploitation of land and of people. The decolonization of the practitioners and the participants in this field is very tricky and unsettling. The self-concept of outdoor educator is predicated on care and connection to nature, yet the notion that this myopic care is a violence to many nations is not easily digested or accepted.

Mi'kmaq scholar Battiste (1998, 2000, 2005) consistently problematizes the many sites of Euronormative colonialism that remain explicit and hidden in the Canadian education system available to Aboriginal

and non-Aboriginal learners. As argued by Root (2009) and by Metis scholar Lowan (2009), in an outdoor education context, this absence becomes even more evident as outdoor education trips pass through, but rarely learn from and about, the Indigenous territories and communities that are the context for learning and engagement. Gruenewald calls for decolonization as a crucial element of education in critical place-based pedagogy (2003). In later writing, Greenwood (formerly Gruenewald) writes that "place consciousness provides a frame of reference from which one can identify, and potentially resist, the colonizing practices of schooling as a function of the larger culture and its political economy" (2009, p. 1).

With these understandings in mind, I begin my classes in teacher education—both Aboriginal education and outdoor education—by asking the pre-service teachers to locate themselves from their position as treaty people. What is the treaty region where we are? In your homeplace? What is the traditional territory? Is that contested? If so, let's talk about that! Are there some landmarks or place-names local to "your" place that are in an Indigenous language? The great example

in Thunder Bay, the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation, in the Robinson Superior Treaty territory, is the Sleeping Giant, or Nanaboozho. This is the local name for the breathtaking land formation—the Sibley Peninsula—that can be seen from much of Thunder Bay, out in Lake Superior. There are several stories about this iconic Thunder Bay landmark that are rooted in the Anishinaabe history of the place. Nanaboozho is a central figure in Anishinaabe epistemology and stories and is sometimes described as trickster and sometimes as “Elder Brother” (Benton-Banai, 1988; M. Douglas, personal communication, 2009). Once the pre-service teachers hear those stories, they see where they are in a different way, and every time they see Nanaboozho, it is a signifier of the Anishinaabe history and contemporary community of Thunder Bay. This lived experience is what I have encouraged and modeled as an aspiring ally who is a teacher-educator. Cultural and territorial specificity are crucial components of respectful and accurate Indigenous education. This central tenet of Indigenous education is echoed and reinforced in the discourse of place-based education, or, as Cajete (2009) phrases it, “learning relationship in context” (183).

It has been said that “[e]very conception of humanity and education begins from a human body in territory and a consciousness in which a specific place takes prominence.” (Battiste, Bell, Findlay, I., Findlay, L., & (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, 2005, p.8). Canada is Indigenous territories. Learning from and about Indigenous people in context is therefore possible everywhere and this is a powerful and empowering realization for outdoor educators. This serves to build community and to disrupt the widely held perception of a monolithic Aboriginal culture by learning about the huge diversity of Indigenous nations, cultures, political entities and colonizing classifications (Status, non-Status, Urban, and so on). This knowledge can serve to support the well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as new and existing relationships are forged and discovered/recovered.

For outdoor educators, while the maps are out, find out the treaty region, the traditional territories, the local communities, and the languages that have emerged in the places you are learning from. In this way, outdoor educators can begin the decolonizing process, and can foster more grounded and compassionate relationships with people and with places from the understanding that we are always already in relation.

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Alexa (Lex) Scully is a reasonably funny shaganash/moonyaw/qallunaat apprentice ally of Celtic descent, a treaty partner and a profoundly land-connected human. Lex is an adjunct faculty member and doctoral student at Lakehead University, teaching and learning outdoor ecological and Indigenous education. She has taught at both Lakehead campuses—in the territory of the Fort William First Nation, in Robinson Superior Treaty territory, and in the territory of the Chippewa Tri-Council, in the Williams Treaty territory (Thunder Bay and Orillia).



