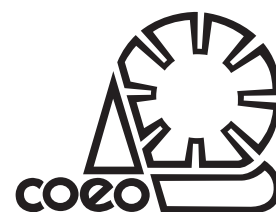


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION
Winter 2014, 26(2)



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*.

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario
c/o Sport Alliance Ontario
3 Concorde Gate
Toronto, ON M3C 3N7
www.coeo.org

Pathways

Pathways is published four times a year for members of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO).

Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please contact the Interim Chair for submission guidelines.

Articles in *Pathways* may be reproduced only with permission. Requests must be made in writing and should be directed to Bob Henderson, Interim Chair, *Pathways* Editorial Board.

Opinions expressed in *Pathways* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Pathways* Editorial Board or COEO.

Advertising included in *Pathways* should not be interpreted as an endorsement by COEO of the products or services represented. All rights reserved. To receive an advertising information package, please contact Bob Henderson, Interim Chair of the *Pathways* Editorial Board.

ISSN: 0840-8114



Pathways is printed on FSC recycled paper.

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario Board of Directors

President: Allyson Brown
Norval Outdoor School, Upper Canada College
10444 Winston Churchill Boulevard, PO Box 226
Norval, ON L0P1K0
abrown@ucc.on.ca

Past President: Kyle Clarke
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen's University
28 Division Street, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6
kyle.clarke@queensu.ca

Vice President: Deborah Diebel
Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre, BWDSB
3092 Bruce County Road 13, Wiarton, ON N0H 2T0
deborah_diebel@bwdsb.on.ca

Treasurer: Bill Schoenhardt
King City Secondary School
2001 King Road, King City L7B 1K2
william.schoenhardt@yrdsb.edu.on.ca

Secretary: Justyna Szarek
Burnhamthorpe Adult Learning Centre, TDSB
500 The East Mall, Toronto, ON M9B 2C4
justyna.szarek@gmail.com

Volunteer Coordinator: Ruthie Annis
Adam Beck Public School, TDSB
400 Scarborough Road, Toronto, ON M4E 3M8
r.m.annis@gmail.com

Director At Large: Lindsay Cornell
Outward Bound Canada
550 Bayview Avenue, Suite 201, Toronto, ON M4V 3X8
lindsay_cornell@outwardbound.ca

Director At Large: Kevin Linder
Adventureworks! Associates Inc.
102 Plaza Drive, Box 63012, Dundas, ON L9H 6Y3
kevin@adventureworks.org

Director At Large: Karen O'Krafka
Lakefield College School
4391 County Rd. 29, Lakefield, ON K0L 2H0
karenokrafka@yahoo.ca

Director At Large: Christopher Walker
ALIVE Outdoors Inc.
30 Elmsdale Road, Toronto, ON M4J 3M4
christopher.walker90@gmail.com

Membership: Chris Ockenden
Mansfield Outdoor Centre
937365 Airport Road, PO Box 95, Mansfield, ON L0N 1M0
ockydoky@yahoo.ca

Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Winter 2014, 26(2)



Pathways Editorial Board

Interim Chair: **Bob Henderson**
2631 Concession #7, RR#4, Uxbridge, ON L9P 1R4
bhender@mcmaster.ca

Heather Andrachuk
Carp Ridge Learning Centre
nature.kindergarten@gmail.com

Ben Blakey
OISE, University of Toronto
john.blakey@mail.utoronto.ca

Erin Cameron
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University
emcarte1@lakeheadu.ca

Scott Caspell
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University
scottcaspell@hotmail.com

Indira Dutt
Outward Bound Canada
indidutt@gmail.com

Kathy Haras
Adventureworks! Associates Inc.
kathy@adventureworks.org

Connie Kavanagh
1564 4th Concession Rd W, RR#1 Troy, ON, L0R 2B0
connie.elizabeth2@gmail.com

Zabe MacEachren
Faculty of Education, Queen's University
maceache@queensu.ca

Roman Jakubowski
School of Outdoor Recreation,
Parks & Tourism, Lakehead University
mrjakubo@lakeheadu.ca

Patrick Byrne
McMaster University
byrnep@mcmaster.ca

Managing Editor: **Randee Holmes**
605 Arbor Road, Port Credit L5G 2K1
(B) 905-271-6129

Features

Off the Beaten Path: The Work of an Ontario Outdoor Education Centre in Relation to Environmental Education 4
Joanne Nazir and Erminia Pedretti

The Potential of Animism: Experiential Outdoor Education in the Ecological Education Paradigm 13
David Clarke

Outdoor Risk: A Fresh Approach 18
Albi Sole

Care and Adventure Education: Adventure-based Outdoor Journeys Provide Suitable Conditions for Giving and Receiving Care 20
Jakob Thorsteinsson

Columns

Editor's Log 2
Bob Henderson

President's View 3
Allyson Brown

Opening the Door
Wind and Whales and Wildebeests 28
Andy Kerr-Wilson

Reading the Trail
Wilderness Secrets Revealed 30
Connie Kavanagh

Explorations
Thoughts on a Writing Journey: Autoethnography in Outdoor Education Research and Practice 31
Emma Brandy

Prospect Point
Beyond the Surface 35
Mark Gaynik

Oh, how I enjoy the open theme issues of *Pathways*. Submissions are collected over a span of several months—some are newly arrived, while others have been patiently waiting for production of the issue to begin. And then comes the moment of seeing what is to fall together. Voila! Here is another issue of *Pathways* containing a wide mix of content that showcases the variety of practices and perspectives in our field of attention. We have here research, philosophy, dynamic cultural issues/concerns, the arts and personal reflection.

For the editors—in this case me and managing editor, Randee Holmes—there is the joy that comes with reading a whole issue cover to cover, both as editors and as readers for pleasure and learning.

Looking into the future, the spring issue is close to complete, and a “Call for Papers”

will soon be issued from guest editors of the fall issue, Scott Caspell and Bryan Grimwood. The theme involves digging into *Pathways*’ back issue archives in search of a relevant former article and providing a present-day commentary to explore the article’s continued or evolving relevance (or not). It is a chance to look at the old anew.

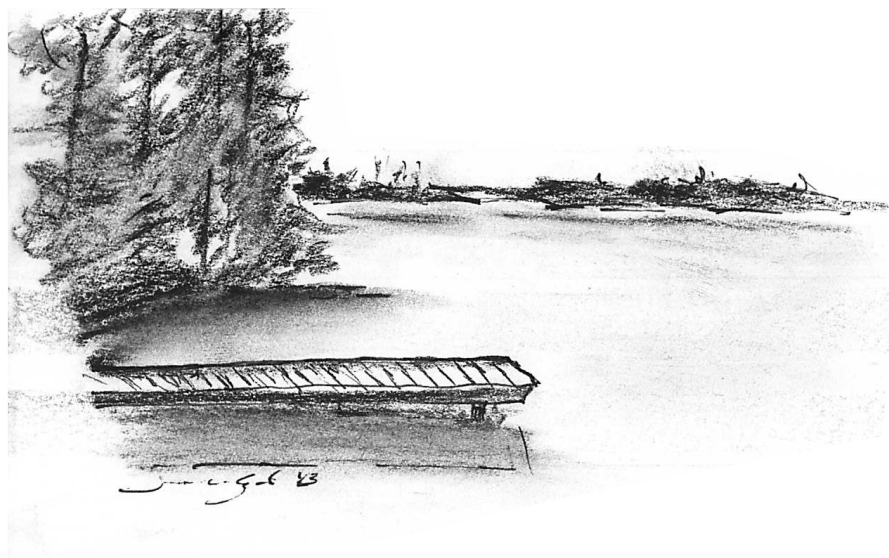
The invitation is open, then, to begin sifting through former *Pathways* issues. Hey, you could even start from the first issue published in 1989 and suggest a treatment from then that you would like to add to/comment on now. If we get a rousing response, submissions will find a home in a future open issue of “mixed content” that showcases the variety of practices and perspectives expressed by *Pathways* readers.

Bob Henderson

Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Dimitri Gagnon Morris (cover, and pages 3, 5, 10, 15, 27, 29, 32 and 35) and James Czank (pages 2, 9, 12, 22 and 34).

Dimitri is a Montreal-based multidisciplinary artist, animator and jeweller. A graduate of Capilano University’s Commercial Animation program, he has been a professional in the media arts world for over ten years. Currently studying at Concordia University in Studio Arts, and graduating from l’École de Joaillerie de Montréal in the spring of 2014, he is on the verge of launching his own line of fine jewellery and developing his career in design and fine arts.

James is a PhD candidate at Lakehead University. Having grown up in Thunder Bay, he developed a love for the outdoors at a very early age. His sketches are of the terrain and his experiences in Northern Ontario.



Winter solstice has come and passed, and as the days are getting longer I hope you have been able to spend time with family, friends and students outside over the holidays and into the New Year.

Ontario has seen its share of varied winter weather, from loads of fresh powder to an icy layer over all surfaces, from a polar vortex to a rainy thaw. Sir Rannulph Fiennes' wise words "There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing," a long time favourite quote of outdoor educators, has surely reached the ears of many youth this season. The Norval Outdoor School was not spared tree damage, and we have made use of the indoor space to provide a relief from the extremely cold temperatures, but have otherwise managed to run our program as planned. With the aid of a hefty packing list of spare woolly socks, hats and mitts, and being able to provide hand and toe warmers this past week, it has been fun and rewarding to show grade 4 boys that it is still possible to learn and play outside during cold winter temperatures. Their end of week recollections of experiencing many "firsts," including cross country skiing, snowshoeing, long snowy hikes and winter cookouts, made all of the extra behind the scenes work to make it happen worth the effort!

It is my hope that the ice damage to trees and unpredictable temperatures have not hindered the programming offered at your schools, outdoor education centres and camps and instead have offered teachable moments and rich experiences in the out of doors.

Over 80 COEO members beat some winter blahs by partaking in an all-inclusive wintertime experience. COEO's born again annual retreat, Make Peace With Winter, or MPWW for short, was an absolute blast at Camp Kawartha. The exciting workshop



line-up and location that by design lends itself to winter ecology, snow science, cross country skiing, bush craft, winter camping skills and games opportunities made for a fantastic retreat. Jesse Jewell from the Yukon Department of Education and Dave and Kielyn Marrone from Lure of the North delivered engaging keynote presentations. Participants benefitted from the skills and knowledge that presenters brought to their interactive hands-on workshops throughout the weekend. And the food! Oh the food. Delicious and locally sourced. Many thanks to the wonderful hospitality of Camp Kawartha.

MPWW was a popular event in the 1980s and early 1990s but was then set aside as a priority, possibly as a result of a period of decreased membership and volunteer organizers. I would like to take the time to thank Kyle Clarke for encouraging MPWW's revival in 2011, Karen O'Krafka for her hard work as Conference Chair, and the volunteers who stepped up in response to the call in order to grow the tradition once again!

Allyson Brown

Off the Beaten Path: The Work of an Ontario Outdoor Education Centre in Relation to Environmental Education

By Joanne Nazir and Erminia Pedretti

In this article, we report on a study aimed at illuminating the response of one group of educators, working at a well-established outdoor education (OE) centre in Ontario, to the challenge of providing environmental education (EE) for its visiting elementary students. The study was prompted by a previous study led by Dr. Pedretti that investigated Ontario educators' views of EE. A finding that struck us from the earlier study was the passionate conviction of most participants that OE is an essential component of EE. In the participants' view, OE is "necessary for connecting children to the natural environment; and helping students to understand the role of nature in their lives" (Pedretti, Nazir, Tan, Bellomo & Ayyavoo, 2012, p. 7). Supporting data further suggest that, more than acting as just another avenue for EE, OE has the capacity to enrich EE in ways other opportunities cannot.

