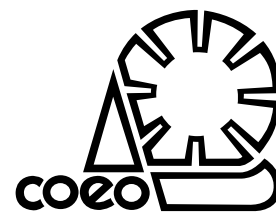


# Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF  
Fall 2014, 27(1)

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



# Pathways

## COEO

Formed in 1972, the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario  
c/o Sport Alliance Ontario  
3 Concorde Gate  
Toronto, ON M3C 3N7  
[www.coeo.org](http://www.coeo.org)

## *Pathways*

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

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ISSN: 0840-8114



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## The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario Board of Directors

**President:** Allyson Brown  
The Bishop Strachan School  
298 Lonsdale Road, Toronto ON M4V1X2  
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[kyle.clarke@queensu.ca](mailto:kyle.clarke@queensu.ca)

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[karenokrafka@yahoo.ca](mailto:karenokrafka@yahoo.ca)

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[esseryr@uwindsor.ca](mailto:esseryr@uwindsor.ca)

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102 Plaza Drive, Box 63012, Dundas, ON L9H 6Y3  
[kevin@adventureworks.org](mailto:kevin@adventureworks.org)

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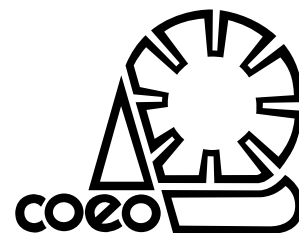
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[lk64@queensu.ca](mailto:lk64@queensu.ca)

**Membership:** Chris Ockenden  
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937365 Airport Road, PO Box 95, Mansfield, ON L0N 1M0  
[ockydoky@yahoo.ca](mailto:ockydoky@yahoo.ca)

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THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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## Pathways Editorial Board

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2631 Concession #7  
RR#4, Uxbridge, ON L9P 1R4  
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connie.elizabeth2@gmail.com

**Zabe MacEachren**

Faculty of Education,  
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### Managing Editor:

**Randee Holmes**

randee\_holmes@sympatico.ca

### Layout and Design:

**Karen Labern**

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Wow—25 years of *Pathways*! Lots of issues, lots of corresponding and lots of editing. But mostly, lots of learning and fun. Personally, working on *Pathways* issues has kept me feeling—well—in the loop on outdoor education in Ontario, Canada and abroad. To produce “years” of issues along with many others of the editorial board (particular thanks to Kathy Haras who was also at the head of the trail for a number of years) you have to be wide eyed. You have to be watching for new relevant themes and contributors while nurturing established relationships. You need to have one foot in Ontario with COEO members and the other foot exploring contributions from “beyond our borders.” In short, working on *Pathways* is a wonderful interactive learning experience with people and ideas in outdoor education.

*Bob Henderson*  
Editor

To celebrate *Pathways*' 25th anniversary, we are thrilled to present readers with this extended theme issue: *Pathways for Reflection and Dialogue: Looking Back for Directions Forward*. For this issue we have selected and reprinted a range of articles from the *Pathways* online archives and invited a short response from educators within our professional network. We endeavoured to include a mix of articles covering a breadth of topics relating to outdoor education. This required that we work within, yet push beyond, the journal's page limitations. Thanks to COEO's Board of Directors and *Pathways*' Managing Editor, Randee Holmes, for making this happen!

We were able to contact most authors of the archive articles contained in this issue for permission to reprint. Thank you to all authors for your willingness to engage with us in crafting this collection. We hope COEO members receive these pages as an invitation to explore the *Pathways* archives, and perhaps consider preparing a response for publication in a future issue. It is our view that critical reflection and respectful dialogue are seeds for innovation and requisite processes in shaping the future of outdoor education in Ontario and beyond. And on that note, please join us in celebrating a quarter century of *Pathways*! Happy trails.

---

*Bryan Grimwood and Scott Caspell*  
Guest Editors

*Bryan Grimwood is Assistant Professor at the University of Waterloo. His research and teaching focuses on human–nature relationships in contexts of leisure, learning and livelihood. Bryan can be reached at [bgrimwood@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:bgrimwood@uwaterloo.ca)*

*Scott Caspell recently completed the MEd program at Lakehead University. These days Scott spends his time guiding in the Polar Regions, paddling rivers in the Ottawa Valley, and working with Outward Bound Canada. Scott can be reached at [scottcaspell@hotmail.com](mailto:scottcaspell@hotmail.com)*

## A Note from the Managing Editor

Articles included here from earlier editions of *Pathways* have been reproduced in their verbatim original form. Although conventions of language and style have, in certain instances, changed since the date of original publication, out of respect for the authors and to authentically reflect the conventions of the time, the articles have not been updated to reflect today's norms and practices.

Another successful fall conference has been and gone. I don't know about you, but I am already missing the sense of camaraderie, thoughtful discussion and the autumn colours that were starting to become electric up at Bark Lake Leadership Centre.

The weekend started off on an inspiring note with a Back to Nature pre-conference on Friday. This workshop served to provide tools to educators with the aim of paying it forward in order to share their knowledge with colleagues interested in incorporating environmental education and nature experiences into their practice.

Emma Brandy, Meredith Davy and the rest of the organizing committee did a wonderful job organizing the conference. Grant Linney, Simon Beames from the University of Edinburgh and Lisa Nisbet from Trent University delivered engaging presentations to the whole crowd, while a long list of talented presenters hosted workshops throughout the weekend.

I would like to take the time to thank Lindsay Cornell, Ruth Annis and Chris Walker for their work on the Board of Directors as well as welcome incoming Directors at Large Ryan Essery, Liz Kirk and Shawn Stetson.

We have an exciting year ahead as an organization and I am proud to be working with such a talented Board of Directors. The conference AGM launched COEO's renewed Mission and Vision, which can only be brought to life through the valuable contributions of the membership in the areas of Strategic Action for Building Leadership Capacity of COEO, Information Sharing and Resource Development Strategy, Networking and Mentorship Program (Intergenerational

Roots and Shoots), Accessibility and Diversity Plan, Operation Outreach, and an Advocacy Campaign. Opportunities for projects and sub-committees are plentiful, and your proposals and involvement are encouraged! The 2014 President's Award winner, Deb Diebel, said it best in the monthly newsletter when stating, *"It is exciting to think of the possibilities for moving COEO forward with the energy and ideas of everyone who has committed to our happy and creative organization. I am so thankful to be involved, and excited to see what you can bring to the table, as well! Giving back is important, and I promise each and every one of you who chooses to get involved that you will also take something away from the experience that you will cherish."*

Whether to help out with conferences, or supporting COEO in any other way, we welcome you to contact COEO's Volunteer Coordinator, Karen O'Kafka, at [volunteercoordinator@coeo.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@coeo.org). We are also lucky to have Karen continue to chair the Make Peace With Winter conference, and she would love to hear from anyone interested in becoming part of the organizing committee.

Scott Caspell and Bryan Grimwood have worked hard to put this very special issue of *Pathways* together to celebrate the fact that *Pathways* is a quarter of a century old! The themed issue celebrates how far the journal has come, paying tribute to past articles and celebrating current contributions. A reminder of the energy behind membership involvement, collaboration, ideas and passion is infectious.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with you this year!

---

*Allyson Brown*  
COEO President

**Sketch Pad** – Jill Addington Greenwood is a home school educator from Thunder Bay Ontario. She took the photo that appears on page 15.

Helena Juhasz is a children's book author-illustrator with a soft spot for cartoons and graphic novels. She is also the Illustrator Co-ordinator in Vancouver for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) and an avid cyclist and skier. Her art appears on the cover, pages 4, 6, 11, 13, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 32, 35 and 40.

## Environmental Education: Looking to the Past for Future Direction

By David Baird (1991), *Pathways*, 3(3), 14–19.

There is no question that the last three years have seen more of an environmental consciousness-raising among the general population than any other time in the history of mankind. Unlike the anti-nuclear movement of the late seventies and the eighties, the environmental movement (of which the nuclear question is still an important part) can easily be embraced by most people regardless of their political viewpoint. From business leaders

scrambling to “green” their company products and practices, to political leaders struggling to position their party’s platform under the “green umbrella”, environmentalism is both politically and socially fashionable.

Close behind these political and industrial interests are the school

administrators and educators who must translate these new environmental interests into curriculum guidelines.

As environmental and experiential educators, many of us have seen the ebb and flow in trends over the last thirty years. Recent media reports highlight some of the preliminary stages in environmental awareness (i.e., recycling, energy education) being carried out across the country. But as many Environmental Education teachers know, these basic actions have been implemented to various degrees for the last two decades. Are we now as a society rediscovering the wheel that Environmental Education teachers have been demonstrating for the past twenty years? Have we indeed made progress? Has the last twenty years in the schools’ environmental studies curricula been a total failure? Or has success been random and coincidental, dependent on the charisma of individuals working within a system that frequently and inadvertently confounds their best efforts? In light of the renewed interest in environmental curricula in many provinces and states, it is useful to reflect on the international origins of Environmental Education to see if we have strayed from the original ideals.

### Foundations for Environmental Education

Many of us have been actively involved in teaching environmental education, becoming thoroughly engrossed in the material we present to our students without taking the time to gain a firm philosophical foundation of the discipline. As a result of this negligence, we have spent a great deal of our energy and time, as the saying goes, reinventing the wheel. It is interesting to note that some of the most concise philosophical discussions of environmental education were laid down more than eighteen years ago in documents that, unfortunately, have had limited circulation



in the teaching field. We should reflect on the aims of Environmental Education as they were first established.