An Autoethnographic Study of Snowboarding: Embodying Outdoor Education

By Jennifer Wigglesworth

I strap myself into my snowboard bindings and gaze at the horizon. I am beneath slate-gray skies. My eyes sting in the cold air atop the mountain. My heartbeat quickens and my breath shortens as I push myself up off the ground. I set my sights on the descent. A sense of urgency fills me. I crave to carve. I am up at this early hour to savour the “freshies,” to dig my board and its metal edges into untouched snow. Where do I end and the board begin? Are we one as I zigzag down the mountain? I feel the hard, crunchy snow beneath me, and I ride *with* it, not simply *on* it. The snow and the mountain seemingly become part of my body and my body a part of it. My body extends to the mountain.

My fellow riders and I become somewhat of a pack as we hurdle ourselves down the mountain. I hear the sonic assault of my snowboard as I whizz down the mountain. Everything is so white. Our manoeuvres resemble an aerial ballet. We are surfers of the sky. Instead of water emitting into the air after each twist, it is snow. And the hill is our permanent wave. Troubles are left behind in the gouged snow and all that matters is the white abyss that lies ahead. My quads and calves burn as lactate acid fills them. The wind burns the skin left uncovered on my face. My goggles fog up as I continue to painstakingly maneuver my way down the hill. I pull up at the end of the trail and let my body fall backward onto the snow. My muscles quiver with excitement. I feel more content. More full of my own self and of nature. A friend critiques her own riding, and I hear myself saying: “Don’t think too much. Just let go and *feel* it.”

We know that stories are important, but I want to go further and argue that personal stories expressed *through* the body are important. In this paper, I aim to explore my embodied experience of snowboarding. I draw from my field notes and investigate

how feelings of desire and other emotional responses emerge throughout my snowboarding experience. The purpose of my paper is to demonstrate that embodied ways of knowing are important to incorporate in outdoor education (OE) research and practice.

Humberstone (2011) proposes that autoethnography—a qualitative research method in which the researcher focuses on his or her own subjective experience – provides a unique opportunity to explore the body through its senses and interactions with the natural environment. In a similar vein, Yarnal and colleagues’ (2006) paper on embodiment, space and young women’s leisure experience argues that the extent to which the body is considered in relation to leisure typically fails to do justice to the potential of the body as *part of* the leisure experience. Yarnal et al. state that conceptualizing mind *and* body together (not as a mind–body dualism) adds insight to our theorizing of leisure.

So what is embodiment? Within the sociology of sport, a tension exists between the cultural decoding of the body as a system of meaning, and the phenomenological study of embodiment that attempts to understand human practices. Ford and Brown (2006), writing on surfing and social theory, assert that the lived, material body remains elusive and is constantly at risk of disappearing behind its discursive, textual formations. A possible solution to this persistent tension is Bourdieu’s (1990) notions of habitus, practice and bodily knowledge that simultaneously look at how status difference is inscribed on the body and how we experience the world through our bodies. Consequently, the definition of embodiment I employ is a combination of the phenomenological and cultural understandings of the body, which is mind–body *integrated*, not mind–body separated.

Within the leisure literature, Yarnal and colleagues (2006) define embodiment to be learning *about* and *through* the body. Upon coming across this definition, I could not help but think of the definition of OE that I used in my Master's thesis from Donaldson and Donaldson (1958): education *in*, *about* and *for* the outdoors. I also included the Henderson and Potter (2001) extension of the definition of OE: an education *of* and *with* the outdoors. Both definitions of embodiment and OE share an exploration that goes beyond physical descriptions; however, where OE occurs *within* the outdoors, embodiment can go one step further by studying *through* the body. So what about an *embodied* outdoor education?

people's conversations about their "epic pow sessions." I desire to be considered a "hardcore" credible rider. In turn, when snowboarding, I feel more desirable. It instills in my body a thrill for more.