Prompted by these inklings we decided to design another study (the subject of this paper) to investigate the nature of EE in an outdoor context. Specifically we wanted to investigate the following: (1) What does EE look like in the outdoor context? (2) What factors shape outdoor educators' understanding and practice of EE? (3) What are the main barriers to EE in this context? (4) What are some of the implications of the study's findings for the future development of EE?

To increase the validity of the findings, we chose to locate our study at a well-established OE facility connected to the formal education system. Fortuitously for us, in Ontario several school-boards operate OE centres charged with the mandate of providing EE to their student visitors. We chose one of these as the site for our study.

The Intersection between Outdoor and Environmental Education

Over the past few years EE has become a topic of increasing interest in Ontario. For many educators, EE was bought into sharp focus in 2007 by the Working Group for Environmental Education's report *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future: Environmental Education in Ontario Schools* (commonly referred to as the Bondar Report). This report unequivocally identified human caused environmental change "as a matter of increasingly urgent concern around the world" and described schools as having "a vital role to play in preparing our young people" to meet local and global environmental challenges and shape the future (p. 2). The Bondar Report also acknowledged partnerships between the formal education system and OE centres as promising elements in the overall response to providing comprehensive EE for all students.

In resonance with the Bondar Report, for many, the kinship between OE and EE is obvious. For example, Foster and Linney (2007), speaking on behalf of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO), assert: "Early sequenced and repeated experiences in the outdoors [help students] develop a kinship with nature that can evolve into an informed, proactive, and lifelong stewardship of our natural environment" (p. 53).

Lucie Sauvé (2005) a well-established Canadian environmental scholar concurs:

...outdoor education is one of the most effective means of learning about/within the natural world and imparting an understanding of nature's inherent right to exist by and for itself—humankind's place in nature being definable only in context of this ethos. (p.14)

Yet despite such positive popular endorsement, a broader review of the scholarly literature suggests that the relationship between OE and EE is not as straightforward as statements like these imply. Of the scholars who do explore the topic through research and discourse, there are those who endorse the overlap between OE and EE, and those who doubt their compatibility. Loynes (2002) and Gough (2007), for example, argue that much of what occurs in mainstream OE is outdoor skill development, physical fitness and interpersonal development; and that the activities associated with these promote anthropocentric (environmentally unfriendly) rather than ecocentric (environmentally friendly) attitudes toward nature. According to Loynes (2002), in mainstream OE “nature is understood as an assault course, gymnasium or puzzle to be resolved and controlled. It is a resource to be commodified instead of a home to which to relate” (p. 3). According to Lugg and Slaterry (2003), in many mainstream OE contexts, EE is limited to minimum impact behaviour and aesthetic appreciation of outdoor settings. In the opinion of these scholars, too many outdoor programs tend to focus on education “in” the environment with little attention being paid to teaching “important knowledge” about the environment and how “to protect” it.

For us these criticisms concerning the compatibility of OE and EE seemed a bit harsh, particularly in the light of findings of our earlier study (noted above) regarding Ontario educators’ strong conviction of the overlap between the two. We decided to revisit the issue with the hopes of providing some clarification by studying the work of outdoor educators with a commitment to EE, at one OE centre.

The Study Context: Faraway Dale Outdoor Education Centre

Faraway Dale is an OE centre located on the outskirts of a densely populated urban hub in Ontario. As indicated earlier, it is owned and operated by a major provincial school board. The site has been used for OE purposes, though not always in the present form, for over 50 years. The facility consists of a relatively large expanse of natural green space encompassing meadow, forest, marsh and river habitats. It is surrounded by a suburban residential neighbourhood. A number of wild animals such as deer, foxes, beavers, groundhogs, snakes, squirrels, birds and coyotes roam its grounds so that encounters with wildlife are relatively common on any trip to the centre.

Faraway Dale is a day centre as opposed to a residential centre. This means that there are no facilities to stay overnight. There are also no permanent classes housed at the facility. The centre serves the urban and suburban student population that attend schools, administered by its parent school board, within its vicinity. Furthermore, it accommodates mainly Kindergarten to Grade 8 students through day visits that last between two and five hours. During a typical visit, students participate in one or two of over 50 self-generated programs the centre offers. The programs are diverse, ranging from classic OE experiences such as maple syrup making and snowshoeing to newer offerings such as a study of habitats and



communities, ecosystems hike and sketching in nature.

Faraway Dale is a very busy outdoor facility. On any day during the school year it hosts at least five classes. Visits are arranged by teachers weeks in advance. To facilitate its work, the centre employs a fulltime staff of educators and support staff. To assist, there is also a steady stream of volunteers, work-study trainees and part-time educators. Outdoor educators at this centre are serious about their jobs, especially the educational aspect. Programs are always accompanied by documented outlines that list program connections to the official provincial K–12 curriculum. During the research, we found all study participants were passionate about their jobs and expressed strong commitment to their work.

The Study

In designing the study we chose to heed the well-established premise that educators often possess valuable knowledge about educational topics gained from years of personal practical involvement in the field (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Simply put, we chose to study the nature of EE at Faraway Dale through the experiences of the educators who work there. There were nine participants in the study, all of whom, at the time of investigation, had each worked ten or more years at the centre. Data collection focused on representing characteristic experiences of these educators in providing EE at the centre.

Data collection took place over a period of five months during which Joanne (one of the authors of this paper) visited the centre twice a week on daylong visits. Four data collecting strategies were used on these visits: (1) semi-structured interviews with participants; (2) observation of educational outdoor sessions; (3) participant journals; and (4) collection of relevant artefacts (documents, pictures and memorabilia). Each participant was interviewed at least twice and observed at least three days in the field. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured informal way, and were

audiotaped and later transcribed. Extensive field notes were created to capture the main events of OE sessions. At the end of data collection we had over 500 pages of documented data (transcripts, field notes, journal entries and other artefacts). Established qualitative data analysis procedures were applied to this data to characterize the nature of EE at the outdoor centre.

Findings and Discussion

Data analysis yielded three major findings regarding the understanding and enactment of EE at Faraway Dale Outdoor Education Centre. These findings, organised to reflect the three research questions listed at the beginning of the paper, are summarised below.

1. *Connecting, Care and Agency: The Structures of EE*

It was clear to us that educators at Faraway Dale are engaged in understanding and enacting EE as part of their work in OE. Their stated goal for EE is to foster a culture that leads to healthy people and healthy environments by encouraging a more equitable interplay among people and nature. In the words of one of the educators,¹ “It’s about engaging and inspiring and empowering people to a healthy environment. I think everything flows toward that common goal” (Arlene, Interview 1, p. 10).

Further, there are definite discernible structures that describe the nature of EE they are providing. These are: connecting people to the environment; encouraging an ethic of compassionate care towards the environment; and building agency for living low-consumption, low-impact lifestyles. It is important to understand that the identifying words—connecting, care and agency—used by outdoor educators to describe their work with EE are not simply labels, nor are they limited to the everyday meanings usually ascribed to them. Rather, these words represent complex constructs for which these educators have deep meanings.

Connecting to the environment is more than simply understanding facts or ideas about the environment. It implies the formation of a personal tangible bond with nature—one that includes physical, emotional and spiritual components along with a cognitive aspect:

Connecting with nature is leaving your regular world behind in the city, even in a rural community, and going into a forest or a meadow or a river or a lake and just kind of being still in that place. And by being still, it does not mean you are motionless. But it just means you're quieting yourself.... What I mean by connecting is recognizing that there is a wind blowing but it is a very small wind. Or recognizing that a leaf shimmers in a certain way.... Being sensitive to things around you, hearing things differently, feeling it on your skin. That's connecting for me. (Danny, Interview 1, p. 7)

Similarly, care is not understood as primarily derived through a system of rational, justice-based reasoning. Rather, it is a deep commitment that arises out of an ethic of compassion and originates from a place of emotion and spirit. For these educators nature is a living conscious "Other" with whom we are compelled to have a relationship. In their work they present students with the option of caring for the Earth as one would care for a loved Other out of a natural compulsion born of a relational bond. This is not simply valuating the Earth as a thing in terms of assets and benefits.

Following from building connection and care, building agency for the environment is more than doing prescribed actions for the environment. It is about providing students with opportunities to move from wanting and thinking about helping the environment to feeling empowered to do so, while at the same time respecting their autonomy. Visits are conscientiously designed to encourage students to think critically about their current lifestyles and introduce them to alternative ideas for living low-impact, low-consumption lifestyles that will not harm

the Earth further. Students are also provided with opportunities to participate in Earth Repair projects designed to ameliorate human-caused damage on the facility's grounds. As one educator explained:

Other than not hurting the Earth further, part of what we do is show students how they can actually help. In the Waste Free Lunch program [for example] they get the chance to see the garbage they produce and what they can do to reduce that.... Depending on the time of year, they may also get to participate in an activity to help repair some damage that people have caused on the grounds. (Arlene, Field Visit 2, p. 3)

While there was some indication in the data that complex relationships may exist between the structures *connecting*, *care* and *agency* to produce a complex model of EE, the majority of educators at the centre described the components as acting in a simple linear way (see Figure 1). They believe that if people are provided with opportunities to connect to and build agency for the environment, this in turn will lead to compassionate care for the Earth and motivate them to act more frequently in environmentally friendly ways. Over time, these educators believe the entire process will result in healthier people and environments. It is important to note that, while for many environmental educators the terms "agency" and "action" are used interchangeably, for the outdoor educators at Faraway Dale they have distinct meanings. Agency is about motivating students to care and empowering them with environmental skills. Action is a choice presented to students, but not forced upon them during their stay at the outdoor centre.

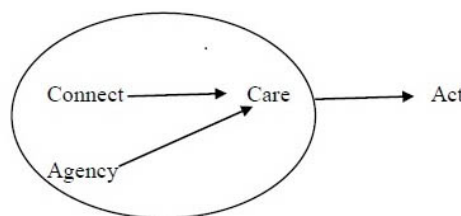


Figure 1: Simple Model of Environmental Education at Faraway Dale

2. Factors Underpinning the Structures of EE: Understandings of Environment and Education

In addition to providing a description of what EE looks like in an outdoor context we wanted to determine the factors that underpin its manifestation. Early on in the research project it became clear that the nature of EE being enacted at the Faraway Dale rests heavily on resident educators' fundamental understandings of the terms 'environment' and 'education.'

With respect to "environment" all the study participants demonstrated complex ecocentric understandings. They agreed the Earth is an extremely complex entity that works in systemic, interconnected ways. They also recognized that humans are a part of nature subject to ecological laws. According to Neesha (Interview 1, p. 7), "We know our environment provides us with everything we need. And what we do to the environment we do to ourselves." This in itself is not surprising, since ecocentrism is the stance one would expect of environmental educators. What is exceptional is the extent of power and living consciousness these outdoor educators ascribe to the non-human world. Throughout the research process they spoke of nature in transcendent terms as amazing, mysterious, magical, therapeutic, exciting and ingenious. For example:

To me nature is ingenious! How did a tree figure out how to bend itself to get to the light? How did something like a burr, which is a seed, figure out how to stick itself onto a body so it can be taken to another place and develop and grow in a new location? (Trevor, Interview 1, p. 9)

Building on these transcendent qualities they suggest that nature is a "natural teacher" with the capacity to act serendipitously and spontaneously to engage students in ways human teachers cannot. In other words they view nature is a living, sacred Other of intrinsic worth, with whom humans can have an intimate, educational relationship, rather than a thing or commodity to be exploited.