Environmental Education as a discipline grew out of the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972). After this landmark meeting, major goals were set and further conferences were planned. The Belgrade Conference (1975) and Tbilisi Conference (1977) developed a set of premises to guide environmental education. The major premises were as follows:

1. The rate of social and cultural evolution is faster than the rate of biological evolution. Therefore biological evolution cannot cope with the environmental imbalances brought about by sociocultural evolution.
2. Environmental problems are often complex and require the expertise of various disciplines for their solution. To learn about the environment in the natural setting likewise requires an inter-disciplinary approach.
3. Environmental problems should be seen, first, in their local context so that the individual sees their relevance to him, and second, in their global context so as to impress on the individual their magnitude and pervasiveness.
4. The human population, more than any other living species, has wrought damage to the environment and, therefore, it should be held responsible for corrective actions that will hasten the recovery of damaged environments and prevent the destruction of others.
5. The welfare and continuing existence of humankind on earth depends on the values people have concerning: regard and consideration for others, particularly the less fortunate; care and protection of humanity's resources; and a strong drive to actions that serve humanity as a whole and improve the environment.
6. The behaviour of people towards their natural and built environments is the overt expression of values and attitudes and understanding and skills.

7. A harmonious, ethical relationship of man to his/her environment, having environmental conservation and enhancement as its theme, can be developed from early childhood onwards through formal and nonformal education. (Jacobson, 1985)

Supporting the above mentioned premises are a series of guiding principles that were developed at the Tbilisi Conference. Although they are generalized statements, they do provide a broad window into the diversity of concepts Environmental Education embraces. Any environmental curriculum must adhere to the following:

### **Guiding Principles of Environmental Education**

1. The environment should be viewed in its totality, blurring political, cultural and physical boundaries since each part affects the others.
2. An interdisciplinary approach best fits the study of the environment and its interacting and interdependent parts.
3. Environmental Education should be a lifelong process, both in-school and out-of-school.
4. Environmental Education programmes should develop in each individual ethics or a code of behaviour leading him/her to: work for the development and utilization of natural resources with the least destruction and pollution; seek the improvement of the quality of life for everyone by eradicating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, human exploitation and domination; reject the development and economic growth of a nation that may lead to the collapse and debasement of another nation, and the lavish consumption of a few to the deprivation of many; utilize technology not only for self-gains and a life of luxury in the short term but also for the economic stability and survival of human kind in the long term; and consider in his/her consumption of non-renewable resources the needs of future generations.

5. Since values and attitudes lie at the core of a person's ethical behaviour, Environmental Education should go beyond cognition (i.e. awareness and comprehension) into valuation and attitudinal formation.
6. Environmental Education should begin with the local, current and most relevant situation and issues and should move on to issues and situations that are national, regional, and global in scope. The forms should be an enduring and never-ending process, and the concepts, principles and values of general applicability.
7. Experiencing, through participation in real and simulated environmental situations, makes for greater impact and, therefore, more lasting learning of environmental concepts and values. In the pedagogic sense, local environmental problems are a good starting point for learning environmental attitudes and values (Jacobson, 1985).

### Environmental Education: A Need for Values Transmission

If there is one major reason why Environmental Education has not expanded to its full potential, it would have to be our inability to view environmental issues from a systems perspective and of course, structural constraints. Somehow during the last ten years, educators began compartmentalizing the Environmental Education field into "packaged" courses more closely aligned with the sciences than other subject areas. Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Economics and Psychology all had their own unique way of dealing with environmental issues. The particular environmental phenomenon was isolated by the narrow focus that each discipline had towards the problem.

One of the basic aims of Environmental Education is to enable students, teachers, and the general public to understand the complex nature of the environment as this results from the interaction of its biological, physical,





social and cultural aspects. Education should provide a clear awareness of the economic, political, and ecological interdependence of the modern world. Environmental Education, in any school milieu, should develop favourable attitudes towards the improvement and quality of the environment. This must be done for effective Environmental Education. And it cannot be accomplished by any one individual teaching from the narrow perspective of a single discipline.

Through the late seventies and early eighties, government education ministries implemented courses at all grade levels from a more ecological perspective. In high school curricula, new course with names like Environmental Science were created, with the result that the teaching of environmental issues become the domain of the science department. Many teachers of the humanities were left with the impression that they did not have the scientific background to instruct their students in the “new” environmental studies direction. Nothing could be further from the truth. If we are to make a change in students’ behaviour, it can be argued that subjects that deal in the effective domain (Art, English, Drama) can be just as effective (if not more) in teaching environmental values as can science-based curricula.

Most teachers will agree that changes in behaviour patterns with regard to our environment cannot be brought about until a majority of the members of a given society have freely and consciously been exposed to and assimilated more constructive attitudes and values concerning the environment. Environmental Education strives to clarify and correlate the concerns and values – ethical, aesthetic, and economic – of individual teachers who will be instrumental in effecting change. Environmental Education relies heavily on values transmission, and values transmission can and must be taught using the humanities. To limit the mandate to one discipline is to invite failure!

Environmental Education must be interdisciplinary in approach. The fact that there are so many environmental problems

today is partly due to the system’s failure to train people for the accurate identification and effective solution of concrete, complex problems. In support of this statement, the following points should be brought into discussion:

1. Traditional education, which is too abstract and fragmentary, has been unsuccessful in preparing individuals to face the ever-changing complexity of reality. An education geared to the specific problems of the environment implies, on the contrary, that the different aspects of knowledge combine to provide the explanation for complex realities.
2. Truly interdisciplinary education is an arduous undertaking that has to be approached gradually. It presupposes ease of contact between educators made possible by the provision of a new type of training for those concerned and by appropriate organization of the teaching system so as to take into account the conceptual and methodological affinities between different disciplines.
3. The need to devise a type of education that will meet social needs effectively brings us to another of the main characteristics of environmental education: the fact that it is open to the surrounding community. An education that seeks the solution of concrete environmental problems implies not only the development of knowledge and techniques but also, and more important still, practical action by the community in specific environments. It is undoubtedly in everyday community life and face to face with the problems that they find there that individuals and social groups will come to feel concerned with the quality of the environment and will act with resolve and perseverance to preserve or improve it. (UNESCO, 1986)

#### **Traditional Structures: Traditional Attitudes**

For environmental education to be truly effective in the next decade it is important

that each individual teacher and supervising administrator be cognizant of his/her own values with regard to environmental issues. It is critically important to stress the need for inter-disciplinary approaches to environmental learning, particularly among secondary teachers who are too often constrained by the philosophy and style of formal education and the parameters of their own disciplines. As A. Young and M. McElhone (1986) demonstrate:

“Firstly, we must critically examine education practise, we often disregard the extent to which formal education may be a cause of our problems. Many educators today can be accused of using classical elitist approaches which are old fashioned and irrelevant to the vast majority of school children. Many children throughout the world should be receiving an education which uses the richness of the environment to develop a wide range of cognitive skills rather than focussing on disciplines and specialization for selection purposes ...”

The traditional approach to education is also challenged by the process of environmental problem solving. The complexity of most, if not all, environmental issues mean that they do not fit within the boundaries of any one discipline but are trans-disciplinary in nature. Once again teachers are expected to deal with a situation that is radically different from their own experience and training. It is not surprising, therefore, that, worldwide, the response of the formal education sector to the environmental challenge has been slow and piecemeal. It has to be accepted that the educational system, like the rest of society, has not been able to adapt quickly enough to rapidly changing environmental conditions. This situation is unlikely to change dramatically in the next decade and the world cannot wait for a new generation of politicians and decision-makers to emerge. It may be necessary to develop an educational strategy that is prepared to challenge existing economic principles and practice, questions traditional social and political goals, and also critically examines the personal ethics that are considered the norms of many societies (Young and McElhone, 1986).

If the educational system is to meet the demands of the next decade, then there must be a complete re-examination of secondary school structure as it pertains to environmental education. They should not be the domain of one department, but a collage of ideas and experience from art, science, geography, English, and economics.

Until school administrators are cognizant of the need for tangible input from three or more departments into environmental education classes, the wheel will continue to spin in place. The “turn around decade” as the 1990’s have been called, must work with drastic changes in societal values. It is up to all of us to be open to input from our colleagues – from *all* disciplines. Only then can we hope to provide our students with a (truly effective) curriculum.

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Editors’ note: *At the time of publication, David Baird had just resigned as the Director of the Bill Mason Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies Centre and en route for a posting in Africa.*

## Response to Baird (1991)

By Grant Linney

David Baird's article provides an interesting perspective on the "ebb and flow in trends" within environmental education. For Baird, writing in late 1991, these trends reach back to the 1970s, when at least three major international conferences (Stockholm, Belgrade and Tbilisi) occurred that helped to bring new life and hope to environmental education. I shall now highlight several of Baird's points and examine each within my perceptions of the present day context.

- The flourishing environmental movement of the early 1990s could, in Baird's opinion, "easily be embraced by most people regardless of their political viewpoint." Everyone was jumping on the green bandwagon.

U.S. It seems that we perpetually cycle back to the myth that economy trumps ecology.

- The study of the natural environment and the problems we have afflicted it with requires an interdisciplinary approach. (Baird at one point goes as far as describing it as "transdisciplinary.") "The narrow approach of a single discipline" cannot possibly do justice to the intricate complexity of natural settings impacted by the interaction of physical, biological and sociocultural factors. The lenses of the arts need to be utilized as well as those of the sciences. The goal must be the development of values and attitudes as well as cognitive understanding and skills.

The foregoing words—and the lack of follow-through—are just as applicable today. The Ontario Ministry of Education's *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow* document (2009) urges that environmental education be infused across the curriculum and yet offers no support to already-overwhelmed teachers. With the notable exception of those few and far-between outdoor education-based multi-credit high school interdisciplinary programs, and those few elementary teachers who actually take their students outdoors regularly and within walking distance of their home schools, the gap between stated noble intentions and realized outcomes remains very large.