I do not maintain that outdoor experiential education is not already incorporating embodiment into its studies and practices; however, I am hopeful for a greater affective turn within the field. I echo Evers (2006) possibility for a shift from research *about* bodies to a way of researching *through* bodies. Many studies in OE examine intrapersonal relationships, and while this could be the umbrella under which embodied ways of knowing are framed, I

propose a deeper connection with learning *through* the body including emotions, sensations, desires and dissolution of the self into nature.

There is a price to pay when embodied experience is brought into research. Neilson (2012) refers to the investigation of experience as difficult because there are so many different types of experience, which, in turn, are susceptible to different kinds of interpretation.

Although embodied

experiences provide a conceptual opening, they do so only at the expense of an almost unbearable multiplication of possibilities that can disorient as much as guide the analysis. Evers (2006) acknowledges this "messy" type of research, but believes "this messiness heightens anticipation and draws attention to a vast array of feelings, relations, spaces, rituals and practices" (pp. 237–238).



In writing this paper, I have considered what constitutes desire, and desire within the culture of snowboarding. Snowboarding entails a giving up of myself to nature. It lets me appreciate how small I am. It lets me see how I can harness nature's energy and seemingly be one with it. Now that I know what the mountain has to offer, I desire to be near it. I desire to try different trails, to carve deeper into the crystalline white powder. I desire to be around the snowboarding culture and to soak in other

So could there be an OE program set up in which individuals snowboard and learn about their connections to the environment, others and their selves with a focus on embodied ways of knowing? Where the instructor emphasizes learning to snowboard in a technical sense but also learning to snowboard *through* the body's emotional responses, sensations and desires? Where it is okay to say, "Don't think too much, just go out there and feel it"?

It is necessary to encourage embodied ways of knowing because experiential learning, or "learning by doing," yields the best knowledge retention (Chapman et al., 2008). Take the old saying, "Tell me, and I forget. Show me, and I remember. Involve me, and I understand." Embodiment adds an extra element of connecting to the materiality of our selves. This is especially important in a field where the body is so central to performance and nearly all outdoor experiences provide hands-on learning opportunities.

Autoethnographies and studies of embodiment are significant to OE as they offer an avenue for exploring the multiplicity of experience and more visceral ways of knowing. The outdoors is a lived text. Experience is fluid. Embodying OE through research and practice contributes to a greater understanding of the lived experience because it is the researching body that is penetrated by and *feels* the field.

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Fingertip Reflection

By Erika Bailey

I broke two fingertips surfing in Nicaragua.

It's a spectacular story, I suppose, if you want to be cavalier about the whole thing. And I was, at first.

As it is with healing, lots of unknowns swarmed my mind:

*Transfixed by the mess at the end of my hand:
Will I keep my fingertips?*

*Three days post-operation inspecting the
x-ray: Will I have fingernails?*

*Removing the casts at week one: Will my
fingers ever straighten?*

*Sick of smelly splints at week six: How long
will this take?*

*Willing my fingers to wiggle at week nine:
Will full range of motion ever return?*

The doctor could not really determine what was going to happen or when. It seems that in southern Ontario, they tend not to see many surfing accidents.

Eventually, the ring finger did her job and found a path to healing.

My lumpy pinkie, however, had been bleeding non-stop for three months. It grew to the same size as my thumb.

Frowning at the recent x-ray, my specialist said, "The infection is eating the bone. And forensics will have to test this strange lump on your nail." She chopped off a bit of the lump, then chunked me on a six-week course of antibiotics.

It was just after this visit that I joined a family canoe trip: Algonquin Park entering North Tea Lake. We were Mom and Dad (now retired but not from paddling), my



reticent but sporting sister-in-law, my super-eager and tripping-hero brother, and my new-to-canoe nephews and niece.

"I'll do pretty much any task, except dishes," I told my brother. I hate dishes. Also, while the name of the weird growth on my finger was unpronounceable, I had learned that it flourished in wet and dirty environments. Naturally, I still took that canoe trip.