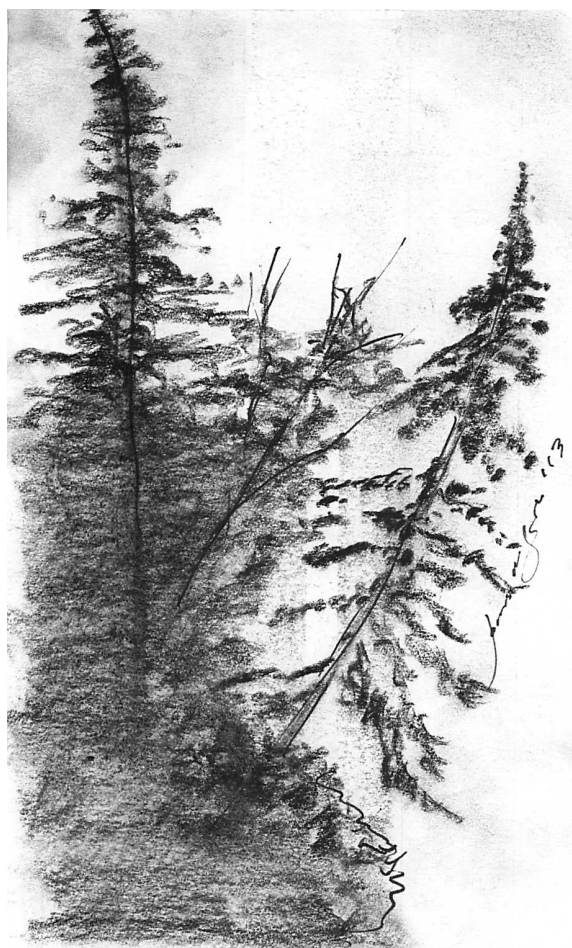
With respect to "education," data from this study reveals that educators at Faraway Dale hold particular understandings of what the term education means and how it should take place. These understandings greatly define their work with EE. Connection, care and agency, the identified structures of EE at the centre, stem from educators' deeper recognition of these as fundamental components of all education. Their understanding of all education as a care-based endeavour was evident from their talk and overall practice. For example, at the beginning of every daytrip compassionate care is explicitly suggested to students as the way things are done at the facility and an appropriate attitude for them to adopt towards each other and the non-human world during their stay at the centre. Care for the human and non-human world is also actively modeled by the staff throughout educational sessions. Similarly, the participants demonstrated an understanding that agency is a fundamental goal of the educative process. They all agreed that education should be more than transmissive. It should empower students by providing them with connections and experiences to make choices and act autonomously. As one participant succinctly put it, "For me, [education is] just about creating positive experience and hopefully opening a door for them to get outside and continue to discover in their own ways" (Keith, Final Interview, p. 2).

In addition to embedding notions of care and agency into their definition of education, educators in this study defined the educative process as one of building connections through direct experience with phenomena. The main educational theory they subscribe to is "experiential education" (Kolb, 1984), which, for them, includes the premises that knowledge and experience are inextricably linked and learning is a holistic process with mental, somatic, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Consider the following comments that reflect these understandings:

I think unless you really experience, then you don't really know. (Kelly, Interview 1, p. 12)

And:

We can know something cognitively, but knowing something cognitively is very different from experiencing it. In languages other than English they have two words for knowing. Like in French they have “Je sais” and “Je connais,” And what they are getting at there is that there is knowing from your mind and there’s knowing from experience. So when I talk about “knowing,” it’s that knowing from experience.... That’s a whole different way of knowing that isn’t limited to our brain. There’s a whole emotional piece and the aspect of experience that imprints on our body. (Arlene, Interview 1, p. 12)



Based on what has been stated above, the nature of EE Faraway Dale educators’ practice becomes more understandable.

For them, fostering connections, care and agency equates to their understanding of what good education should be about and what all educational work should entail. This coupled with their ecocentric understandings of nature as a living Other of intrinsic worth translates into a form of EE that is highly relational, emotional and grounded in concrete experience with the outdoors.

3. Tensions and Contradictions in Outdoor Educators’ Work with EE

While the study data clearly indicated that outdoor educators at Faraway Dale are engaged with EE, it was also clear to us that the practice of EE in this context is not unproblematic. A major source of tension undermining outdoor educators’ work with EE arises from the incompatibilities between the ideologies educators at the outdoor centre hold and those reflected in the more formal school system. Simply stated, many of the fundamental ideas that shape Faraway Dale educators’ work with EE differ from those of educators in mainstream indoor settings. Ironically, it may be that the very elements that define outdoor educators’ work—their emphases on the emotional, spiritual and somatic dimensions of education and their particularly defined ecocentric connection towards nature—that are the major elements of tension for them.

Participants in the study expressed the opinion that for many of their education colleagues (teachers and administrators in indoor schools, especially those not overly concerned with EE), education is about passing along the rational canons of knowledge through the use of cognitively biased pedagogical strategies. They also opined that many educators seem to work with shallow ecocentric views of the environment—that is, they still seem to evaluate the Earth as a commodity we need to take care of to ensure human survival rather than something to be cherished for intrinsic equitable reasons. OE, with its emphases on emotion, transcendence, direct somatic experience and the challenge to view the non-human world as a living

Other presents an unsettling contrast to these notions. For some educators, the idea that “nature can act as a teacher” may be particularly idiosyncratic.

Faraway Dale’s outdoor educators supported their opinions with instances of direct negative criticism of their work. In their estimation, for many in the formal school system and broader political arena, particularly those in positions of power,

OE centres and the work of outdoor educators are non-essential luxuries, “a bit of fluff to be cut” (Arlene, Interview 1, p.15). This situation has manifested in Faraway Dale outdoor educators working in a situation where they feel they have to constantly justify their existence and “fight for a place to survive” (Keith, Interview 1, p.11). While they firmly believe the work they are doing is valuable and necessary, the atmosphere of marginalisation and embattlement they constantly contend with is a major hindrance to their educational efforts.



overlapping, compatible endeavours. Educators at Faraway Dale Outdoor Education Centre are actively engaged in interpreting and providing EE to visiting students. However the nature of EE these educators are providing may be different from what happens in typical indoor classrooms. The structures of EE at the outdoor centre are building connections, care and agency with respect to the non-human world. These are related in a specific way (shown in Figure 1). In practice, outdoor educators focus on exposing students to the non-cognitive aspects of EE— its physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions in addition to the cognitive (science-based factual knowledge about nature). Strong positive emotions, direct experience with the natural world, and practice in concrete ameliorative actions, while at the same time respecting student autonomy are important components of their educational efforts.

Secondly, the study confirmed the structures of EE with which educators work are underpinned by deeper ideologies associated with particular meanings of “environment” and “education.” Faraway Dale’s outdoor educators hold holistic views of education and deep ecological understandings of the non-human world that serve as derivative bases to guide their work with EE.

However the study data also indicated (the third major finding) these same ideologies from which outdoor educators derive their work may also be a source of tension, hampering their work with EE. Simply put, outdoor educators’ notions of what good education entails and the potential of the human–nature relationship may differ from the norms of schooling found in the formal education system (Stevenson, 2007).

Conclusion and Implications

In summary, this study of outdoor educators’ work in relation to EE yielded three major findings. Firstly, it provided much compelling evidence supportive of the premise that OE and EE can be

These findings have important implications for the future work of outdoor educators and the broader field of EE. The finding that outdoor educators are working with different understandings of education and the environment provides a counterargument to some who suggest that

OE is incompatible with EE. If one were to judge the work of outdoor educators using certain assumptions about the nature of EE, for example the notion that EE is about teaching the 'science of nature' or that the goal of EE is to ensure students to 'seek justice' for the environment, it becomes understandable how the work of outdoor educators can be interpreted as problematic and even antithetical to EE. Outdoor educators are not primarily concerned with filling students with scientific knowledge about the environment or producing ecojustice activists. As has been stated several times before, they are concerned with connecting people and building compassionate care and agency for the environment through direct immersive, emotion-filled experience.

The work of outdoor educators in this context also provides much needed insight that can inform the future development of EE. It is well known that, despite the existence of much theory and policy, the successful implementation of EE remains elusive (Rickinson, 2001). Over the years, in response to this problem, the nature of EE has come into question. Many have questioned what it means to be environmentally educated. A relatively recent popular response has been the argument for a shift from an emphasis on teaching students knowledge about the environment to preparing them for critical decision making and action for the environment (for example, Bowers, 2009; Jickling, 2003). This critical turn in thinking represents an important step in the development of EE theory. It asks educators to revisit their assumptions about EE—especially its purposes and goals. The work of outdoor educators as revealed by this study continues in this vein by prompting further questions about the fundamental nature of EE that can have far reaching conceptual and pedagogical implications. Some important questions outdoor educators' work raise are: What are the knowledge(s) of EE? Is it possible to relate to the environment beyond knowing cognitive facts about it? What does caring about the environment entail? Are there

non-rational components to caring? In other words, what part(s) do the emotions, spirit and somatic sensations play in EE? We believe that consideration of these types of questions is urgent and necessary for the continued development of OE and EE.

Notes

¹ Pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper to protect the identities of the study participants.

References

- Bowers, C. (2009). Educating for a revitalization of the cultural commons. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 14, 196–200.
- Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Foster, A., & Linney, G. (2007). *Reconnecting children through outdoor education. A research summary*. Toronto, ON: The Council of Outdoor Educators Ontario.
- Gough, A. (2007). Outdoor and environmental studies: More challenges to its place in the curriculum. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 11(2), 19–28.
- Jickling, B. (2003). Environmental education and environmental advocacy: Revised. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 34(2), 20–27.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Loynes, C. (2002). The generative paradigm. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership*, 2(2), 1–14.

Lugg, A., & Slattery, D. (2003). Use of national parks for outdoor environmental education: An Australian case study. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 3(1), 77–92.

Pedretti, E., Nazir, J., Tan, M., Bellomo, K., & Ayyavoo, G. (2012). A baseline study of Ontario teachers' views of environmental and outdoor education. *Pathways the Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 24(2), 4–12.

Rickinson, M. (2001). Learners and learning in environmental education: A critical review of evidence. *Environmental Education Research*, 7(3), 207–320.

Sauvé, L. (2005). Currents in environmental education: Mapping a complex an evolving pedagogical field. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 10, 11–37.

Stevenson, R.B. (2007). Schooling and environmental education: Contradictions in purpose and practice. *Environmental Education Research*, 13(2), 139–153.

Working Group on Environmental Education (2007). *Shaping our schools, shaping our future: Environmental Education in Ontario Schools*. Ottawa: Queens Printer Ontario.

Joanne Nazir, PhD, is a recent graduate (March 2013) of OISE, University of Toronto. Erminia Pedretti, PhD, is a professor of science education at OISE, University of Toronto. Erminia was Joanne's doctoral dissertation supervisor—the research project from which this paper is drawn. Both authors share research interests in science education, environmental education and outdoor education.



The Potential of Animism: Experiential Outdoor Education in the Ecological Education Paradigm

By David Clarke

Providing experiences that reconnect people with nature so as to help counter human-induced planetary degradation is increasingly becoming a priority of outdoor experiential educators. The popularity of place-based education literature and practice demonstrates a move towards authentic and connected experiences within both natural and not-so-natural settings. My intention with this article is to explore what the notion of reconnecting might mean for the philosophy that underpins our practice of outdoor experiential education. Philosophy (and maybe cosmology) is useful here, for if we aim to reestablish some lost connection we would do well to describe the nature of the “nature” we intend our participants to reach out to. For instance, I found myself wondering that if, as is often stated, we are a part of nature (and, ipso facto, we *are* nature, at least inasmuch as any other single element we might choose to pick out of the world), what might it mean for outdoor experiential education practice to say that we need to “reconnect with nature”? Further to this, what unexamined contradictions might exist within experiential education practice that currently seeks to reconnect with nature?