- To ensure personal meaning, environmental problems should be first viewed within their local context and subsequently in a global context that portrays their "magnitude and pervasiveness."

Since the time of David Baird's article, place-based education (for me, best exemplified by the writings of David Sobel) has arrived in the educational lexicon. Once again, with the exception of relatively few bright shining lights, this firsthand



Such is not the case these days, when our present federal government prefers to frame environmental issues such as the development of the Canadian tar sands and its supporting infrastructure (i.e. pipelines) in deeply polarized terms: Either you are pro-jobs and pro-Canadian economy or you're in the camp of "environmental radicals" funded by left wing groups in the

“experiencing, through direct participation in real and simulated situations” within one’s community remains more in the realm of theory than practice.

- “Environmental education should be a lifelong process, both in-school and out-of school.”

Of course it “should.” It is only natural to align one’s environmental awareness with one’s growing capacity (from child to teen to adult) to absorb and understand on more than the cognitive level. It is only natural to continuously expose and re-expose the young and older to their natural sustaining surroundings. *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow* nobly declares such intentions. And, yet again, as with the 1980s so with the current teens, the gap between intention and reality remains. Our successes now appear to possess the same feature of being “random and coincidental” that Baird notes between the 1970s and the 1990s.

- The 1970s and 1980s, according to Baird, largely defined environmental education as a focus on environmental problems and what to do about them.

Some things never change and, in this particular case, such a narrow and fixed definition is to our detriment. *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow* does the same when it consistently equates environmental education with “environmental issues” and with what it describes as “environmental problems and solutions.” This is in stark contrast to Rachel Carson who, in her 1965 landmark book *The Sense of Wonder*, wrote the following:

It is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. Once the emotions have been aroused—a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and unknown,

a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love—then we wish for knowledge about the subject of our emotional response.

To which I will humbly submit that the soil occasionally needs to be reworked and replenished—these affective experiences also need to be repeated for the older students and adults. In 2014, we have the writings of the likes of David Sobel, Louise Chawla and Richard Louv to further underline this essential need for affect first, before we can move to caring, a thirst for knowledge and a desire to protect. While the other messages from the time of David Baird’s writing remain just as relevant today (and, unfortunately, still largely ignored), here’s a misdirection that remains and that desperately needs revision. I agree with the author that we need to look to the past as well as our present but, in both cases, we need to be more selective about whom we listen to.

My final point concerns the relationship between outdoor experiential education (OEE) and environmental education. Even though David Baird recognizes that his audience for this article is both environmental and outdoor educators, he, like many others before and since, does not make explicit what I see as an immutable connection between these two endeavours. It makes no sense to be an environmental educator and not take one’s students outdoors. It also makes no sense to be an outdoor educator and to fail to acknowledge one’s role in inculcating environmental values in one’s students. These deficiencies are unfortunate and all too common, both in the past and the present. It is high time that we recognize and more consciously act upon these connections.

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*Grant Linney has been sharing the outdoors with children, youth and adults since the 1970s. He has also had a variety of roles within COEO since its inception.*

## Thinking Like a Planet

By Skid Crease (1991), *Pathways*, 3(5), p. 22–24.

In an eloquent conclusion to one of the chapters in *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry states,

“In relation to the earth, we have been autistic for centuries. Only now have we begun to listen with some attention and with a willingness to respond to the earth’s demands that we cease our industrial assault, that we abandon our inner rage against conditions of our earthly existence, that we renew our human participation in the grand liturgy of the universe.”

A recent Peel Board Outdoor and Environmental Education Conference created the slogan, “Earth whispers...are we listening?” Most outdoor educators who have tried to gain a perspective on the massive environmental issues facing us now and into the next century, would probably argue that the earth is not whispering—it has been screaming for the last two hundred years. As educators approaching the third millennium, our greatest challenge will be to teach our children, indeed our entire human community, to listen to the voices of the earth and to move beyond knowledge to understanding, beyond understanding to responsible action in all of our person/planet relationships.

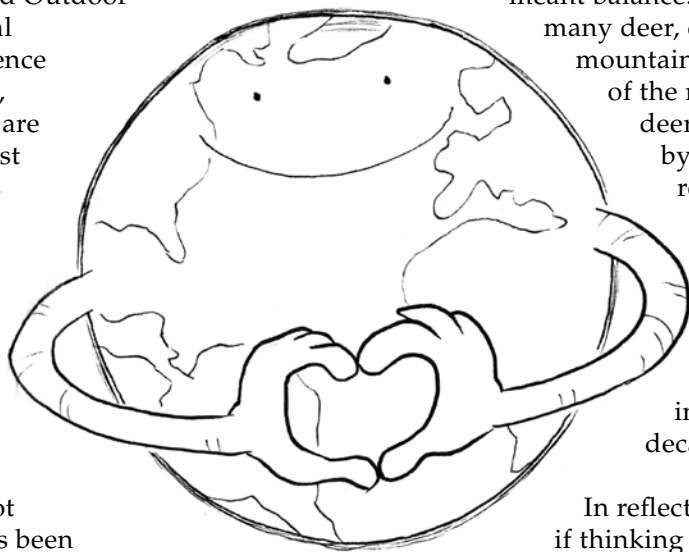
Just as I was beginning to focus my own global perspectives in 1989, I reread the “Thinking Like a Mountain” essay by Aldo Leopold in his classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. In this beautiful essay, Leopold describes being on a deer hunt, when he

and his friends come upon a wolf pack. In those days, when the thinking was that fewer wolves meant more deer and therefore no wolves meant a deer hunter’s paradise, the young hunters opened fire. Leopold recalls getting to the side of an old wolf just in the time to see that “fierce green fire dying in her eyes.”

That event changed his life. In a sense, it rid him of his earth autism. When he saw that fire die, he realized that only the mountain has lived long enough to understand the howl of the wolf. The mountain understood that the howl meant balance. No wolves, too many deer, destruction of the mountain flora, erosion of the mountain. “A deer pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years but a mountain range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades.”

In reflection, I decided that if thinking like a mountain was a transformational event for Aldo Leopold in 1910, then Thinking Like a Planet would be necessary for us in the 1990’s. How do we teach our children to move beyond shallow ecology and the quick environmental fix to feel the essence of their connection to the planet? How do we teach them to listen to the voices of the earth?

In outdoor education, we have the opportunity to be closer to those voices than many of our classroom-bound colleagues. We work the seasons connected directly to natural systems and if any group should understand those systems it should be



us. However, sometimes I sense that in our relationship with the earth we have been more like the grasshopper than the ants. What deeper inner journeys do we need to take and what will be our guiding principles as we collectively begin Thinking Like a Planet?

Father Thomas Berry has observed that we are passing out of the Cenozoic and entering the Ecozoic Age. We are now at that period of flux where the former has not yet been buried and the latter not yet baptized, giving a certain edge to the ancient Chinese proverb: “May you be born in interesting times.” Berry states in *Befriending the Earth*, that there are several guiding principles that will become conditions for survival in the Ecozoic Age:

1. The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.
2. The earth exists and can survive only in its integral functioning.
3. The earth is a one-time endowment.
4. The human is derivative, the earth is primary.
5. Unlike the Cenozoic, the Ecozoic Age will require our responsible involvement in almost everything that happens—accepting, protecting and fostering natural processes.
6. We will need new ethical principles that recognize the absolute evils of biocide and geocide.
7. We will need a new Ecozoic language and legal system based on planetary primacy.

Education in the Ecozoic, Berry contends, will be the telling of the universe story in all its richness, how it began, how it came to be as it is, the human role in the story, everything.

Matthew Fox, another eco-theologian, shows that these principles begin in our earliest myths and that we need to bond ourselves and our children to a new cosmic creation story. In *Creation Spirituality*, Fox describes how a creation story “grounds us in the history of how we arrived here, and it awakens awe and wonder that we are

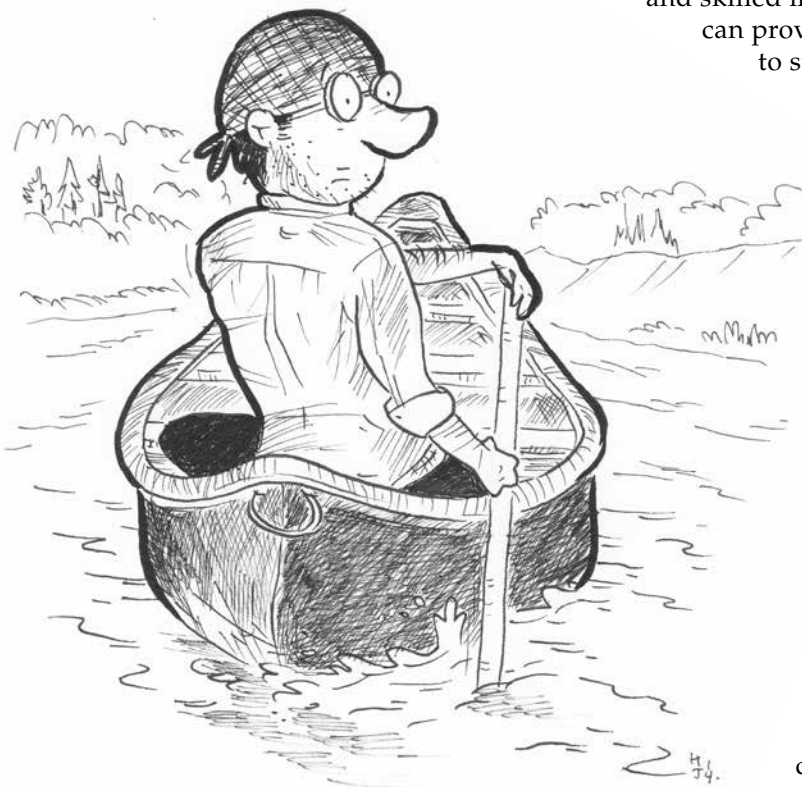
here. When this happens, we are less subject to manipulation, to trivia, to titillating distractions, addictions and consumerism. Awe and amazement are the results of a rich creation story, and the awe we feel should encompass our very selves, since every self is part of the unfolding creation story. We feel our interconnection with other creatures and peoples on this surprising planet in this amazing universe of one trillion galaxies, each with 200 billion stars.”