In the face of familial fretting, I paddled and lifted and dragged and gathered and packed and carried and swatted and sang and all those useful camping activities. My nursing sister-in-law suggested I remove the protective bandages and let my pinkie hang out naked and exposed in the northern sun. One warm and sunny campsite, I did.

The thing looked like a starved, flaking maggot. The children were fascinated. Then they went blueberry picking.

As I stretched out, feet soaking up the shield rock heat, I reconnected with the sensation of air against the skin of this little finger. After months and months, I finally sensed cool and warm. I felt freshness and softness. My finger's skin tightened.

As the clouds swept shadows over the waves, this finger situation reminded me of my city life. It takes place indoors a lot; a lot more than I wish, and a lot less than other people. Doors and walls and windows and desks and traffic rules and smog smother it. Slowly, my life pales and atrophies. Stress grows and mutates in enclosed environments. I seek artificial forms of healing to mitigate these symptoms.

"How is your pinkie now, Auntie WeeWee," asks my niece. She's paused her fruity wanderings to come visit.

We inspect it. Within two hours of freeing my poor pinkie, it has changed. Now a more regular pinkish colour, the skin looks more like a part of me, less like a part of a maggot. The strange mass on my nail stopped oozing and dried. For the first time

in four months, it has not bled.

"I think it looks much better," proclaims nurse niece authoritatively with her six and a half years of life experience. She returns to her blueberry hunting.

It sure did feel better. So did I.

Can I attribute my finger's healing exclusively to exposing it to northern sunlight? Of course not.

Antibiotics? Nope. Too many nuts for lunch? Possibly. Somewhere in the middle of relaxation and hard work, play and contemplation, natural and artificial, protection and exposure, there lies the turning point. It's balance.

But you knew that already.

To complete the metaphoric circle, I visited the doctor post-trip for an operation to remove the unnameable strange lump. She turned my finger over, poked the now hardened lump, stared at the earlier x-ray, and then up at me.

"We are not operating. The lump is shrinking. You are free to go."

Clomping down the polished hospital floor, I reflected: I had changed my focus to natural and open spaces where I gathered and healed. No significant interventions were needed. My life was filling back up. And I was free.



*Erika Bailey lives in Toronto, and works as an educator, advisor, coach, writer and editor. She's recently published her research, *Paddling as Place: Experiential Learning of Place and Ecological Identity*, and has stories included in *Bare Elements* and *The Totally Unknown Writers Festival 2011 anthologies*.*

Peter Middleton

By Robin Middleton

Early Inspirations/Influences

Peter's passion for outdoor experiential education (OEE) was kindled by a father who delighted in the wonder of the natural world and was interested in passing that on to his sons through time spent together. Peter grew up with boyhood experiences and adventures steeped in wonder and appreciation for nature both in Scotland and in Canada. When the family emigrated to Canada in 1952, the McIlwraith Club in London, Ontario became instrumental in fanning the flames of boyhood interest into a fire. Many club members were willing to share their knowledge with young naturalists. Bill Judd and Bill Girling, in particular, took the younger members under their wings, helping them explore and learn about nature. For Peter it was whole new world.

In 1962, The McIlwraith Club hosted the annual meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Peter was assigned as a club liaison for one of the outing leaders, Kirk Wipper, showing him natural areas around London. These few days together resulted in an invitation from Kirk to join the staff at Camp Kandalore that summer.

Peter spent the next two summers at Camp Kandalore. Here, encouraged by Kirk's support and mentoring, Peter developed a naturalist program for the camp, setting up nature trails and programs for the campers. While at Kandalore he also developed his love for wilderness canoeing.