I hope to shed some light on these points by firstly introducing the ecological education paradigm as a philosophy of education that seeks to place humans inside of the concept of nature by revealing and tackling the current and entrenched, though often unquestioningly accepted, societal worldview of Cartesian dualism. Following this I discuss how current theory and literature in experiential education may not provide an adequate philosophy of ecologically underpinned experiential education practice. With this in mind I draw on literature describing an animistic worldview and proffer animism as a way of “seeing” that may be philosophically well placed to inform experiential education practice.

The Postmodern Ecological Education Paradigm

The postmodern ecological education paradigm is informed by the fields of systems theory and Gaia theory, and founded on critiques of Western Cartesian dualism in general, and its permeation of modern education specifically (Sterling, 2004). These critiques are philosophical, such as Bateson’s (1972) description of the “epistemological error,” and informed by the observation of seemingly irreducible complexity in the physical and life sciences, such as in Earth systems science and quantum science. Whole systems scientists assert that the non-linearity and complexity present in physical, biological and social systems can only be partially understood by the reductionist approaches advocated by the scientific method (Capra, 1996). The essential feature of the ecological paradigm is that the whole cannot be entirely understood through the reduction of its parts due to emergent properties, such as cybernetic feedback loops, inherent in complex systems. Further to this, it has been argued that Cartesian dualism permeates Western and, to an increasing extent, global society, promoting a false dichotomy in the human/nature relationship by advocating perceptions of the environment as separate and disconnected from human activities. As Merchant (1994, p.4), cited in Sterling (2004), states:

So deeply does this way of thinking become that it is presumed to be reality by mainstream society. So powerful is the mystique of reason as instrument in the control of nature and human bodies that it banishes other modes of participating in the world to the periphery of society.

Echoing this view, Capra (1996) points to a failure to properly recognize relationships, complexity and ecological systems, and mirror these systems’ natural

sustainability, as the cause of current planetary environmental crisis. At its core the emerging postmodern ecological paradigm is concerned with tackling this crisis of perception by promoting the skill of “knowing more wholly” (Sterling, 2004, p. 8), or what Orr (1992) and Capra (1996) refer to as “ecological literacy.” Proponents argue that ecological literacy has profound implications for sustainability and future societies, and thus curriculum and education more specifically (Martin, 2008; Stibbe and Luna, 2009). Orr (1992) paints a detailed picture of the potential benefits that increased ecological literacy would have for society in terms of sustainability. Ecological educators aim to bring an ecological understanding to the forefront of the educational endeavour, often through focusing on whole institutional change along ecological and sustainable lines and implementing curriculums of transformation (Sterling, 2001, 2004; Stibbe and Luna, 2009).

Experiential Education and the Ecological Education Paradigm

Roberts (2008) notes that discourse concerning the nature of experiential learning and education in Western literature fails to engage with the central concept of experience, instead adopting a taken for granted, or “common sense notion of experience which ignores important distinctions, contradictions, and conflicts embedded in the term” (Roberts, 2008, p. 21). Roberts (2012) distinguishes that, whilst experiential *learning* is concerned with the processes by which knowledge, across diverse domains, can be acquired, experiential education is a far more significant concept, concerned with the underlying philosophy and purposes of education. In this way, experiential education can be seen as a *tabula rasa* upon which educational ideals and philosophies are etched (Roberts, 2012). Roberts (2008) identifies four broad conceptual variations that exist in current experiential education literature and practice. These variations (though I will not recount them here, they are well worth a look), each with their

own strengths and weaknesses and each demonstrating varying opportunities for environmentally concerned practice, may ultimately be superficial in the promotion of an ecological equality between humanity and the more-than-human world. For instance Roberts (2008) identifies how both theory and practice can place emphasis on novel experiences over the everyday (see Hess, 2007), perpetuate modernistic assumptions regarding progress (see Bowers, 2003), or promote ecological concern for ultimately anthropocentric reasons (see Bowers, 2005). In his conclusion Roberts (2008) notes that “for those who believe in the transformative power of experience in education, there is important work yet to be done” (p. 33). With this in mind it seems pertinent to focus on what the ecological education paradigm might bring to the discussion on how experiential education might reconnect humanity with a nature it is already vitality connected to.

Experiential Education and Becoming

Sterling (2004) notes that the ecological paradigm looks towards educational approaches that embrace enacting, experiential and experimental ways of knowing the world, but also suggests that these approaches better represent the world that someone who is “learning towards thinking, working and living ecologically and sustainably” (p. 324) will encounter. He refers to these modes as asking questions in a manner of *being* and *becoming*. Experiential approaches that have at their centre an ontology of becoming may provide direction forward for discussion of experiential education within the paradigm. For instance, Roberts (2012) notes how indigenous ways of experiential knowing have been largely overlooked in experiential education discourse, but also how wider appreciation in anthropology recognizes the stark contrast between these approaches and approaches informed by Western Cartesian dualism. As mentioned previously, it is generally agreed by ecological educators that the human-induced planetary crisis is resultant of a crisis of human perceptions regarding the

species' relationship with Earth (Harding, 2009; Orr, 1992). With respect to this Hillman (1982) urges a reconnection with the *Anima Mundi* (soul of the world) stating that assumptions of Cartesian duality in everyday life imbue human existence with a sense of entrapment in experience, relegating experiences to valueless forms of subjectivity where the body's emplacement in the world is never fully realized. What can be conceived as a broad social and cultural malaise can be highlighted in outdoor education practice in which a conception of the environment is omitted from the construction of the experience in favour of personal development goals through adventurous activities (see Wattchow and Brown, 2011). Of a similar activities-orientated approach in more formal curricular education Jardine (1996) notes:

In this milieu, meaning and significance and connection get reduced to glinting surface stimulation. And since stimulation is inherently always momentary, new stimulation is always needed—new “activities” are always underway. And so we have a common feature of many schools—a relentless rush from activity to activity, all in the name of “keeping the children’s interest...[I]t is precisely this sort of unsettled panic that makes us excellent consumers of yet more and more activities. (pp. 50–51)

The suggestion, along lines informed by Eisner (1985), is that when an element of an educational experience is deemed of less value to, or even omitted from, the curricular conception, it may be considered valueless by a learner through a form of educational socialization that may often be subconscious (as, for instance, in Pierre Bourdieu's social field theory). When this less valued, or omitted, element is the fact that humans are a part of, and (inter) dependent on, the biotic community of Earth, as the ecological whole systems paradigm denotes, questions can be raised as to the purposes, or lack thereof, of prevailing structures and content of

education. Following this line of thought, the role of outdoor education in the socialization process has been questioned (see Baker (2005) and Wattchow and Brown (2011), among others, for discussions of how outdoor education can deny “place”).

In answer to this problem in education more broadly, Sterling (2001, 2004) describes in detail how ontological and epistemological principles of systems thinking and ecology can inform education practice from organization and management through to learning and pedagogy. Where a Cartesian conception, or what Sterling (2001) refers to as the mechanistic view, of education prioritizes knowledge for instrumental value, the ecological view sees an intrinsic value, or contentment, in *being*, or more accurately, *becoming*. In this sense experiential education is prioritized so as to allow the learner to see the world as animate.



Harding (2009) echoes Hillman's concern that current human perceptions of the environment as “other” are a direct result of the prevalence of the reductionist Cartesian ontology. Harding (2009) urges a reanimation of Descartes' *res extensa* (that which exists outside—or nature as “that green stuff over there”) through diverse participatory ways of knowing in order to reconnect with the *Anima Mundi*. Specifically, Harding (2009) invokes what he terms an animistic approach to experiencing the world. In his conception, animism does not imply applying sentience in inanimate objects, but rather a practice of experiencing the world in terms of corporeal encounters prescribed as feeling, thinking, sensing and intuition. Ingold's (2011) formation of animism bears resemblance to Harding's (2009). Whilst Harding (2009) points to ecological systems thinking and, more specifically, Gaia theory as a primer for his form of animism, Ingold (2011) draws on the

philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which describes the nature of reality as lines of relationships, a meshwork of rhizomatic becomings. Ingold (2011) suggests that, rather than prescribing sentience to objects and interties within this world, animists, in an indigenous sense, *know* a world in formation, a world continually becoming. This world is constantly experienced due to an implicit and all encompassing worldview that instills

a way of being that is alive and open to a world in continual rebirth. In this animistic ontology, beings do not propel themselves across a ready-made world but rather issue forth through a world-in-information, along the lines of their relationships. (Ingold, 2011, p. 63)

There is a significant feature of Ingold's (2011) animistic worldview that is of particular appeal to the ecological paradigm—astonishment. Ingold (2011) describes astonishment as a sense of awe emergent in existing in a world that is forever on the threshold of becoming. Ingold (2011) argues that this worldview produces values of caution, humility and care that are directly manifested in a way of acting necessary for negotiating an ontology of becoming:

[T]hose who are truly open to the world, though perpetually astonished, are never surprised. If this attitude of unsurprised astonishment leaves them vulnerable, it is also a source of strength, resilience and wisdom. For rather than waiting for the unexpected to occur, and being caught out in consequence, it allows them at every moment to respond to the flux of the world with care, judgment and sensitivity. (Ingold, 2011, p. 75)

Responsive sensitivity through experience of an animate and becoming world has potential to circumvent the values/action gap identified as problematic to sustainability education (Bar, 2006; Kollmus & Agyeman, 2002). This is because the world that animists inhabit is best negotiated with these guiding principles

and actions, perhaps in the same way that an objective world, underpinned by Cartesian dualism, is best negotiated in a manner where these principles are much more easily set aside for destructive actions underpinned by self-serving principles. Both fortunately and unfortunately, such an objective world is proving to be a figment of our imaginations.

Summary

What, then, does it mean to have experiential education practice founded on an animistic ontology? Whilst ecological literacy is often discussed in terms of skills, competencies and values (see Martin, 2008), there appears much room for a reshaping of education along lines that promote ways of "seeing" the world as animate and continually becoming. Seeing in this respect moves beyond mere perception, instead taking on a deeply ontological meaning and acting as a foundational way of being alive that influences both "knowing" and "doing" (Sterling, 2004). Is this even, then, something that can be attempted consciously? Harding (2009) demonstrates how the move to a Cartesian worldview was fought for and defended within the writing and work of Galileo, Descartes and Bacon, but how it became societally entrenched by being reflected in the structures of our institutions, including education. Why then, could a move towards an animistic conception of the world not occur in a similar fashion?