It is not surprising that both of these men have been placed under vows of silence by the Vatican. This is revolutionary thinking to promote a cosmology that does not reflect the anthropocentric viewpoint that the universe revolves around human needs and wants. To begin to think like a planet, to move away from the anthro- to the ecocentric perspective, requires a dramatic shift in some of our most sacred belief systems and social structures. Barry Commoner, in *Making Peace with the Planet*, calls this a massive transformation wrought with potential conflict. He says that to bring the present structure of the technosphere into harmony with the ecosphere means totally “redesigning the major industrial, agricultural, energy and transportation systems” and that such a transformation directly conflicts with current short-term economic and political interests.

While conflict may be an inevitable part of the move from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric worldview, failure to do so will be mutually destructive for human society and all planetary systems. The premise is simple: you cannot have a healthy humanity on a sick planet. In order to achieve a healthy planet, humans must begin to listen to the earth and rediscover their place as members of the earth community. We must begin to move from a dominator to a partnership society as described so clearly in Riane Eisler’s *The Chalice and the Blade*.

As outdoor educators, we are often teased about the preponderance of cooperative games and everybody wins “coopetitions.” But the skills learned in these activities, and in our initiative courses and adventure

programs, are exactly the skills needed to move us towards that partnership model. In order to move through this period of social systems conflict, humanity will need all of the “Silver Bullets” it can possess. When we take that deep breath, and begin to think like a planet we recognize the absolute importance of cooperative community as a survival mechanism for the twenty-first century.



Many brilliant minds have given voice to the current state of our person/planet relationships and what we need to do to move into harmony. Fritjov Capra says we need to develop an “ecological perspective”; Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich call it a “conscious evolution” towards a new world with new minds; Jeremy Rifkin declares that we need to “reparticipate with the biosphere”; Bill Devall says we need to develop an “ecological self” with a “sense of place”. David Suzuki states empathetically, “Ecological awareness informs us of our place within, and dependence on, an intact

planetary biosphere that must subsume all other human priorities.” I think we all, collective and integrated, need to begin to think like a planet. We need to tell our creation story as a planet and a people. We need to celebrate our unique humanness with pride and to take our places as simple members of the complex earth community with great humility and awe.

I believe in my heart of hearts that outdoor educators, close to the voices of the earth and skilled in cooperative social interaction, can provide the leadership needed to successfully bridge the chaos that exists between the

Cenozoic and Ecozoic Ages, between an anthropocentric and an ecocentric worldview. The force that will drive us will be love—a love of the earth, ourselves and our children and all living things yet to come.

When Thomas Berry was asked why he was putting himself through all the conflict and turmoil of challenging sacred traditions and dominant worldviews, he answered quite simply, “The children.

I cannot bear to leave the children a planet any more desolated than I can help. So I say simply that I do it for the children.” For the children and

with the children, I hope that we can all begin thinking like a planet.

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Editors’ note: *At the time of publication, Skid Crease worked at Mono Cliffs Outdoor Centre, from where he had a tremendous outreach with the Periwinkle Project.*

## Response to Crease (1991)

By David Greenwood

Skid Crease published “Thinking Like a Planet” in 1991, the year of the first Gulf War. I was opposed to that war by instinct, along with all the other wars I’ve been around to see—from Vietnam to the War on Terror Without End. War is bad for people, for the outdoors, for education, for the planet and, for that matter, for thinking. The reality of what sociologists are calling “a culture of perpetual war”—war on poverty, war on the earth, war on climate change, war on drugs, war on racism, war on Al Qaeda, war on despair—forms a troubling contemporary context for Crease’s provocative question: “What deeper inner journeys do we need to take and what will be our guiding principles as we collectively begin Thinking Like a Planet?”

In search of these principles, Crease drew on the inspiring wisdom of Aldo Leopold, Thomas Berry, Matthew Fox and Riane Eisler, each of whom can certainly help readers develop their own deeper ecological journeys. Perhaps the ethic of Crease’s 1991 article, and much of the outdoor/environmental education of 20 some years ago, is best summed up in his citation of David Suzuki: “Ecological awareness informs us of our place within, and dependence upon, an intact planetary biosphere that must subsume all other human priorities.” Much strident environmentalism, from the early pioneers of the 1960s to the climate activists of today, echoes this same sentiment. While I do not disagree with Suzuki, Crease, or others in their desire to promote ecological conscience and consciousness, I want to point out in this brief essay that championing “thinking like a planet” by “subsum[ing] all other human priorities” may not be the best strategy.

Environmental/outdoor education has matured significantly since the early 1990s. One of the most important developments is a growing understanding and articulation of the interconnection between social and ecological problems. The Earth Charter (see

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org>) is perhaps the largest educational/political project ever to address the question of what principles should guide human societies toward a more sustainable relationship with social and ecological systems. The Earth Charter was in part a response to the failure of political will to change the unsustainable course of human society witnessed at the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro back in 1992. What the hundreds of multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic and multinational drafters of the Earth Charter knew is that “subsuming all other human priorities” to a white North American person’s version of what it means to be “green” would be both bad policy and bad pedagogy.

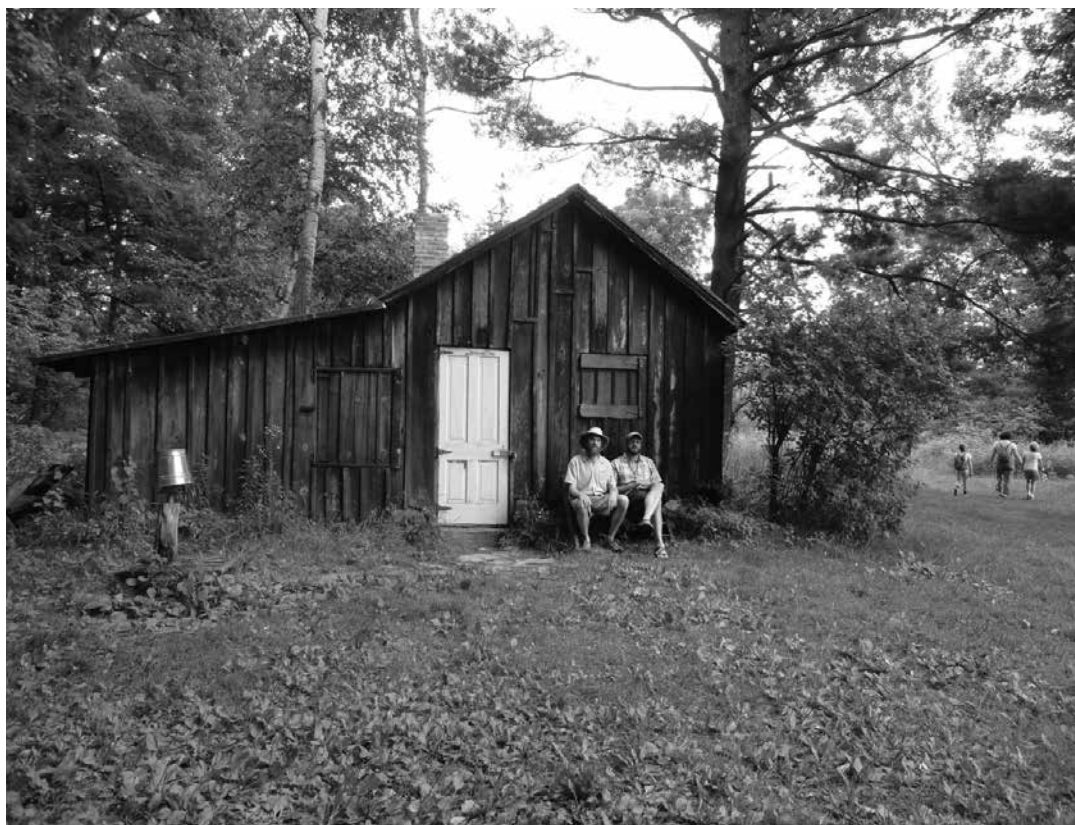
*Learning works best when the learning connects to lived experience.*

The social world, the process of education, the planet itself—all of these are much more diverse and complicated than that. People’s priorities develop from their lived experience and cannot be dictated by proselytizing green outdoor educators, especially those so zealous as to believe that they have “the answer for humanity.” I am not saying that Crease or Suzuki present themselves this way; I am saying that ecological fundamentalism remains a serious problem in the field of outdoor/ecological education. As any good experiential educator knows, Dewey was right: Learning works best when the learning connects to lived experience. And the lived experience of the people on this beautiful and besieged planet is incredibly diverse. All around the world, people are responding to the social and ecological challenges they face in diverse and inventive ways that are changing the course of their lives and the lives of others—human and more than human.



In the mid-2000s, author Paul Hawken published *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*. “Blessed unrest” is Hawken’s term for the millions of groups and individuals around the world that are taking action and creating change in the interest of social and economic justice, ecological restoration and sustainability, non-violence and peace, and indigenous and civil rights. As with the Earth Charter, Hawken’s call for principled action is rooted in an ethical understanding that these social and ecological issues cannot—from the perspective of lived experience—be disentangled. Moreover, acknowledging the blessed unrest of diverse people and cultures suggests that meaningful change may depend on building alliances, as well as conceptual frameworks, that are capable of embracing a multitude of human priorities rather than subsuming all human priorities to an incomplete vision of the so-called “ecological.” Try to get through the day thinking like a planet and you realize pretty soon that you have to think like a person, a person who lives someplace, in relation to vast networks of social worlds.