Peter's passion for the natural world was now on fire and it was becoming obvious that he had a unique way of sharing that passion and lighting the spark of interest in others. Based upon his experiences at Camp Kandalore, Peter was successful in becoming a Park Naturalist in Algonquin Park in the summer of 1964. It was an exciting and interesting time in Algonquin's program development, under the leadership of Grant Taylor. Grant Taylor was pursuing a greater

knowledge and understanding of the park's natural history and also promoting more effective education of the public on the importance and wonder of the natural world that surrounded them. During his time at Algonquin, Peter was involved in the first public wolf howl ever held in the park, he worked on blazing and mapping the proposed route for the Highland Hiking trail, developed interpretive programs, assisted with the documentation of pictographs and assisted in a survey of park users regarding their perceptions of wilderness. In short, Algonquin was seminal in developing Peter's interest in active guiding and teaching about nature.

Career Path

There were a number of things (important mentors along with magnificent experiences) in the early years that made the path to teaching, and outdoor education (OE) in particular, obvious to Peter. Peter enrolled in the London Teacher's College in the fall of 1962.

After teacher's college, Peter taught in London, Ontario before gaining a position at the Toronto Island School of Natural Science. He taught there from 1966 until 1975. Peter's philosophy of education has always been to "be a bridge to take people from where they are to a place of discovery and new adventures; a place where they make new connections." During his tenure at Toronto Island, he did just that, teaching Grade Six students from across Toronto, many of whom knew nothing but the inner city before their trip to the Island! He shared with them the magic of the natural world in their city and the joy of being surrounded by it. He became Vice Principal and was responsible for the six student teachers that arrived each week to gain experience as practice teachers. For several summers, Peter was also Principal of the Toronto School Board summer program at High Park run in conjunction with the Toronto Parks Department.



In 1975 Peter moved to Bruce County to work with Clarke Birchard at the newly begun Bruce County Outdoor Education Centre (OEC). He taught there until his retirement in 1998. During his 23 years with the Bruce County Board, Peter was the “face” of outdoor education for thousands of students and the full-time teacher at the OEC. Programs catered to students from K–13, in a system-wide approach that provided students in the board with experiences over the course of many years. The program was designed to build an understanding and appreciation of the natural and human heritage of the unique place they called home. Here he taught lessons on topics ranging from biology and ecology to geography and geology, from history and social studies to camp craft and canoeing. Following Clarke’s retirement,

Peter took over the leadership of the OEC, becoming the site Principal in 1992.

During his career, Peter was an active member of COEO. He sat on the COEO Board as a regional representative and served as the organization’s Treasurer. In September 1989, he chaired the planning committee for the Annual Meeting held at Talisman Resort in the Beaver Valley. He regularly led workshops at various COEO events.

Challenges Faced During His Career

Although much of Peter’s career in OE occurred during a time of provincial political support and ample education funding, one of the biggest challenges he faced came toward the end of his career. In



the 1990s the political climate in Ontario changed dramatically: education budgets were being cut, OE was seen as a frill, rather than an important element of the educational experience. Many school boards were divesting themselves of their OE centres. During this time, Peter continued to remain committed to the goal of accessible, high quality OE for all students in his school board.

The OEC was in need of major facility upgrades to remain a viable site and Peter persuaded the Bruce County School Board to consider how to ensure the long-term sustainability of the site. This persuasion led to the creation of the Bruce County Education Foundation and ultimately the transfer of the OEC's land base and buildings to the Foundation, which would assume responsibility for site management and fundraising. Over the next few years, a successful fundraising campaign was mounted by the Foundation that resulted in the building of new classrooms, dormitories and dining room facilities at the OEC, securing the centre's future.