References

- Baker, M. (2005). Landfullness in adventure-based programming: Promoting reconnection to the land. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 27(3), 267–276.
- Barr, S. (2006). Environmental action in the home: Investigating the 'value-action' gap. *Geography*, 91(1), 43–54.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Bowers, C. (2003). The case against John Dewey as an environmental and eco-justice philosopher. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 25(1), 25–42.
- Bowers, C. (2005). How the ideas of Paulo Freire contribute to the cultural roots of the ecological crisis. In C. A. Bowers & F. Apffel-Marglin (Eds.), *Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the environmental crisis* (pp.131–148). Mahwah, NJ: Taylor & Francis.
- Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life*. London, UK: HarperCollins.
- Deleuze, G., & Guatarri, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus*. London, UK: Continuum Books.
- Eisner, E. (1985). *The educational imagination*. New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Harding, S. (2009). *Animate Earth: Science, intuition and Gaia*. Totnes, UK: Green Books.
- Hess, S. (2007). *Imagining an everyday nature*. (Unpublished manuscript). Earl-ham College, Richmond, IN.
- Hillman, J. (1982). Anima Mundi: The return of the soul to the world. *Journal of Archetypal Psychology*, Spring, 71–93.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Jardine, D. (1996). Under the tough old stars: Meditations on pedagogical hyperactivity and the mood of environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 1(1), 47–55.
- Kollmuss, A., & Agyeman, J. (2002). Mind the gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior?, *Environmental Education Research*, 8(3), 239–260.
- Martin, P. (2008). Teacher qualification guidelines, ecological literacy and outdoor education. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 12(2), 32–38.
- Merchant, C. (1994). *Ecology: Key concepts in critical theory*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Orr, D. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Roberts, J. (2008). From experience to neo-experiential education: Variations on a theme. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(1), 19–35.
- Roberts, J. (2012). *Beyond learning by doing: Theoretical currents in experiential education*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Sterling, S. (2001). *Sustainable education: Re-visioning learning and change*. Totnes, UK: Green Books.
- Sterling, S. (2004). *Whole systems thinking as a basis for paradigm change in education: Explorations in the context of sustainability*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Bath, Bath, UK.
- Stibbe, A. & Luna. (2009). Introduction. In A. Stibbe (Ed.), *The handbook of sustainable literacy: Skills for a changing world* (pp. 9–16). Totnes, UK: Green Books.
- Wattchow, B & Brown, M. (2011). *A Pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world*. Clayton, Australia: Monash University Publishing.
-
- David Clarke is a lecturer at Plumpton College in the UK where he has been teaching Brighton University's outdoor education courses since 2009. He is currently completing an MSc in Outdoor

Outdoor Risk: A Fresh Approach

By Albi Sole

One of the most frustrating things for the outdoor educator is dealing with risk management. To be sure, there are risks in the outdoors as everywhere else, and we have a responsibility to protect our students from serious injury. But often things seem so out of whack.

One of the principal motivations for forming the Outdoor Council of Canada was to address the artificially high and absurdly onerous risk management barriers that many outdoor educators must surmount. As compared to current norms, it is entirely possible to manage injury risk in a way that is cheaper, safer and better suited to creating learning environments for both students and organizations.

There are many reasons why things have gotten so bad. One is that, without strong organizations presenting the facts, wildly ill-informed perceptions about the nature of risk in natural environments have been allowed to drive the risk-management processes. A second reason is the widespread application of a risk management strategy that works well in many industries but is profoundly ill-suited to outdoor leadership.

As we have become better at understanding risk we have become better at recognizing the role of “human error.” As a result, many industries have developed risk-management strategies that minimize the opportunity for people, especially front-line workers, to make discretionary judgment calls. The result is often impressive gains in injury reduction.

On the other hand, however, constraining the ability of front-line workers to use their own judgment is a poor way to manage risk in cases where achieving the objectives of the enterprise is dependent on successful human relationships. It is no accident that Nordstrom, a renowned leader in customer service, has only one “rule” guiding its

customer service employees: “Use good judgment.”

Meanwhile, the adventure tourism industry has relied on an “expert decision-making” model. This model is very efficient and effective for complex and poorly understood environments, but it is inherently vulnerable to human error and the injury rate tends to be quite high.

Today, risk management for outdoor education and activity often appears to be dancing to the beat of these two different drums.

Where the need and demand is greatest—leadership for the young—the risk management style tends to be distinctly “modern” in the technical sense of the term. By that I mean risk management is focused on eliminating acute injury risk, as though this is either possible or desirable. The weapon of choice has been a reliance on systems that overly constrain the independence of the field leader.

All humans are to some degree elitist (although most deny it). Unfortunately, risk-management systems of this sort tend to re-enforce elitism. Individual field leaders become infantilized by a system that fails to train and support them to provide good judgment within their scope of competence. Similarly, the compendium of restrictions and prohibitions placed on children fails to recognize, support and develop their inherent ability to develop and exercise their own good judgment.

Ironically, these safety-obsessed strategies are actually very dangerous because: a) they fail to provide the potential health and educational benefits that more outdoor education could provide; b) they retard children’s development of self-efficacy with respect to self-care; and c) infantilized leaders and children are alienated from the risk manager; they are unable or unwilling

to provide the feedback essential for the creation, maintenance and growth of a high performance learning culture.

Conversely, experienced outdoor leaders intuitively approach risk with a post-modern perspective that considers injury risk to be inherent in physical activity, and increased exposure to injury risk as appropriate when the rewards justify it. This perspective was validated in 2009 when the Canadian Standards Organization endorsed the ISO 31000 definition of risk as “the effect of uncertainty on objectives” (Canadian Standards Association, 2009).

ISO 31000 implicitly requires risk managers to consider the pros and cons of a project in a probabilistic manner. The burden of negative risk must be added to other costs, the bonus of positive risk added to the benefit side, and the two reconciled with an equation that seeks to maximize net benefit. Under this new paradigm, the effective risk-management system will more accurately recognize when to limit individual judgment, and when to support, encourage or even demand it.

In defense of institutional risk managers, they have not had a lot to work with until now. To allow leaders to act independently within their scope of practice, there must be objective ways of identifying who is qualified to lead outdoors and where. It is the absence of such standards for youth leaders that the Outdoor Council of Canada has set out to rectify.

The first step was to formally identify low-risk terrain on both land and water. Almost all pedagogical objectives can be achieved in such terrain and the chance of injury risk is much lower than that encountered every day in the school gym or on the playing field.

The second step was to create a two-day training course. This course, Leadership Level 1, ensures leaders have the basic skills required to run a high-quality/low-risk program. Leader who have completed only this course are restricted to taking

participants into only low-risk terrain (at least initially) and are required to work under a competent supervisor.

The third step—under construction—is a certification program required to train supervisors. The right kind of supervision is as critical for the organization as it is for the leader. Good supervisors support leaders as they develop, recognize when they are able to move from the assistant leader role to the front position and from simple trips to more complex ones. Good supervisors also create a framework for trust and communication essential for building resilient learning organizations.

The long term goals of the Outdoor Council of Canada are ambitious. The risk-management structure we are developing will allow schools to use their own teachers to provide a rich outdoor education and activity program for the same sort of cost as the existing indoor curriculum. This will unlock the possibility for every Canadian child to have the experiences essential for them to have a healthy relationship to their environment, their community and their own body.

Membership in the Outdoor Council of Canada is open to everyone and costs \$25/year. Organizational membership is \$125/year and includes an individual membership.

Reference

Canadian Standards Association. (2009). CAN/CSA-ISO 31000-10. *National standard of Canada. Risk management: Principles and guidelines.*

Albi Sole is a mountain guide and educator living in Calgary and is the Executive Director of the Outdoor Council of Canada. Albi has been outdoor-active since he first crawled in the mud of his family's farm. Since 1977 he has been based in Western Canada where he skis, climbs and sea-kayaks.

Care and Adventure Education: Adventure-based Outdoor Journeys Provide Suitable Conditions for Giving and Receiving Care

By Jakob Thorsteinsson

The idea of “care” has been researched from the unique perspective of disciplines as diverse as the social sciences, anthropology, arts, humanities, philosophy, moral philosophy, theology and nursing (Halldórsdóttir, 2006). In Iceland, care has primarily been studied in the fields of education and nursing. Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir is at the forefront of educational research, with an emphasis on respect and care (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007). The core of Aðalbjarnardóttir’s theory is that each person has the right to enjoy respect and care as a human being, including respect of feelings, opinions, wishes and desires, while also having their wellbeing cared for (2007).

In social science, psychologist Carol Gilligan and philosopher and educator Nel Noddings have made considerable contributions to education by writing and researching within the framework called “ethic of care.” In this article I primarily focus on analysing how the ideas put forth in Nel Noddings’ (2005) *The Challenge to Care in School* can be applied to an adventure education context.

The main question guiding this analysis is simply: Can adventure-based outdoor journeys foster care? My hypothesis is that these journeys supply the educator with an assortment of essential opportunities to provide a caring community through modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. Outdoor educators, however, must be aware of this potential as well as have the knowledge and capabilities to successfully create programs guided by an ethic of care.

About the Case

The case studies I use in this article are based on three outdoor education programs

I personally experienced in the fall of 2007. I call the programs The Highland Adventure Journeys (HAJ) and they were arranged by a primary school in Iceland housing students 6–16 years of age. The school is in a mixed neighbourhood with middle and upper class incomes. For the past 15 years, the school has been developing an outdoor program that offers different kinds of outdoor adventures to each class in the school. I will use examples from the following three case studies: a two-day, 70 km bicycle journey with a 10th grade class; a three-day, 100 km bicycle journey with a 9th grade class; and a four-day, 50 km hiking journey with an 8th grade class following the classic “Laugavegurinn” trekking route.

The data used in this study are from interviews with the teenagers and teachers that participated in the journeys, my own field notes and formal documents from the school.

Adventure Education and Care

Care is perhaps not what first comes to mind when talking about outdoor and adventure education. When looking at the work of Kurt Hahn and other foundational outdoor education theorists, it does however become apparent that care, and related concepts such as empathy, are in fact very important to outdoor and adventure education.

Central to the concept of adventure education is the idea that the outcome is never certain or pre-planned. Participants, as well as events beyond anyone’s control, can actively influence what happens (Ewert, 1989; Hopkins and Putnam, 1993). Adventure education, guided by principles of experiential education, should actively challenge both the “inner world of the person and the outer world of the

environment” (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 2). This idea is consistent with the report of the 1975 Dartington Conference that highlighted the importance of “heightening awareness and fostering respect for” self, others and the natural environment in outdoor education programming (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993, p. 9).

Similarly, for Outward Bound founder Kurt Hahn the purpose of education was to develop the righteous and active citizen, with a strong emphasis on leadership and service. Thomas James has written insightfully about Hahn’s work and notes that

[Hahn] saw the adventure, in a social perspective, as an event of community life and not a private thrill. The adventure of the individual is always mediated to some extent by the values and needs of the group. (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993, p. 25)

Indeed, the vital concepts of respect for self, compassion for others and service to humankind are present in both Nel Noddings’ “ethic of care” philosophy and the foundational adventure education literature.

The Ethic of Care

Before looking at some elements of Nel Noddings’ writings about care, it is important to recognise that Noddings sharply criticises the Western educational system. She asks serious questions about its foundations and argues for radical changes. Her vision is that the main aim of education should be a moral one with a focus on care. Despite her hard critique of the system, she argues that no matter what kind of principles or philosophy (e.g., progressive or traditional) one adheres to, care can still have a central place. She maintains we can have an alternative system that will let both traditional and progressive ways flourish, but the role of education is first of all to be responsive to the needs of the students (Noddings, 2005, p. ix-xvii).

The central idea of the ethic of care is that the living other is more important than any theory. Our role is to empower people and respect them as humans. We can have our own vision on how to raise and educate children but we must also respect other visions by showing care for people and ideas.

Defining Care

Noddings cites Martin Heidegger and describes care as the very “Being” of human life. We shall understand this term in a broad sense, and look at caring and being cared for as fundamental human needs. The concept is relational—that is, a caring relation is a connection or some kind of encounter between two human beings. For this relation to be called caring, both parties (carer and cared for) must contribute in characteristic ways. To be able to care, you must focus your attention, or as Noddings (2005) says “When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey” (p. 15).

McKenzie and Blenkinsop (2006) discuss the matter of how personal, universal or contextual care is and they come to this conclusion:

It seems reasonable to view the framework [of care] as both universal (to care is a fundamental human trait) and as situational (care differs depending on the particular context). (2006, p. 93)

We can then conclude that care can differ between cultures, within groups of societies and also according to class, gender and other determinants. But it is also a universal aspect of human life.

The main themes of Noddings’ (2005) *Challenge to Care in Schools* centre on how to build and conduct education in the spirit of the ethic of care. Her three central ideas are as follows:

1. We want our children to be happy and in good health.

2. We want to foster the multiple intelligences our children have based on their interest, not a tested talent.
3. We want to train children to do the things all our children must do, to live productive and acceptable lives. (pp. 44–47).