While certainly environmentalism has seen many important victories over the last 20 years, it is also depressingly true that for many ecological indicators things are worse than ever. Most of us are aware of the sobering data on climate change, food and water insecurity, ocean acidity, species extinction, loss of outdoor experience and so on. Clearly, sounding the alarm of a purely



“ecological crisis” has not been enough to change people’s environmental thinking and behaviour. That is because people live in diverse social worlds, wracked by multitudes of concerns.

Therefore, I believe that the development of a stronger socio-ecological ethic in outdoor/environmental education over the last 20 years is a step in the right direction. We may know what the data is, we may feel passionate about the best course of action, but there is a piece in between we need to attend to: What do people actually care about? Thinking like a planet won’t help us answer that question. Just as our aims and principles as outdoor/ecological educators need to be responsive to what people actually care about, we also need to create experiences that help people develop care and connection for the ordinary environments and places they see every day, but rarely pay much attention to. We need to think together about what these places mean and how they connect us to our wider and more diverse social and ecological environments. Any place will do, but you

could start with a place such as the barren and neglected school grounds you pass by in your car, just outside the fenced building where kids and teachers suffer inside with the bureaucracy of learning all day long.

“Thinking like a planet” has an appeal. Thomas Berry’s writing in particular inspires me to listen to the Earth more closely, to pay attention, to let it work its miracles on the soul. However, like Wendell Berry, I think we need to avoid the hubris of “planetary thinking” and advocate something smaller scale: we need to “think little,” do more locally and build our principles outward from there. Like Berry, Aldo Leopold, who penned the phrase “thinking like a mountain,” knew how to pay attention to the details of his immediate environment. This is how his ecological insights and commitments developed, not through some abstract principle of planetary connectedness, but from deep, direct, sensory experience with land in a specific place—and lots of quiet reflection.

As I write this, I am planning my second pilgrimage in four years to the Leopold family “Shack” and the Aldo Leopold Foundation in south-central Wisconsin. I visited the Shack with my family a few years ago (see photo) and spent a glorious day walking around the huge oaks and pines the Leopolds planted, reading the landscape for all we could see, smell, touch, taste and hear, and floating in the Wisconsin River during high water. I have a friend who now directs a nearby camp. He says that this time we can get inside the Shack, where we will sit, commune with Aldo’s legacy and reflect on the interconnection of people, place and planet.

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*David A. Greenwood is a Canada Research Chair in Environmental Education and the Director of the Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies at Lakehead University.*

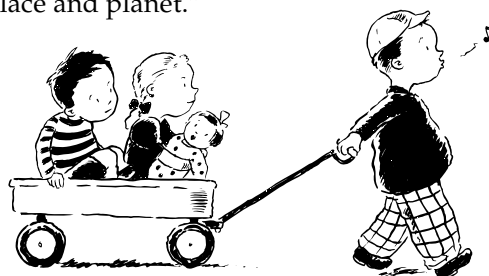
## Response to Greenwood’s Response to Crease (1991)

*By Skid Crease*

Given the year of publication, and the audience for whom it was intended, “Thinking Like a Planet” is as relevant today as ever. I had a wonderful exchange with David Greenwood as he was about to head off to Aldo Leopold’s cabin. It was only fitting, since it was Leopold’s essay on “Thinking Like a Mountain” that led me to write my original piece.

“Thinking Like a Planet” was never intended to be “the answer” to solving the issues facing humanity and our planetary systems. It was simply designed to offer a different perspective. How would our human behaviours be any different if we could think like a planet? If Leopold had been thinking like a mountain, would he have shot that wolf?

The idea remains as clear and true now as it was then: Try a divergent way of thinking, put on a different pair of sandals and take a new path; see what that experience brings to your heart and mind and soul, and then apply it to your actions. As always, my life’s motto remains: *Think globally, act locally, care personally.* And then, as Greenwood concludes, sit with friends in a sacred space and “reflect on the interconnection of people, place and planet.”



## Plants as Mentors: Hearing What the Green is Saying

By Louisa Carl (1997), *Pathways*, 9(4), p. 4–5.

The last rays of autumn sun have faded from the rustling leaves, so I can only see the burgundy, orange, and yellow tones of trees settling in for winter when I close my eyes. Wind sweeps past the branches of oaks and pushes the wall of my tent taut. As my fellow travelers drift into sleep, a steady thump and rattle of falling acorns overtake the hum of voices. In this pre-dream state I remember and honour what we are doing here.

This group of Audubon Expedition Institute (AEI) students is studying and living in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. We learn, work, eat, sleep, and play outside. Surrounded by trees, shrubs, and mosses that support a host of insects, birds, and animals, we are immersed in the landscape. It is a prime way to *experience*, not just study, the ecological links and cycles of a forest. When it rains, we are wet as the leaf litter. When the sun shines we bask on rocks with the lizards. This close proximity to nature brings us insight and lessons about our human choices.

"Hey, let's have a fire! There's wood all over the place." Others chime in excitedly, spurred by the ashes of an old fire and nostalgic memories of campfires past. As the idea moves toward action, Mick calls, "Wait! All the wood lying around only looks dead. See, there's lichen and moss on it. There are termites and beetles in it. Can't we let it stay here and wear down into soil?" "Ah, it's just a few bugs. Why do you always have to look so closely?", scoffs Ken, kindling in hand.

A lively discussion follows; human desires are weighed against respect for the life that lives in this place all year, moving at its own pace. I ask, "What about the roots of plants under our fire? Or the branches and leaves above it? What will rise into the air as smoke?" We turn the fire impulse into an ecology lesson, trying to think of all the

connections between our potential fire and this woodland grove—how we will affect it? Why do we want a fire anyway when there is a waxing moon? Which needs get precedence? Ultimately we decide not to make a fire under so many low hanging limbs.

Another day, Doug Elliot, a Smokies resident, naturalist, writer, and homesteader leads our group around the woods near his home, pointing out plant after plant: "That's a paw-paw, Latin name is *Asimina triloba*. The fruits are great. Taste it. Hah, not ripe yet." He casts it to the ground and Jane picks it up and sniffs it. "Here's blood root, has a red dye in its rhizome, and is also medicinally useful for ringworm and as a mouthwash. And here's tulip poplar; note the silvery green bark and golden yellow fall leaves. The bark makes baskets like this one on my back. You slice off some from one side to avoid killing the tree." He takes out a knife and demonstrates, cutting lines to expose the silky inner cambium of the tree with sure motions.

As Doug rattles off literally dozens of plant names, uses, and histories, everyone is plainly enthralled. He is a walking encyclopaedia of information now held by only a few in this world of convenience marts and all night pharmacies. It dawns visibly on several faces that you can indeed live off the land without depending on imports and monocrops, or even farms. Later that day we sit and talk about our time with Doug. "Wow! I want to live like him—have my own land, live simply, and be close to nature," Sue beams. "But what if we all did that? Can ecosystems sustain the populations we have now?" wonders Andy, "In the National Parks it's illegal to gather wild food. They'd bust us if we did it, and even if they didn't, other people might see us and follow our lead and then what? There'd be no woods left!" A silence

falls. Jesse finally breaks it, “There aren’t any simple answers, are there?”

Metaphors from nature begin to weave into our conversations as each night under the trees turns to day: “Just wait like a seed for the right conditions, Matt, and you’ll get people to play football with you. You’re trying to force it. Be patient,” Kim suggests. “When trying to assess your work in a course, think of it as a tree. Are you top-heavy or lopsided? Are your roots deep or shallow? What events shaped your growth and form?” I ask, offering a visual and now familiar analogy for the complexity of transformative learning at midterms.

The landscape informs our learning, language, and mood. Students deeply examine how natural systems function, and how we as humans are part of these

systems. Consciousness of our impact begins to guide our choices. People develop the ability to hesitate and consider the larger whole before acting, even when the motive is to “live simply”. Each student leaves this semester able to grapple with this irony: a complex view of our connection to nature is the basis of “a simple life”. They carry in their memories the rhythms of the land. Fall colours will remind each one of expanding ideas and understandings; dropping acorns recall sleeping under stars, open to the sky.

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*Editors’ Note: At the time of publication, Louisa Carl was one of the field faculty of AEI, a travelling experiential college program offering undergraduate degrees in environmental studies and graduate degrees in environmental education.*



## Response to Carl (1997)

By M.J. Barrett

The title of Louisa Carl's article, "Plants as Mentors: Hearing What the Green Is Saying," caught my imagination and my academic attention. I read it closely, looking for voices of the plants among her written words. They may be there, but if so, they are subtle in their presentation—I can't find them. Carl writes of students immersed in landscape, of the ones who notice, and the ones who know. She speaks of students grappling with human desires, and the impact of these desires on "the life that lives in this place all year." She writes of transformational, experiential learning, and of how "the landscape informs our learning, language and mood." But she does not speak, as she might have, of what the plants literally have to say.

I re-read the instructions for this response. Write, they say, not to critique the article, but to write in a way that "reflects on the relevancy of the article in today's educational (and socio-ecological) climate."

The pursuit of a different way of being in the world has been a long time passion of mine, and the question "what if we actually listened, and heard what the trees, plants and animals had to say?" has guided my academic pursuits. This year, while on sabbatical, I am collaborating with Indigenous Elders to explore ways to deepen the human–nature connection through human–animal/human–nature communication. As an animist and scholar, I keep wondering what will happen to our teaching when we take literally the notion that the natural world is able to speak (Abram, 2010; Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013.) What if Carl's students were taught this is not only possible, but quite normal? How might their observations, and actions, change? What would they talk about as they weighed their own desires in conversation with the snails, trees and rocks who inhabited the places through which they were travelling? I wonder if Carl and her students were literally listening to the

plants, but like so many, were unsure of the implications of saying it out loud in a culture where such communications are left to those who are, well, a little bit crazy.