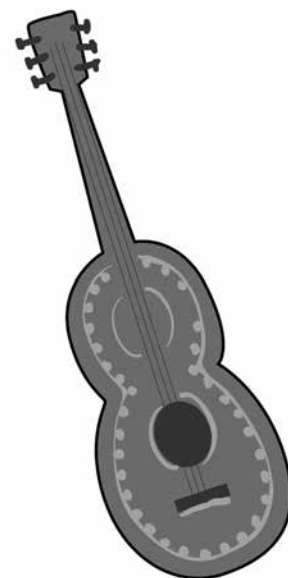
Current Work

With Peter's retirement from teaching came a shift in his audience and venue, but not in his passion for OE and his ability to translate that to others. Peter has used his time in retirement to guide nature trips around the world for various organizations and involve himself locally with organizations that support environmental stewardship and education. As a tour guide, he introduced adults to the natural history of various parts of Canada, the Arctic, Antarctic, Amazon basin, Costa Rica, India, South Africa, Scotland and Trinidad and Tobago. He now spends much of his time

giving talks and leading hikes for local organizations and naturalist groups.

To this day he continues to be a bridge leading people to places of new discovery and adventure while learning about the natural world with which they are surrounded. As one trip participant recently said after a hike with Peter, "One ventures into the field with a sense of anticipation and discovery. No two days are alike and the wonders of a living planet unfold in a remarkable and unpredictable fashion. That is what he shares." This is the magic that Peter has always brought to his calling as an educator and why he has been so successful as a teacher for so many years.

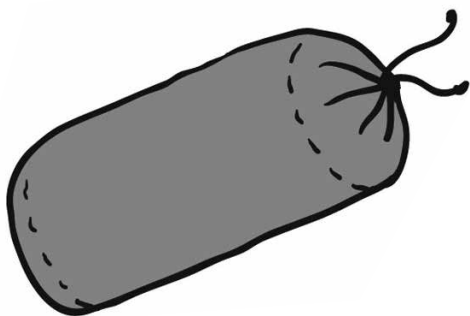
Robin Middleton is one of Peter's daughters and is an outdoor education and science teacher with the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board.



The Hunger Games and the Nature of Rebellion

By Natalie Gillis

In my nature explorations, I've always been fascinated not just with identifying the species I encounter, but with digging deeper and learning their backstories. There are many stories behind the plants and animals that fill our landscapes. Sometimes they're hidden in history, myths and cultural narratives. Sometimes they're hidden in our very words. This new column will explore the stories of nature hidden beneath the canopy of the everyday, and give them a break of sunlight.



With *Catching Fire*, the second film installment of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, in theatres this November, fans of Suzanne Collins' post-apocalyptic dystopian world will be celebrating. Many educators will too, since the film's release will revive the series for students, and thus its relevance in language arts programming.

From a literary perspective, *The Hunger Games* is an action-packed hero's quest told through the eyes of a strong-but-flawed heroine fighting to survive in a dystopian future. It's a great entry point into explorations of the monomyth, and it can be easily compared to other classic quests like *The Hobbit*, *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, *The Lion King* and many comic-book superheroes.

But *The Hunger Games* is also about a society that is completely broken—as unhealthy as societies can get. Even though it only glosses over most of the issues it touches on, it is a great springboard to deeper examination of all sorts of environmental and social justice problems. Panem is

post-climate change North America. There are parallels with the Occupy movement (Panem's 99% live with ongoing environmental strife, food insecurity and resource depletion while the remaining 1% live in the Capitol, where the nation's wealth and power are concentrated). And just why is Panem still coal-powered, anyway? Enter conversations about technological innovation and sustainability.

The Dystopian Nature Disconnect

The Hunger Games can do more than just raise sexy contemporary issues, though. The symbolic role of nature in the story is a portal to a deeper examination of the characterization of nature across the genre. After reading *The Hunger Games* and thinking more broadly about dystopian fiction, I concluded that many, if not most, fictional dystopias are set in highly urban environments or ravaged wastelands. Even those that are set in relatively healthy landscapes isolate their characters from contact with the natural world, as in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, where the countryside is the domain of the exiles. *The Hunger Games* is no different: the land has been wasted, resources have been depleted, citizens are prohibited from wandering freely in the forest and gates surround the districts to separate humans from their natural environment. Wild landscapes and the animals that inhabit them are perceived as dangerous—a continuation of the civilization versus wilderness binary that is a fundamental aspect of colonial and postcolonial culture.