Underlying these points, Noddings points out that we still “need a scheme that speaks to the existential heart of life—one that draws our attention to our passions, attitudes, connections, concerns and experienced responsibilities” (2005, p. 47). Care can be developed in a variety of domains and can have many objectives. Noddings wants us to consider care for self, intimate others, distant others, animals, plants and the Earth, human-made environments and objects and ideas. With these threads that form the basis of care, and the threefold list above, we can redefine the curriculum of the schools.

The Centres of Care

Care, understood in Noddings’ sense, has four main centres, all of which must be addressed by education.

Care for self. Noddings places particular emphasis on four aspects of our lives that have to be attended to: physical life, spiritual life, occupational life and recreational life.

Care for intimate others. This centre revolves around mutual care of those who communicate the most, where equality should be the rule and everyone contributes. Noddings emphasizes equal relations between married couples and lovers, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Care for strangers and distant others. While our ethical understanding first develops within the private sphere of care for self and intimate others, we are also able to care for distant others based on this understanding. Social participation with individuals that belong to the group of “others” is essential to our desire to be acknowledged and respected by those not in our inner circle.

Care for nature, the human-made world and ideas. Care must be approached in a broad sense, and include care for animals, plants, the environment, practical objects, organization, maintenance and protection, and creation and preservation. Care for the world of ideas, such as mathematics and the arts, is also important.

“Teaching” Care

According to Noddings, it is advisable to develop within students the abovementioned centres of care by way of what she calls modeling, dialogue,

practice and confirmation. Originally, these methods appeared foreign to me, however, upon closer examination, I realised that people commonly apply these methods consciously and unconsciously, both in raising their own children and as professionals in relation to other people's children.

Modeling

It is important for students to experience, feel and see how to be cared for and how to care for themselves. We have to show them how to care, and how to be responsive to being cared for, in our own relationships with them and other people around us. The core of modeling is this: "We do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them" (Noddings, 2005, p. 22).

Dialogue

Dialogue is more than simply talking; it is an open-ended conversation where neither party knows the outcome in the beginning. Together a common understanding, empathy or appreciation is sought. Dialogue can be serious, playful or something else entirely, and it serves to connects people to each other. Dialogue provides us with knowledge about the other and creates an important foundation for trustful and caring relationships (Noddings, 2005, p. 23).

Practice

In moral education, we have to give children the opportunity to gain skills in care by giving firsthand experience. Attitudes and mentalities are, at least partly, shaped by experience. Practice is a core element in experiential learning and it is based on the assumption that all knowing must begin with the individual's relationship to the topic (Luckner and Nadler, 1997, p. 3). Noddings (2005) argues that we have to make the conditions right for practicing care and that "people are central to the setting" (p. 24). If we want both boys and girls to experience caring, we

have to plan for it, "it does not just happen" (Noddings, 2005, p. 24).

Confirmation

Noddings (2005) defines confirmation as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. She argues:

When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development. We can do this only if we know the other well enough to see what he or she is trying to become. Formulas and slogans have no place here. (p. 25)

The essential part here is to separate the behaviour from the person, in the hope that the person wants to do better, and believes (s)he has the chance to do so.

Analysing the Journeys

One of the primary difficulties I encountered in my research concerned the analysis and categorisation of certain instances of the care of distant others. The problem lay in drafting a precise definition of who can be characterised as a distant other in the minds of the teenagers. My view is that there are many cases where other teenagers who were in the "other class" counted as distant others, since they were not very familiar to one another. A more general understanding of a distant other, according to Noddings' conception, would be someone you did not know at all, although, in the social context on which the current analysis focuses, such cases were not available for study. As a result, I made the decision to categorise as "distant others," those people with whom a specific teenager was not very familiar.

Cross Table Analysis

I found it informative to review some factors of the HAJ and put them into the table used by McKenzie and Blenkinsop (2006, p. 100). The analysis here is framed in terms of McKenzie's and Blenkinsop's

(2006) approach, which in turn is based on Noddings' theories. The frame of the analysis was structured using field study

data extracted from two journeys as well as from interviews with administrators and focus groups of teachers and teenagers.

Cross Table: Centres of Care and Their Training

	Care for self	Care for intimate others	Care for distant others	Care for nature, the human-made world and ideas
Model	Teachers dress appropriately and eat healthy food. Teachers are positive, laugh and encourage everybody.	Regularly ask how the participants are feeling, if they are hungry, cold, or having a good time. Cook together and for others.	"We travelled as one group, no losers, only winners. We helped each other out." Example 1.	Provide the children with the opportunity to experience the highlands. Evoke their sensation of beauty and the sublime.
Dialogue	Discussion during breaks concerning the importance of personal care and about being responsible for one's clothing and nourishment.	Sharing stories in the evening, and recalling the day's events.	Showing consideration for those who move at a slower pace.	A conversation with a boy about the formation of the land. He informed me and I listened and provided feedback.
Practice	Reminding participants to not overly exert themselves. Encouraging healthy eating by letting participants prepare their own lunch box for the day.	Creating a culture of encouragement. Example 2. Help each other with cooking, cleaning and putting things back in their place.	Being considerate to others in the hut and getting to know people of other nationalities. Example 3.	Discussions about the importance of not leaving trash behind. Students articulating their opposition to the closure of the HAJ program Example 5.
Confirmation	Pride when the journey is completed.	Demonstrating leadership in difficult situations. Example 4.	Discovering that your help and encouragement can matter to others.	Experiencing and exploring the beauty of nature.

A Detailed Description of the Examples

Model and Care for distant others

Example 1: "We travelled as one group, no losers, only winners. We helped each other out."

The quotation in the title is extracted from an interview with Kristín (the teacher in charge of the journeys). I also strongly sensed that a great emphasis was placed upon this aspect of the journeys when I was observing them. Those who have journeyed long roads with large and diverse groups are acutely aware of the difficulties of keeping everyone together in one group, and how demanding such scenarios are for the leaders. It could be tempting to divide them into a slower and faster group. Here, the significance of the ethics of care is clearly displayed, crystallised in the fact that everyone wants to reach their destination. In other words, the teenagers must become aware of the needs (and abilities) of others and momentarily push their own needs to the side (e.g., by rushing to, or arriving early at, the hut). Therein are to be found the possibilities of learning and developing. All the teenagers know this is not a matter of competition; instead, the emphasis is on group solidarity and presence.

Practice and Care for intimate others

Example 2: Creating a culture of encouragement.

During the travels, the teachers frequently encourage the students and the students are likely inspired by this. Moreover, the teachers noted that the students develop between years and begin to encourage each other. Let us give voice to three girls in grade 10:

K: I think that the kids have matured a lot just over this year, and everyone helped each other out more than last year, the atmosphere was less competitive, they were instead encouraging each other.

T: And maybe stop if someone was almost giving up, and like: Hey, you can do this...

K: Also last year if they went over to and someone fell then he would be laughed at, now everybody stops and are like what happened. There was much more of that.

KB: There was more connection between everyone.

T: Yeah, and just everyone caring about each other.

KB: It wasn't just like our class and the other class. It was more like a single whole.

Practice and Care for distant others

Example 3: Show others in the hut consideration and get to know people of other nationalities.

After a group of girls had walked Laugavegur in 2006, two teachers wrote about the group's travels and then offered the story to their students. The following is a segment of the story that takes place after they arrived in a hut in Emstrur. In the hut they encountered a group of foreigners:

The girls made "friends," Germans and Italians, but the latter were rather impolite to begin with and laughed at the girls and made fun of them, but the girls don't ever give up so easily. They paid tribute to the performance by returning the laughter and finally buried the hatchet by inviting them to a conga-line around the house—at which the whole house fell into laughter, the conga-line was hilarious and everybody enjoyed themselves....There was festive food offered: Smoked lamb, red cabbage, green beans and mashed potatoes. The food was eagerly devoured and the leftovers were given to the friends in the next hut. They were so grateful that they came over to our hut and sang a multi-voiced German folksong. The choir consisted of five and four of them peered through the windows and laughed out loud. The girls felt they had to give something in return and sung Icelandic folksongs, which was well received by the audience.

Confirmation and Care for intimate others

Example 4: Demonstrating leadership in difficult situations.

When the occasion arose, a special award was handed out at the graduation of grade 10 for admirable behaviour or accomplishments. Here is an extract from a speech given at the graduation in the spring of 2007:

I want to return to the bicycle tour of grade nine. As I mentioned before, the weather was terrible one day during the trip. It is of immeasurable value on such occasions if someone within the group takes to encouraging his companions with positivity and a smile. I have an image in my mind of a girl who went down the infamous “ten minute hill” with her makeup trickling down her cheeks, but all smiles, showering her companions with words of encouragement. The girl’s name is Linda and she is one of two who will receive this year’s Highland Award, and they have indeed earned them. Another hero, though of a different kind, also partook in this bicycle tour. This individual is a master cyclist, and such masters have not necessarily garnered a whole lot of awards in this field, however, precisely when a group of kids had made it down the aforesaid hill, a bit tired and wet—and I had to wait for the others, and I felt, and knew, that Haukur could be trusted with taking a group of classmates under his wing and accompanying them to the hut in Hólaskjól. As I watched the group set out I felt that I did not have to worry about them. Haukur receives the Highland Award this year. And though two students now receive the Highland Award, I have never before felt that it was in fact the group as a whole who deserved to get it. So, once again, congratulations and the best of luck with your future.

Practice and Care for nature, the human-made world and ideas

Example 5: Students articulating their opposition to the closure of the HAJ program.

In recent years, there has been pressure to terminate the HAJ program. Some student participants were very upset by this and were adamant about having their opposition to the changes heard by those in power. In a transcript of a meeting of the Smáraskóli school council on the 27th of January 2010, the following is stated:

Elín observes that the school should establish its unique position in regard to other objectives if these mountain treks have become too expensive. Guðmundur notes the possibility of developing a relationship with church work. The students’ representatives are completely against the termination of the mountain treks. They are imperative for social life and for the development of each and all.