It is now time to take seriously, and literally, the idea that the earth speaks. It is embedded in poetry, art, music and some prose. It is normal in many cultures and for many people. Just recently, I hosted a workshop taught by a professional animal communicator. Mary J. Getten, the workshop instructor, makes her living from communicating with animals, at a distance, telepathically. She also talks with plants and all of nature. For her, as well as many of the students in the class and the members of our Indigenous advisory team, hearing what the "green" has to say is a familiar occurrence. This kind of "hearing" does require practice, however. I left wondering what kinds of conversations Mary's students will be puzzling over next time they travel in and through places.

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*M.J. Barrett is a professor in the graduate School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan. Her research weaves together expertise in environmental education, animism and multiple ways of knowing.*

## Introducing Spiritual Dimensions in Outdoor Education

By Bert Horwood (1989), *Pathways*, 1(2), p. 5–9.

Environmental education has failed so far to change the way our culture treats the earth. The explanation I explore in this article is a spiritual one. I claim that one central reason for our failure to make a difference is that we neglect to teach the spiritual elements of environmental relationships. It is these elements that provide the motivation to treat the earth differently. Spiritual dimensions can be taught at an effective (although simple) level without offending established religious dogmas and sensitivities.

Ian Robottom (1987) and his Australian colleagues have written a detailed account of educational, political and social factors which they think explain the failure of environmental education. They show how reforms have floundered because of half-hearted implementation schemes and neglect of the social issues that matter most. Robottom's book illustrates that the intellectual processes of teaching and learning about the environment fail to make the environmental issues come to life. Their proposed solution is to make environmental education much more political than any other school subject. The proposal is not satisfactory because it neglects the existing strong connection between curriculum and political processes. More of the same is not likely to make a difference.

It is clear to every observant person that there is continuing degradation of local and global environments. As Bill Mason, eminent artist, paddler and environmentalist, said in a conversation shortly before his death from duodenal cancer, "We've surrounded ourselves with a sea of chemicals and they'll eventually get us." (Raffan, 1988.) The thousands of children and young adults who receive outdoor and environmental education each year for the past twenty years appear only to have made the situation worse. We have made smarter, better informed polluters.

This gloomy view is supported by the Report of The Conservation Council of Ontario (1986).

The picture does not need to be dark. Both teachers and students need to assimilate into their lives models and examples which would help to alter profoundly the ways we treat the earth and each other. What we do must make a lasting difference. Adding intellectual and technological content to the curriculum has failed. Appealing to science to repair the damage done by misapplied past technology is a solution doomed to failure if there is not change in the disposition of the people. You can't make a new hole by digging the old hole deeper. It is significant that the huge advances in science and technology of the past thousand years have not been matched by any significant development of moral or spiritual knowledge.

The low value our culture places on spiritual and emotional components of our environment is vividly demonstrated by Barry Lopez (1988). Forty-one sperm whales were beached on the Oregon coast in 1979. The decent responses of a few local people were almost completely lost in the mob of sensation-seekers, drunks, hoodlums and media promoters. Scientist treated it as a bonanza opportunity to dissect whales. Lopez's final remark about the human reaction is:

As far as I know, no novelist, no historian, no moral philosopher, no theologian had been on the beach. No one thought to call them or to fly them in. At the end they would not have been allowed past the barricades. (p 146)

It could make a difference to pay attention to the spiritual domain because it drives most of our actions. People act out of their deepest conviction and feelings far more than out of intellectual knowledge. It is no

accident that the words “motive,” “motions” and “emotion” all have the same root. Fortunately there are examples of people whose spiritual values lead them to live environmentally harmonious life-styles. Bill Mason provides the most accessible example. He was a man of deep Christian faith, but other people have come to positions similar to his within other religions; dogma does not matter. Bill Mason loved the land and knew his place in it. He learned to understand, to respect, and to teach better treatment of the shared home of all life. He discovered that native spirituality had something important to say. What a switch! Here was a devout Christian who sought to learn from another spiritual system rather than to correct it. The result is best seen in Mason’s film, *Waterwalker*. Bill Mason chose to learn from the native people because they know best how to live in this land without destroying it. His idea was not that we should become Indians, but that we should incorporate their spiritual insights into our lives.

One aspect of the native perspective relates to the idea of ownership. Mason (1980) expressed it this way:

It might seem like we own the earth, and we certainly act that way, but I don’t believe we do. I think this lack of sensitivity towards the natural world is a result of our alienation from it. We don’t see, hear, or feel the land anymore. We only see it from the point of view of what we can do with it. (p. 194)

Another important aspect of native teaching is that the earth is the mother of life, that the earth and the biosphere are equally infused with life and with the divine spark. Living things are thus related to each other as close kin. Dolores LaChapelle (1988, p. 117) quotes Luther Standing Bear:

The Indian loved to worship. From birth to death he revered his surroundings. He considered himself born in the luxurious lap of Mother Earth and no place was to him humble. There was nothing between him and the Big Holy. The contact was immediate and personal.

Boyce Richardson (1975) quotes a Cree hunter, Isaiah Awashish. “The land, the trees have to be respected. The animals live off the trees, and if there are no trees there are no animals and the Indians suffer” (p. 9). And later, Boyce cites a remarkable petition presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs, “...we believe only the beaver had the rights to build dams...” (p. 84). Chief Dan George (1982) said, “We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive” (p. 56). The consequence of this is to make us behave respectfully, even affectionately, toward the earth and our relations.”



It is possible to introduce spiritual elements in outdoor education classes. This can be done in ways which will not offend most religious doctrines. The approach, in general, is to develop activities which are directly emotional and spiritual and which have only a minor intellectual element. The emphasis is not so much on knowing as on feeling that the earth is the mother of life, that we are cousins of the fungi, the herbs, the insects and the other animals, and that we can learn how to behave respectfully

and lovingly toward them and toward each other.

Respectful behaviour may be superficial at first. But when we take it more seriously, the discrepancy in using things like throw-away, non-degradable, non-renewable implements (for example) becomes apparent. This was evident at the 1988 Annual Conference of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario where one could feel the rising discomfort at the persistent use and trashing of styrofoam cups. With discomfort comes the urge to find a better way, itself not an easy or obvious task. Eventually we should learn how to serve drinks to large numbers of people in a good way, a way that respects both our needs and the needs of our shared home.

To develop the feeling and conviction that the earth is sacred one must learn to see the earth, not as an “it,” but as a “you”.

Indians addressed all life as a “thou”—the trees, the stones, everything. You can address anything as a “thou” and if you do it, you can feel the change in your own psychology. The ego that sees a “thou” is not the same ego that sees an “it.” And when you go to war with people, the problem of the newspapers is to turn those people into “its.” (Campbell 1988, p. 78)

To start the process, students can develop awareness of special places. Most of us already know locations where we feel especially well. A good introductory exercise is to have each student find a spot outdoors and just sit there for a time, feeling the sense of place. There are no observations to make, only being at home there. This is a simplified, less sustained version of “magic spots” as described by Van Matre (1979, pp. 188–190).

The deliberate omission of “observations” is critically important in this activity. We have trained ourselves and our students to be good scientific observers. Being observant

is a virtue. It is essential to escape from the mode of observing as a detached objective on-looker. So, at first, ensure that students are not asked to watch for anything, nor to report on what they saw, heard or smelled. (This is a slight variation from Van Matre’s practice.) Later, observation can resurface in a different, more subjective form, much like the observation of the trapper whose life is intimately intertwined with his territory and where he sees and knows each new deadfall, each mossy bank.

Another way to approach the spirit of the land is to hug a tree. Get comfortable, don’t feel sheepish, and hug a tree for some time, say fifteen or twenty minutes. Allow the subtle motions, scents and sounds of the tree to wash over you. Tune into the tree as a living thing, a relative. Then hug another tree, changing size and species. For some people, it is a moving experience to alternately hug a hardwood and a softwood tree.



At the introductory stage, it is important to emphasize relationships. The earth and all the living things are our kin. We are related. A method of recognizing the relationship is to thank each living thing for the gift of its life when we take that life away. It may seem strange to us, but humans in other cultures do this routinely.



The practice of giving thanks to the earth and to the living things we kill derives directly from Native American practice. The idea is that we are the recipients of a gift or “give-away” from the earth. The gift, like the energy of the sun for example, is a kind of grace. It is something that we cannot possibly earn, deserve or repay. This kind of give-away is not like a Christmas Card or gift exchange where reciprocity is expected. The only thing we can do is to tell the giver that we know what is being done for us and then to enjoy it. We must also be ready, in our turn, to give-away our own lives to the

*We must also be ready to give-away our own lives to the biosphere.*

biosphere (LaChapelle, 1988, Chapter 2). Thanking the beings that give away to us is not easy to practice. But the fundamental shift in orientation I’m writing about eventually demands it. The spiritual dimension in outdoor education leads inescapably to discovering ways to say “thank you” to trees we cut, water beetles we collect, cows we eat and so on. A deep change in attitude and action is involved. Think how forestry might be different, if each tree were thanked for the gift of its life before starting the chain saw. An example which illustrates Indian practice assimilated and transformed into scientific and spiritual terms is given in Figure 1.

There is much more to it. Other kinds of activities which develop spiritual perspectives include stories, songs, dances and ceremonies. The cultural diversity of school populations must be respected. Increasing attention to multicultural factors means that great demands will be made on outdoor teachers’ knowledge, ingenuity and creativity to adapt activities to which students can respond effectively. There is no going back to our various cultural roots any more than we can turn ourselves into stone age people. The only direction to go is forward and the voices from the past inhabitants of the land are our only guides.

Beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty to the right of me, beauty to the left of me, beauty above me, beauty below me. All our relations.” (Adapted from Navaho and Sioux prayers.)

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Editors’ Note: *At the time of publication, Bert Harwood taught courses in outdoor and experiential education in the Master of Education Program at Queen’s University.*

## Response to Horwood (1989)

By Bert Horwood

When I wrote this piece, it was normal on the Petawawa River to hear maybe eight different species of birds and upwards of 20 individual birds during the dawn chorus. In the early summer of 2013, I heard two individuals from two species. This personal observation, combined with general scientific opinion, convinces me that humankind is still in wrong relationship with the earth. The efforts of outdoor educators to move us toward a better relationship was failing then and has continued to fail ever since.

The argument in the article is sound: namely that people act, not from knowledge, but from emotions and spiritual values. The key observation in the article—that the graduates of our outdoor education efforts make things worse—remains true today. When the thousands and thousands of our students, and we ourselves, make choices in business, travel, voting and policy to support exploitation of the biosphere, it is clear that if we ever had a mission to make a difference, it has failed.

The article, however soundly argued, is naive because it is based on a hopeful belief that education in deep spiritual dimensions could change people's choices. It is also based on erroneous assumptions. One assumption, obviously false, was that education through precept and experience could instill values of right relationship. Another false assumption was that best educational practice could overcome the powerful teaching effects of example and deeply embedded cultural values.

Outdoor educators, like their society, make personal and professional choices primarily based on convenience, pleasure and comfort. The wider culture, which promotes economic growth at all costs, cannot be changed by tinkering with curriculum. Most outdoor education programs operate with a carbon footprint larger than the reasonable carbon share of

the participants. Most of us teachers make lifestyle choices that do not set an example of right relationship with the biosphere for our students. "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are . . . (Dumbledore in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.) You can't have a tough education in a soft society.

Of course, I continue to hope. There are individuals who live in right relationship with the biosphere. There are coalitions trying to reverse societal norms. But so far as I can see, they have no perceptible influence on others. And so far, I haven't practiced at all well what I have urged others to do. The problems that triggered this 1989 article are greater than ever. Perhaps teachers who feel moved to promote change could seek out those individuals and groups to find potent allies for a deeper, wider and more exemplary cultural revolution.

Finally, the anger that drives the above paragraphs is painfully mixed with gratitude that the editors have considered my work worth repeating. Perhaps the second publication will bear the kind of fruit that I hoped for it the first time.

In all this I could be wrong. But still, there were only two birds in the dawn chorus last year.

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*Bert Horwood was born and raised in the Ottawa Valley where he taught high school sciences for a number of years after completing graduate work at Queen's University. Later Bert joined the innovative teacher education program at Queen's, finishing his teaching and research career in the field of outdoor and experiential education.*

## Response to Horwood (1989)

By Jocelyn Burkhart

In response to Bert's beautiful call to honour the spiritual in outdoor education, the most important place for me to begin is to ask: What does the word spiritual mean to you? How do you articulate meaning and purpose for yourself? To what is it that you aspire, and how do you identify, describe and align to this? What is the most high, most true and most pure expression of being—both in general and as manifest in your own life? These very questions reveal my own understanding of what determines the "spiritual dimensions" of life. And this, of course, is only one possible approach to inquire into it. I think that this is why it is important to start here and acknowledge the limits of language when attempting to speak to the spiritual or the sacred. Keep centered in your own connection to spirit as you read my words, or anyone's, for that matter, and

translate for yourself as you go, so that we can create bridges of understanding between us.

Education, as it is often noted, has connections to the latin *educō*, which means to "draw out" from within. Within each being, there is an inner teacher that has the awareness, intentions and resources to best direct that particular life. The goal of any form of education then, as I understand it, is to help students clear away any debris or accumulated clutter that obscures their genius, so that they can come home to themselves and their true purpose and place. We can support this process of self-discovery by creating experiences that invite that inner knowing to reveal itself, and by not further hampering it in the process. Outdoor environments are amazing places



to facilitate this process, as the mirror of the natural world can reflect students to themselves more honestly and completely than we ourselves often can, with our well-intentioned, and yet particular, motivations.

In his writing about introducing spiritual dimensions in outdoor education, I understand Bert to be saying that, amidst the ecological challenges we face as a society, turning to and addressing the spiritual dimensions of our shared humanity and our shared interdependence with the natural world will help us to better respond to ecological crisis, and more faithfully tend to those natural systems that sustain us. I fully agree that an increase in spiritual consciousness will direct people toward more honest, respectful and harmonious relationships with any and all of their relations. And, I would like to further this approach by flipping it upside down. Rather than aiming our efforts at ecological integrity, and turning to the spiritual to aid that cause, let our aim be the uplifting of consciousness and individual spiritual integrity in general, and let our interactions with and connections to the natural world help to support and sustain this lifelong process of aligning more and more completely with the truth of our being—for ourselves and our students. Outdoor experience and awareness now becomes a modality through which we can effect positive change in spiritual consciousness, rather than an end in itself that turning to the spiritual can assist. It's a question of which is the larger container—the material world or the fabric of consciousness itself.

I propose that experiences in the natural world that help students to connect more deeply with themselves and their own unique purpose in life, according to their own spiritual understanding, will have a more positive and profound ecological impact than experiences engineered to induct them into a particular way of understanding the natural world and their place in it. Notice if there is any fear or resistance that arises within you to this statement, because for those of us with a strong sense of purpose connected to protecting, sustaining,

understanding and communing with the natural world, it may feel scary to release the desire for others to become “just like us.” After all, isn't our cause the most important one? I suggest that it is this very attitude that keeps us apart from that which would connect us most deeply with life, and in the most harmonious way. There is a need for a deep humility that accepts and surrenders to our own place, and that enables us to acknowledge and honour others' places as well. It is in letting go of the need for others to behave in a particular way that we can open the space for them to become exactly who they truly are. And when each one is blossoming and contributing according to his or her own unique nature, our world as a whole can come into balance, just like the intricate balance of the forest ecosystem, where each one has its purpose and place.

Let us offer outdoor education experiences that invite our students into the mystery of their own hearts, souls and unique being, rather than asking them to step into our own paradigm, however beautiful, well-intentioned and ecologically responsible it may be. Let us offer experiences that encourage true exploration and open-ended questions that don't have a “right” or even a preferred “ecologically conscious” answer. It may seem counter-intuitive to let go of a desire to effect the changes in others' behaviours that we perceive will benefit all of life (because our desires for harmony, ecological integrity and respectful relations are powerful, noble and beautiful), and yet, if we are willing to relinquish this attempt to direct, we may find that people naturally find their way to places and lifestyles that maintain both spiritual and ecological integrity. In the end, everything is sacred. Trust that Spirit and Nature are in partnership at a very deep level, and are guiding each of us in unique and sometimes mysterious ways. Trust that surrender to Spirit is also an honouring and uplifting of the Earth.

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*Jocelyn Burkhart is a holistic facilitator and soul guide, and founder of Live Your Truth ([www.liveyourtruth.today](http://www.liveyourtruth.today)).*

## Explorations: Critical Pedagogy and Outdoor Education

By Constance L. Russell (1995), *Pathways*, 7(4), p. 24–25.

Close to sixty years ago, John Dewey suggested that we ought not assume that experience is neutral, that is, that all students would interpret the experiences we offer as educators in the ways we expect or intend. Rather, he suggested that each individual brings with her or him a truckload of assumptions and ideas developed through past experiences and hence brings a unique perspective to any learning situation. For example, my husband and I may see the same film or read the same book and come up with widely different interpretations of what it *really* meant. This is not to say that we never agree; for the most part, we do. But our different backgrounds and experiences, and certainly our genders, influence our perceptions of these various phenomena. Educators working from a critical perspective advocate that a careful examination of such differences and their implications are in order.

Critical pedagogy is notoriously difficult to define; indeed, it would be more accurate to talk of critical theories that influence the different perspectives and priorities of educators who are considered to be working under this rubric. While undoubtedly simplistic, I understand critical pedagogy to be an approach characterized by a deep commitment to social justice and to the development of theories and practices which not only expose the underlying biases of traditional education but work towards eradicating such biases. The most obvious examples are educational practices which challenge sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism.

Various new “isms” continue to be added to the field and one which I and my colleague and friend, Anne Bell, feel must be considered is anthropocentrism. The belief that humans are separate from and superior to all other life and therefore have the right to dominate and control other life

is widespread and is related to what John Livingston calls “zero-order humanism”, the belief that the human enterprise has absolute primacy on the planet. According to environmental philosophers, anthropocentrism and zero-order humanism are highly destructive and have contributed greatly to the environmental crisis. Pointing to the fact that other cultures have had, and some continue to have, different understandings of and relationships with the natural world than those of industrial North American society, environmental philosophers see hope in the development of a new environmental ethic.

So, what does this all have to do with outdoor education? Lots, in my opinion. Outdoor educators are in a unique position to resist anthropocentrism. By offering students the opportunity to interact with the other life around them, they may come to realize that they are connected to, not separate from, nature. But, returning to Dewey, it also means that we must carefully examine the experiences we offer as outdoor educators to ensure that we are not unintentionally perpetuating anthropocentrism or, in the process of resisting anthropocentrism, that we are not contributing to another form of oppression.

For example, if we encourage students to relate to the land as solely a recreational resource, talk of “good” and “bad” weather, we reinforce the dominant ways of understanding other life. Or, if we only practice what Ian Robottom has called “technocratic environmentalism” and offer scientific technofixes as the solution to environmental degradation, we are offering students simplistic answers to complex questions and implying that it is appropriate for humans to manage all other life for our own benefit. Or, if, when discussing environmental issues around the world, we suggest that Southern

peoples are to blame for destroying, for example, the Amazon, we ignore our own society's role in perpetuating the conditions that often lead to environmental degradation.