The Nature of Rebellion

Why is this such a common element in dystopian fiction? I think it's because the primal connection humans have with the land is fundamentally incompatible with dystopian power structures. Beyond providing sustenance, nature has a healing and revitalizing power and is

intrinsically linked to human freedom and happiness (Children & Nature Network and IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, 2012). Seen through the lens of the dualistic nature/culture paradigm, a dystopian superpower cannot effectively control its subjects if the people have healthy relationships with the land, which is by definition wild and uncontrollable. Excluding nature's light and beauty excludes hope, which enables control. Separating people from the place in which they live is necessary in dystopian worlds, because a return to nature would lead to rebellion and independence. Seen in this light, the staging of the final battle in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (in which the Rebel Alliance finally succeeds in overthrowing the Galactic Empire) on the lush forest moon of Endor was highly symbolic. In *The Hunger Games*, the return to nature and freedom is played out through the heroine, Katniss Everdeen.

Katniss' deep connection to the land is fundamental to her survival throughout her life. As a young girl, the sight of a single dandelion inspired her to hunt and forage to keep her family from starving and to provide healing medicines. Because these acts are illegal in Panem—all resources belong to the state, and wandering in the woods is forbidden—Katniss' relationship with the land defines her as a rebel before the story even begins. Aside from the resources the woods provide, Katniss also finds existential freedom and relief there. This bond with the natural world and the vitality it gives her is in stark contrast to the dreary hopelessness of the other residents of her community, who remain caged within the district fences, and to the shallow, overconsumptive urbanity of the Capitol residents, who do not realize they are imprisoned by their luxury.

Once she enters the Hunger Games arena, it is Katniss' skill as a forager, hunter and herbalist that keep her alive. She knows how to read the land as efficiently as readers of books can decode symbols on a page. But beyond these skills, I think it's Katniss' lifelong immersion in nature that gives her

the self-assurance and freedom of mind needed to defy the Capitol and ultimately spark a rebellion against its repressive regime.

Dystopias: Utopias for Educators

Katniss' ecological literacy gives educators an opportunity to forge curricular connections with environmental stewardship and traditional ways of knowing. Questions on the links between nature, rebellion and freedom in the dystopian genre could lead to a comparative study of other dystopian novels. And it's easy to draw parallels between the expulsion of nature in dystopian societies and our own society's impoverished nature experiences. What is the existential and symbolic importance of natural spaces to healthy societies? With so many students already in love with *The Hunger Games* series, the release of the second film offers a cornucopia of discussion topics on nature and society.

Reference

Children & Nature Network and IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (2012). *Children & nature worldwide: An exploration of children's experiences of the outdoors and nature with associated risks and benefits*. Children & Nature Network.

Natalie Gillis is a Grade 6–7 French Immersion teacher in Peterborough. She likes books and backpacking, and thinks more people should ride bikes.



Passeggiato

By Connie Kavanagh

Passeggiato (Italian): a stroll, walk, or promenade, usually through the neighbourhood after dinner

Have you ever paused to consider how our mode of travel affects our sense of place? If you're an outdoor educator, you likely realize that the slower you travel, the more you observe. High-speed travel can quickly take us out of all that's familiar, and we may avoid it for this as much as for the carbon footprint we're trying to reduce. If you travel abroad, particularly if you do so alone, you may find one of the greatest joys of the experience is coming home to (eventually) find someone with experience similar to your own. Although the culture shock of returning to your home country after a lengthy time away can be disturbing, even debilitating, the blow is softened by an understanding and compassionate friend.