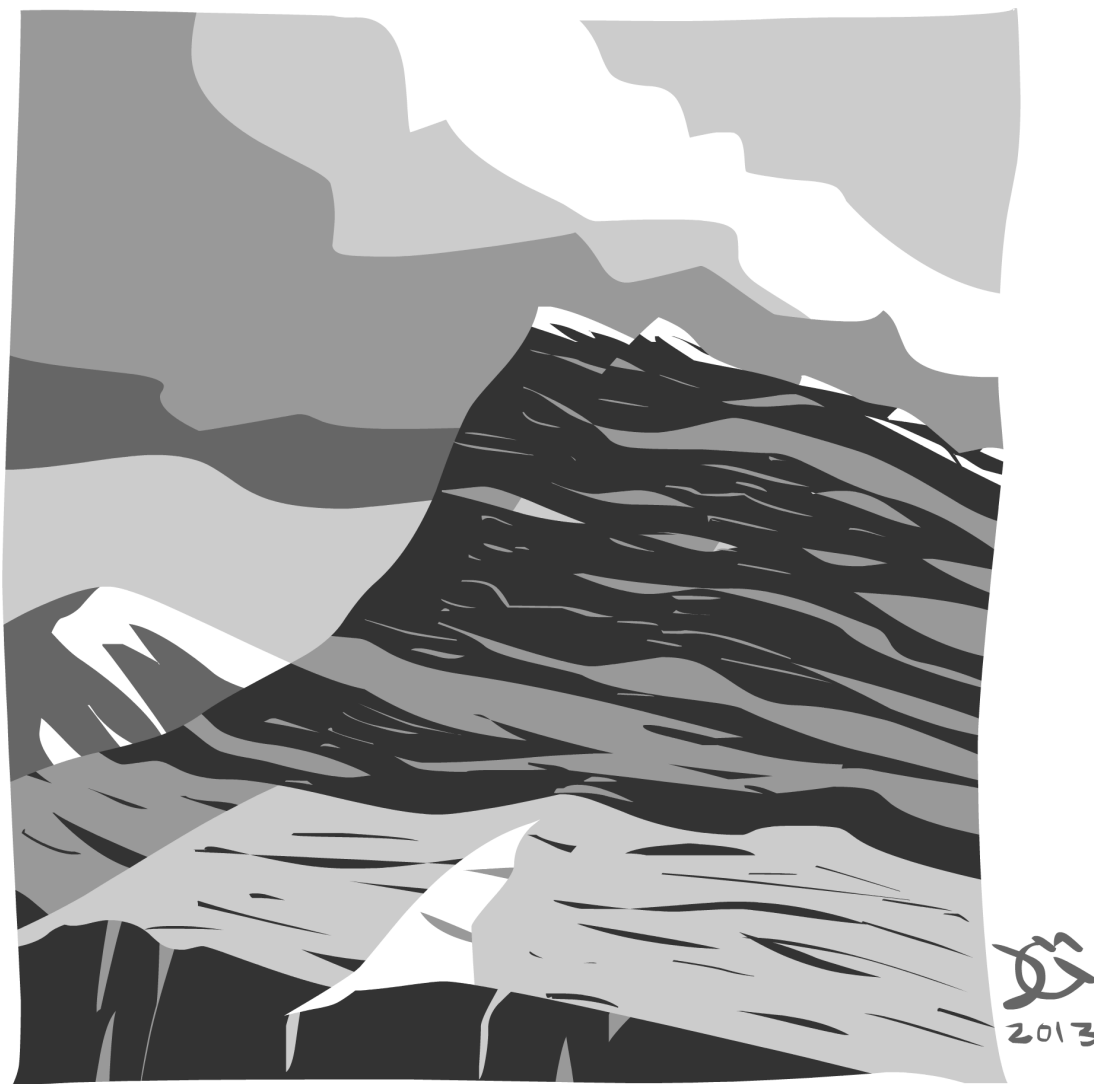
Elín and Guðmundur both represent the parents within the school council. The students representatives at this meeting are Arna Kristín and Lilja Dögg, and they are responsible for this aspect of the school work. A certain sense of ownership concerning this idea has developed among the students and students are prepared to defend the HAJ program.

Reflective Learning

The central conclusion of this analysis is that the HAJ program can produce ideal conditions for giving and receiving care. The strength of the program lies in the fact that all centres of care can be addressed: care for self, care for intimate others, care for distant others, and care for nature, the human-made world and ideas.

Professionals who participate in similar journeys must preserve these conditions and know how to apply ethics of care. This means that both the centres of care and the practical aspects of training—model, dialogue, practice and confirmation—have to be used in the drafting of the curriculum, organization of the travels and practice in the field.

The highland journeys are categorised as adventure education. The explanatory



model of the fundamental theories of adventure education is in many ways overly fixated on the “I” aspect of experiences, and has difficulty accounting for the “we” aspect of educational experiences and its relation to the environment and nature.

By analysing the HAJ program in terms of Noddings’ model, the focus is cast toward care—not solely the care for self, but also the care for friends, acquaintances, strangers, nature and ideas.

My belief is that this is all very simple. We have an expression in Iceland that applies well to the HAJ program: no matter what,

everyone is in the same shit or sun. In the same weather, eating the same food, sleeping in the same bunk and living in the same nature. In the highlands there is freedom and obligation, rights and responsibility. To live there you have to show trust and consideration and you will feel kindness and compassion in return.

References

- Aðalbjarnadóttir, S. (2007). *Virðing og umhyggja. Ákall 21. aldar*. Reykjavík: Heimskringla, Háskólaforlag Máls og menningar.



Beard, C. and Wilson, J. P. (2006). *Experiential learning. A best practice handbook for educators and trainers* (Sec. ed.). London: Kogan Page.

Ewert, A. (1989). *Outdoor adventure pursuits: Foundation, models, and theories*. Scottsdale, AZ: Publishing Horizons.

Halldórsdóttir, S. (2006). Hjúkrun sem fagleg umhyggja: Kynning á hjúkrunarkenningu. *Tímarit hjúkrunarfræðinga*, 1 (1), 2–11.

Hopkins, D. and Putnam, R. (1993). *Personal growth through adventure*. London: David Fulton Publishers Ltd.

Luckner, J. L. and Nadler, R. S. (1997). *Processing the experience. Strategies to enhance and generalize learning* (Sec. ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Books.

McKenzie, M. and Blenkinsop, S. (2006). An ethic of care and educational practice. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 6 (2), 91–106.

Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Smith, M. S. (2004). *Nel Noddings: The ethics of care and education*. Retrieved 23rd of August 2008 at www.infed.org/thinkers/noddings.htm

Jakob Thorsteinsson was a keynote presenter at the September 2013 COEO conference at Camp Glen Bernard. He is Department Chair of Leisure Studies & Social Pedagogy at the University of Iceland School of Education.

Editing support was provided by Patrick Byrne, Pathways Editorial Board.

Wind and Whales and Wildebeests

By Andy Kerr-Wilson

There is a place in my mind
Where I am connected to all things.
I see waves crashing on rocky beaches
I feel the rain dripping off fir trees in BC.
I hear the wind through the pines on
Superior shores.
And I am moss, and rock, and soil, and
sunlight.

There is a place in my mind
Where my legs pound
Across the African plains
With a 1000 wildebeests.
One amongst a single many,
I smell the dung,
I taste the dust.
I feel the fear of the lion
and the herd turn as one.

There is a place in my mind,
Where my lungs fill,
And I plunge,
To black depths with blue whales.
Singing stories across miles of ocean
Of long cycles and slow migrations
To mothers, sisters, brothers, children.

There is a place in my mind
where I stand, rotted
Down through ancient stone
To the heart of the planet.
Her pulse is my pulse.
Her breath is my breath.
And I am, we are, one.

But this is only a dream.
It is not true.
But there is a place in my world
where I teach the dream to others;
where I open their eyes, their minds, and
their hearts;
where I connect them to the land, the
water and the sky.
So that when they dream
They will dream true
Of wind and waves
Of whales and wildebeests
So that these things
Will always be true.

Andy Kerr-Wilson has been a wilderness guide for 40 years and a teacher of forestry and ecology for 20 years. Andy lives off the grid in a self-built, timber frame, passive solar home on nine acres of rock, trees and swamp in Eastern Ontario. He began writing poetry in 2010 and is an active member of the Lanark County Live Poets Society, representing his home town at the Canadian National Slam Poetry Championships in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Andy has spent the last 20 years teaching a four-credit, G12, integrated curriculum package at Carleton Place High School. Check out his blog at talbotprose.wordpress.com



Wilderness Secrets Revealed

By Connie Kavanagh

A review of Bourbeau, A. (2013). *Wilderness secrets revealed: Adventures of a survivor*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Have you ever dreamed of living off the land, eating wild mushrooms and berries, building a log raft and exploring parts unknown? Dreamt of testing your survival skills by venturing into the forest with only the most basic of gear and your wits to sustain you? If so, read André-François Bourbeau's latest book, *Wilderness Secrets Revealed: Adventures of a Survivor*. With a warm sense of humour and deep humility, Bourbeau relates the stories of his life as an adventurer, sharing his knowledge gleaned from a career of self-imposed survival experiments, excursions and teaching.

If you're looking for yet another how-to guide, Bourbeau's book will cause you to re-evaluate the validity of conventional survival techniques and tips under real-life conditions. Bourbeau has read the guides, tested the techniques, and discovered for himself what works and what doesn't. Some of his wilderness secrets are highly practical and clearly stated: seek shelter from wind; STOP when you're lost and mark your current location. Other secrets are just as clearly stated, yet more philosophical in nature: take good risks in life, not stupid risks; the worst risk of all is not to risk at all. These tidbits of advice may in the long run be just as practical. And some secrets, while not explicitly stated, are revealed through Bourbeau's engaging storytelling: keep your ego in check; consider who you are responsible to when leading group excursions; be aware of the hazards of fire and smoke.

With advice on how to survive hunger, thirst, blackflies and mosquitoes, hypothermia, loneliness, pollution, angry parents, floral suitcases, tourists, dates gone wrong, broken glasses, wearing a suit and tie, high heels, and other frightening and dangerous experiences, this book covers it all.

While Bourbeau's book may indeed inspire you to test the limits of your own survival skills, it may also satisfy your thirst for adventure from the comfort of your own couch, at least temporarily. While the idea of taking off with a group of students to Mexico to explore underground caves sounds enticing, the thought of possible death and permanent lung scarring due to histoplasmosis from infected bat guano may give you pause to reconsider. Either way, Bourbeau's entertaining and fluid writing style will take you with him on the adventure.

"With a warm sense of humour and deep humility, Bourbeau relates the stories of his life as an adventurer, sharing his knowledge gleaned from a career of self-imposed survival experiments, excursions and teaching."

One might say that Bourbeau is crazy for willingly subjecting himself to the torments of blizzards and blackflies, and the observation may not be too far off the mark. Yet Bourbeau has made good use of his personal experiences, teaching scores of other people wilderness survival skills, and training them to become leaders in their own right. With this new book, Bourbeau extends his wisdom to audiences previously unreached. Whether you're already an experienced survivalist, are hungering to become one, or have unwillingly faced survival situations beyond your control and lived to tell the tale, you will find a kindred spirit in André-François Bourbeau. Buy his book, *Wilderness Secrets Revealed: Adventures of a Survivor*, and read it before you embark on your next adventure.

Connie Kavanagh is on the Pathways editorial board.

Thoughts on a Writing Journey: Autoethnography in Outdoor Education Research and Practice

By Emma Brandy

We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world. — Buddha

It is with great thought that I share the following writing with you. As the quote above suggests, our thoughts play an integral role in the manifestation of our lives as human beings. I have found this to be an immensely important truth throughout the process of becoming an outdoor education (OE) practitioner and academic.

It is my hope that this piece will take you on a rich (albeit, short) journey to experience autoethnography (AE) as an alternative social science research methodology. To aid you in reading this article, the edited narrative pieces from my unpublished master's degree thesis, written to mediate between my mind and the world (Nicol, 2012), appear in italics. The regular text incorporates my back story as well as definitions and applications of AE within OE research and practice.

Thinking about Identity

When I think about outdoor experiences I feel an awakened sensibility. Just the word "Temagami" stirs up memories of my steady heartbeat during a long portage, my feet moving to an internal rhythm while dancing over tree roots, the complete calm felt while gliding through the water in a canoe. But does this awakened sensibility help me to better understand my own experiences? Or does it simply allow me to connect with an identity? Perhaps this identity—being a canoeist—frames the way I think about experience. So many canoe trips have had a powerful affective element to them—an embodied element. These elements make me question who I am and how I am internally linked to "place." Perhaps the canoeist identity simply helps me put an embodied experience into words. Perhaps identity linked with this affective capacity is part of what makes outdoor experiences so powerful for me.

My Story

In a world where we are constantly attempting to understand the self (or the many selves) and our identity, it is important to find places and experiences that help us do so. For me, canoeing has long been an outdoor activity that creates a feeling of being "at home" within me and with others. It has only been more recently that canoeing has evoked the feeling of being at home within environment.

Things started shifting for me in September 2010, when I embarked on a nine-day field course as part of my Kinesiology degree at McMaster. The focus was a five-day canoe journey in the Temagami region of Ontario. It was on this trip that I had what I like to call "my epiphany." I call it an epiphany because I was finally able to see and feel myself deeply connected to place. I recognized that this canoe journey created embodiment of self and identity. From my perspective now I can see that the reality of feeling tangibly connected to the world created a sense of urgency to more deeply understand outdoor experiences. How this feeling manifested at the time was through the pursuance of my master's degree in OE and a plunge into AE.