Italian and Spanish are Romance languages, both derived from ancient Latin and adapted through time and place to become distinct yet recognizable to one another. I remember one time we had Italian visitors at our nature Centre who did not speak English but who wanted to learn more about the local area. I volunteered that I spoke Spanish, and we were able to communicate well enough to satisfy their interests. It was a joy to experience this brief moment of diversity of language and culture. After they left, I turned to my co-worker who had been listening in and, remembering a fact about him, exclaimed, "Hey – you speak Italian!" "You did fine," was his simple reply. I had struggled with some vocabulary, and asked him to translate "Mediterranean." "Mediterraneo," he offered. Simple enough, yet the word still echoes in my mind.

Many years have since passed, and I have discovered the meaning of another memorable Italian word: passeggiato. When my co-worker-turned-partner's family lived in Rome, it was customary to take an occasional stroll as a family after the evening meal—a passeggiato—often stopping at the local gelateria for a cold treat along the way while

seeing the neighbourhood and being seen. From what I gather, this was a relaxed affair and an important time for family bonding.

What if families living in the Western hemisphere took up the practice of taking a passeggiato together after dinner? Would we have a deeper connection to our neighbourhoods and one another? Would our connection to nature strengthen upon noticing the hummingbirds amongst the hostas, or the cottontails nibbling their favourite herbs in the pesticide-free lawns, or the faint comet making its own passeggiato through our solar system? For our part, my partner and I have taken up this practice together, sometimes enjoying the fragrant scent of blossoms in the evening air, sometimes entering deep conversations about the past or our dreams for the future, sometimes sharing the occasional joke with each other or one of the kids. We even stop by the river to watch the paddlers and enjoy an ice cream every now and again.

While we were both born in Canada, each with United Empire Loyalist roots in our ancestry as far as we know, our own international experiences have uniquely shaped us. To be able to share meals, conversation and the occasional glass of wine by candlelight, and to enjoy a passeggiato through the neighbourhood afterwards, be it urban, rural or wilderness, helps to heal some of the battle scars we've endured: saying goodbye to friends left in foreign countries, economic downturns and loss of jobs, feelings of isolation, loss of parents and children.

As far as how all this relates to our roles as outdoor educators, consider this: we are human, and we walk upon the Earth as we are and as it is. We discover as we walk. Our passage here, our passeggiato, is made better by connecting with the environment around us and with each other. We are richer for the walk.

Connie Kavanagh enjoys combining her creative writing and outdoor education careers. She is currently based in Hamilton, Ontario.

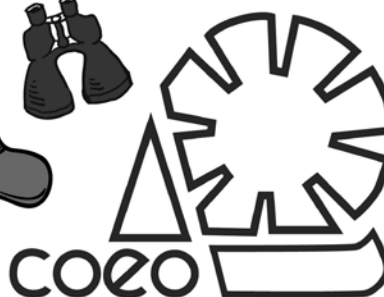
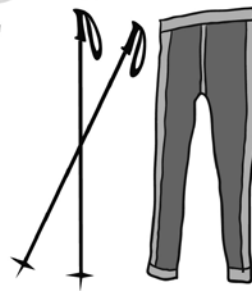
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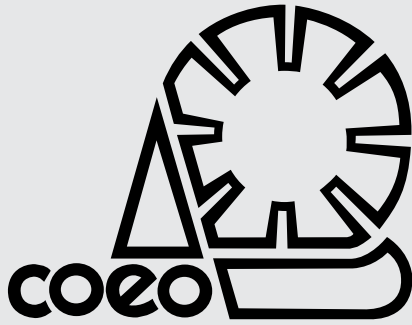
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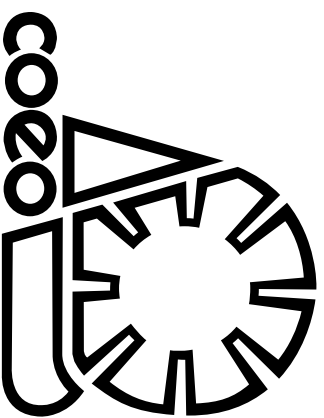
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