Re-structuring the Mind

I am struck by several questions when confronted with another piece of literature that fails to provide empathy towards the difficulty of understanding OE: Are the successes of OE due to our inability to accurately define or quantify the outcomes of programs? Do we really need to quantify them? Can we evade the cultural and investigational norms that perfuse research in our society? If we don't, will these norms ultimately affect the existence of OE programs in the future?

I am worried that the individual story is not important enough—not valued enough—within social science research, let alone society. Is a re-structuring of the mind needed in order to display the importance of OE so that society will understand and accept it? Are we bringing children into a society that does not promote individualistic thinking, nor acknowledge the relevance of individual experience? How can we foster agency within those who have not been given the opportunity to think for themselves?

There should be more room for exploring the individual mind in OE theory and practice.

and a lack of accounts illuminating specific places that have positively affected participants (Brown, 2008; Harrison, 2010; Nicol, 2012). I also found little process-oriented research. Because of this, I felt I needed to embrace the complex, emergent and situated nature of participant experience (Fox, 2008; Higgins & Wattchow, 2012). Through AE, I learned that I didn't have to exclude myself from the research, especially since my story was an outcome under investigation (Muncey, 2010).

AE is "a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9). It is both a process and a product. However, it is not as straightforward as it may sound. According to Spry (2001), "good AE is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal;

it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (p. 714). AE, as a methodology, holds self-conscious introspection (reflexivity) as invaluable, and proposes that the process of knowledge generation can enlist both the analytical and emotional brain spaces. This is where AE contributes greatly to OE research.

Through recognizing that research can be both emotional and analytical, AE takes research beyond traditional dichotomies. Seeking to understand personal experiences in OE programs through the reflexive, artful and rigorous crafting of AE is exactly what OE research needs. We need to better understand programs from the participant perspective. We need to address the individual nature of experience of OE programs and seek to create a knowledge base that tells a story.



A Place for Autoethnography in Outdoor Education Research

Through my reading of the current OE literature I noticed a paucity of research surrounding place-important education

Poetic Understandings

Lakes of change:

*I went to them and ran into the water; ran
until the water swallowed me whole.
I filled my heart with translucent light, and
calmed my mind to stillness.
The water sank deep into my skin.
When I emerged, steeped in matter,
my world appeared a changed shape:
wind-blown,
sun-bleached,
clearer.*

*Branches of thought dance gracefully among
the treetops of my mind,
pulled by wind and song.
Beads of clarity, strung together;
growing ever more.*

The Potential for Autoethnography in Outdoor Education Practice

The AE I crafted adds one specific story to the small pool of OE research that seeks to understand the nature of individual experience. However, the knowledge generated through it is intended for use within my own “sphere of influence,” or community, and cannot and should not be used to create wider generalizations. This is a pertinent contribution to outdoor and environmental education programs since many of them focus on this idea of community involvement (Elrick, 2007) and/or the development of participants’ awareness of the world around them (Higgins, 2009).

Could there be an OE program where participants focus on canoeing while also being taught how to strengthen self-awareness through reflection? Where reflexive journaling and creative writing exercises are experienced alongside paddling lessons? Where our inherent creativity as human beings is fostered (Muncey, 2010)? Development and execution of this type of program starts with the facilitator. AE encourages educators to embrace reflection, creativity and their own value systems that underpin

practice. Through self-realization, we can become more conscious practitioners.

Final Thoughts

I do not intend to claim that AE would be successful for every program, practitioner and participant within OE. What I do know is that the process of creating an AE has sparked a desire to be more aware of how certain experiences affect my life. Specifically, I find great learning comes from actively engaging with a reflective writing practice during or immediately after I am part of an activity. I find this practice to be most relevant to outdoor and/or environmental activities. Taking this practice beyond the writing and into my next experiential learning opportunity is where I see the most growth in myself. It is through this practice that I am able to articulate the transformational power of outdoor experiences.

“Could there be an OE program where participants focus on canoeing while also being taught how to strengthen self-awareness through reflection?”

American eco-philosopher and teacher, Joanna Macy, talks at length about her idea of The Great Turning, describing it as the current movement away from an industrial growth society towards a life-sustaining civilization. Macy (2013) states that,

the beauty of the Great Turning is that each of us takes part in distinctive ways. Given our different circumstances and... capacities, our stories are all unique. All have something fresh to reveal. All can help inspire others. And that’s why we need these stories. (p. 37)

It is important to understand that our stories have the potential to inspire others. This is where the true power of AE lies.

References

Brown, M. (2008). Outdoor education: Opportunities provided by a place-based approach. *New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education*, 2 (3), 7–25.

Elrick, M. (2007). Headwaters: The next stage in high school integrated programming. *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 19 (3), 14–27.

Fox, K. (2008). Rethinking experience: What do we mean by this word “experience”. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31 (1), 36–54.

Harrison, S. (2010). ‘Why are we here?’ Taking ‘place’ into account in UK outdoor environmental education. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 10 (1), 3–18.

Higgins, P. (2009). Into the big wide world: Sustainable experiential education for the 21st century. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 32 (1), 44–60.

Higgins, P., & Wattchow, B. (2012). The water of life: Creative non-fiction and lived experience on an interdisciplinary canoe journey on Scotland’s River Spey. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, DOI: 10.1080/14729679.2012.702526.

Macy, J. (2013). Hearing the call. *Resurgence & Ecologist*, March/April (227), 34–37.

Muncey, T. (2010). *Creating autoethnographies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Nicol, R. (2012). Returning to the richness of experience: Is autoethnography a useful approach for outdoor educators in promoting pro-environmental behaviour? *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, DOI: 10.1080/14729679.2012.679798.

Reed-Danahay, D.E. (1997). *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd.

Spry, T. (2001). Performing autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 706–732.

Emma Brandy is a Torontonion, but feels her heart has been left in the highlands of Scotland. After completing her Master of Outdoor Education degree at the University of Edinburgh, she has returned to her homeland to rekindle her connection to the land and the lakes.



Beyond the Surface

By Mark Gaynik

So often I am asked the question, "What do you teach?" I first try to answer that question with the seemingly straightforward, "I teach outdoor education." I sometimes get the reply, "Oh,...interesting." At this point I go on to describe the usual set of adventures I take my students on over the course of a semester, most often of the physical variety. "Oh, so you teach kids about camping" is the usual reply. I might, then, politely continue and explain how camping might be one thing we might do, but explain that it just scratches at the surface of what I actually do as an educator.

I gauge the conversation and, I hope, pique enough interest to entertain the question of *why* I teach this relatively uncommon field of study.

If I told the inquirer right then and there the magnitude of what I really do (or at least try to), I risk being there all day attempting to explain the complexities, connections, fundamentals and the incredibly holistic experience that is outdoor education. Of course, it is a risk that I am fully willing to take to defend my passion. It is about the experience nonetheless, so trying to

explain this multi-faceted field is like trying to explain the concept of 3-D in two dimensions. When it's an experience, you, well, have to *experience* it to fully understand it. Needless to say, it is a little more complex and multifaceted than simply "camping."



I often try to explain to prospective students what they are getting themselves into when they take my program. Students throughout the years have often reported that they got a lot more than they expected out of the program. I can explain all day how this complicated set of connections take place, *add y to z*, *carry the 7* and what comes out is something so valuable, so

real, and often so life-altering that you just have to be there—and *do* it—to fully grasp it. This often creates a difficult reality in OE as we have to convey the essence of our work to administrators, potential funders, parents, colleagues, and so on that haven't had an experience of outdoor education. I love when I come across those that have had that experience and thus fully know what the experience means. These are the people that tell you how great of an experience they had, what they learned about themselves, how it affected them in so many ways for the better. You almost never hear the opposite. These people know the true value of this type of experience for students. It remains the reality, however, that we have to "stay the course" and continue to do what we do as outdoor educators to change the perception of outdoor education for those who may not have had the benefit of firsthand experience.

So what is it that I really teach? I teach kids how to find themselves, how to have passion for wild spaces, how to practice stewardship, how to be healthy, how to challenge themselves, and how to follow their hearts, and their guts, and how *not* to follow the other "sheep" like so many of their peers. The outdoor education field is so lush with opportunity for growth, and peace, that to never experience it is to

never experience the meaning beyond the surface in so many areas in life.

I can't imagine never experiencing real relationships, or the spiritual connections these outdoor experiences provide. The deeper connection to self, to others, and to nature are all inevitable and amazing outcomes of outdoor education. I love watching my students go through the revelations that these experiences have created within them. Hearing in their journals what inspired them, or how they think differently about things, or better yet experiencing the many "serenity" moments with them in the very places they happened are some of the reasons *why* I do what I do.

I feel so lucky to be able to do what I do for a living. I *love* what I do. It is real. It is emotional. It is so much more than meets the eye. It is outdoor education.

Mark Gaynik teaches the Enviroventure Program—a three-credit environmental leadership program—at Nantyr Shores Secondary School in Innisfil, Ontario. Mark is a former McMaster University Kinesiology and Queen's University Outdoor and Experiential Education graduate.





The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Please visit our website at www.coeo.org/membership.htm
for more detailed descriptions of the benefits of each
membership category.

Please print and fully complete each line below.

Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss) _____

Street Address _____

City/Town _____ Province/State _____ Postal/Zip Code _____

Telephone Home (____) _____ Business (____) _____

E-mail _____

Type of Membership *(Check one box)*

- ☐ Regular \$50.00
- ☐ Student/Retiree \$35.00
- ☐ Family \$60.00
- ☐ Library \$60.00 (Subscription to *Pathways* only)
- ☐ Organization \$125.00

United States orders please add \$4.00
International orders please add \$12.00

Journal Format *(Check one box)*

Please select the format in which you
wish to receive your four *Pathways*
journals:

- ☐ **PDF version** through password
access to the COEO website
- ☐ **Printed copy** through postal mail
- ☐ **Both a digital and a printed version**
(an additional fee of \$5.00 applies).

COEO Membership is from September 1 to August 31 of the following year.

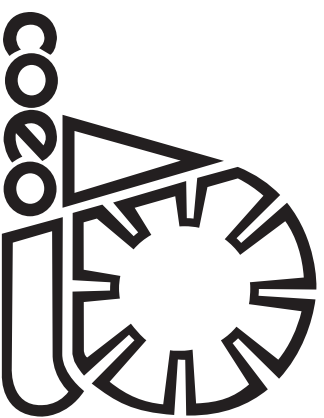
Every **Ontario member** of COEO will be assigned to a region of the province according to the county where (s)he lives.

Central (CE)	Welland, Lincoln, Hamilton-Wentworth, Halton, Peel, York, Simcoe, Metro Toronto
Eastern (EA)	Victoria, Durham, Peterborough, Northumberland, Hastings, Prince Edward, Renfrew, Lennox and Addington, Frontenac, Leeds, Grenville, Ottawa-Carleton, Lanark, Prescott, Russell, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry
Northern (NO)	Parry Sound, Nipissing, Muskoka, Haliburton, North Bay, Patricia, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Algoma, Cochrane, Sudbury, Rainy River, Timiskaming
Western (WE)	Essex, Kent, Elgin, Lambton, Middlesex, Huron, Bruce, Grey, Dufferin, Wellington, Waterloo, Perth, Oxford, Brant, Haldimand-Norfolk

Please send this form with a cheque or money order payable to

Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

c/o Sport Alliance Ontario, 3 Concorde Gate, Toronto, ON M3C 3N7



Return to:

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

c/o Sport Alliance Ontario

3 Concorde Gate

Toronto, ON

M3C 3N7