The students with whom we learn and teach undoubtedly will be encountering a complex world and will need to be both critical and compassionate as well as creative. Weaving insights from critical pedagogy through outdoor education practices holds great potential in helping us achieve such ends.

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Editors' Note: At the time of publication, Constance Russell was a Ph.D. student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.



## Response to Russell (1995)

By Constance Russell

When asked to revisit my article on critical pedagogy and outdoor education, I cringed. It was the first article I wrote for a *Pathways* column and was almost 20 years old. I was relieved when I reread the article to find it was not as outdated as I feared but, upon reflection, I was disheartened to see that not as much had changed as I would have hoped.

*What remains the same?* First, many of my students still arrive in my university classes with naïve ideas about experiential learning, thinking that simply getting kids outside will solve our environmental woes. That can be seen as encouraging because it usually reflects their own positive outdoor experiences with mentors, but I worry about their lack of critical analysis given they themselves must have witnessed how little some of their peers got out of such experiences. The simple fix they imagine clearly does not work. Second, a number of “isms” mentioned in the article still plague the field. A new one that has been of interest to me lately is “weightism” and how outdoor, physical and health education often marginalizes fat kids. Third, the “ism” upon which I focused in the original article, anthropocentrism, is still prevalent, demonstrating how important outdoor education remains.

*What has changed?* Critical pedagogy was highly anthropocentric when I wrote that column. For the most part, it remains so. Outdoor education still exists on the fringes of educational theory, research and practice. Nonetheless, I do see increasing interest, particularly as more people come to terms with the realities of climate change. As well, both academics and activists have been paying more attention to the ways that various oppressions interact—indeed, “intersectionality” is a bit of buzzword these days. (A quick example: my experience of the world as a straight, white woman likely will differ from that of a gay, white man even though we share whiteness.) Intersectionality provides

one lens for understanding why outdoor experiences are interpreted in varied ways. Indigeneous, ecofeminist and environmental justice academics and activists have long made such arguments. Some outdoor educators have drawn inspiration from these ideas; I have been encouraged to see increasing attention to decolonizing outdoor education, for example.

*What now?* We need to continue to work on being inclusive. Learners and teachers of all races, classes, abilities, genders, sexualities and body sizes should be part of our field. We need to continue to pay attention to the hidden curriculum and the oppressions we may unwittingly reproduce. It has becoming increasingly clear these past 20 years that environmental and social justice are intimately intertwined; there are inspiring examples of efforts to embody this in outdoor education, some of which have been published in *Pathways*. Let us continue to think deeply and critically about our field and let us continue to work with, and learn from, our allies.

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*Constance Russell is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Lakehead University. Email: [crussell@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:crussell@lakeheadu.ca)*



## Response to Russell (1995)

By Dr. Mary Breunig

A colleague who recently moved across the country wrote me asserting, “As one of the few social-justice minded outdoor educators, I will miss our more regular interactions.” Her words got me thinking. Are there truly only a few justice-oriented outdoor educators? The timing of the colleague’s email just happened to coincide with a request to respond to “Critical Pedagogy and Outdoor Education” (Russell, 1995), and more specifically to comment on the article’s educational and socio-ecological relevancy. In my preparatory musings about my response and prior to receiving the colleague’s email, I was poised to launch into a declaration of the ways in which critical, social and environmental justice pedagogues have made significant strides since the 1995 article, citing examples of recent publications (e.g., Dustin & Schwab, 2013; Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014), cultural competency training being infused into outdoor leadership trainings (e.g., summer camps and the National Outdoor Leadership School), and how, increasingly, conversations about social justice coincide with conversations about environmental justice. This last point would be congruent with the critical pedagogy that Russell (1995) sought to advance 20 years ago—one that characterizes a “deep development of theories and practices which not only expose the underlying biases of traditional education but work toward eradicating such biases,” including the process of resisting anthropocentrism and scientific “fixes” to environmental issues (p. 24).

Another colleague once said, “The thing that really bugs me about critical pedagogy is the hesitancy to take a real stand at the expense of all that reflexivity and critique.” So, here goes with an effort to take a stance. I believe there exists more than just a few outdoor experiential educators committed to social and environmental justice. I believe that Russell’s article holds even more relevancy today than it did in 1995. What is outdoor education if not the very site for acts and interactions of non-oppression, be they interpersonal or in relationship with and to

the natural environmental we travel through, including honouring the original peoples of that land? As I often say to my own students, “Outdoor education is not just fun and games; this is outdoor play with purpose.” And that purpose, resonant with Russell’s (1995) assertion, is that outdoor experiential education has, does and should continue to engage students in such a manner that they become socially and environmentally just citizens. This would resonate with John Dewey who inspired the opening statement of Dr. Russell’s commentary. Dewey (1938) impels educators to design purposeful educative experiences for students to actively participate as democratic citizens. As Russell concluded, “The students with whom we learn and teach undoubtedly will be encountering a complex world and will need to be both critical and compassionate as well as creative” (p. 25). Isn’t this even more true today as the world has already become infinitely more complex and will only continue to become so? How can we educate our students to contribute to a more just and compassionate world?

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Mary Breunig is Associate Professor in Recreation and Leisure Studies at Brock University. She can be reached at [mbreunig@brocku.ca](mailto:mbreunig@brocku.ca) or via her website [marybreunig.com](http://marybreunig.com)



## Connecting the Natural World to Your Own

By Gail Fatkhoulina-Reddick (1992), *Pathways*, 4(4), p. 10–11.

While on an all-day hike one beautiful early fall morning, I started to wonder how I could help some grade seven students connect better with the out-of-doors and, more importantly, take those connections with them back to their hamburger-and-french-fry-filled world of North York

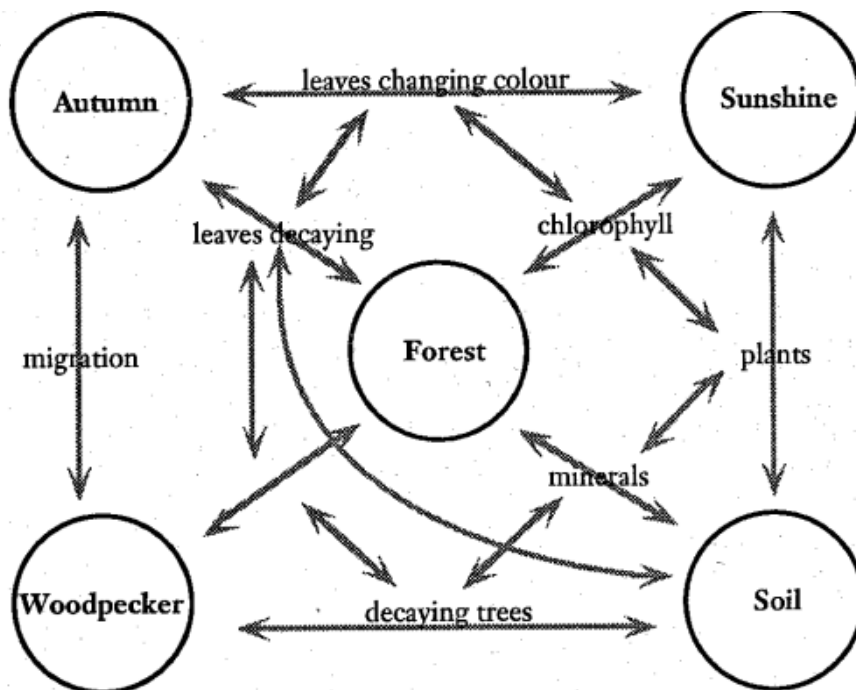
I had asked each student to pack a pencil, a pad of paper and some coloured pencils of their choice, trusting that something would inspire me while out on the trail. To my delight, it did. This is how the activity went:

When the group arrived at a suitable spot to sit down, I asked them to find their own space on the forest floor where they could see and hear me.

I said a word and for one minute the students wrote everything that jumped into their heads when they heard that word. Spelling and grammar were not an issue—just getting the words down on paper was the objective. For example, I used “forest” (as we were in one), and on a clean sheet of

paper, the students wrote silently for one minute, all the words that entered their minds connected with the word “forest.” I did this with ten words in total. I tried to use words that related to our surroundings and the activities they had done or things that we had seen: cave, tree, soil, autumn, human, provincial park, sunshine, energy, woodpecker .... After each word they drew a line to delineate the end of that thought process, clear their heads and listen to the next word. We hiked on.

Before the next activity—their solo sit, we had a short discussion on what the word and concept “connections” meant to them. “Things being joined together” and “feeling related or close to someone” were two of the definitions that came up. We then had a look around us and, as a group, tried to come up with examples of how some of the things around us were connected to each other. For example, the red squirrel is connected to the red pine tree as it eats the trees’ cones; the red pine tree is connected to the soil as it needs the soil to grow, etc.... Before





assigning them to their solo sit, I said that, while on their twenty minute solo, they needed to observe and write down as many examples as they could of things being connected. They were also to write down how they felt they were connected to that particular place and any other thoughts that came to them.

After the solo sit, we gathered together to share our observations and feelings. Interestingly, the comment I most often heard after the students had spent time in the woods alone is that it wasn't long enough.

At the next comfortable sitting place, the students formed a circle, sitting beside someone that they could work well with. I read out the ten words that we had used in the word-association activity earlier on. Each student then drew five circles on a piece of paper. One partner then wrote each of the five words in the circles, i.e., one word in each circle, while the other partner did the same with the second set.

Using either their words they had earlier associated with those five words or any other thoughts that came to them, the students were asked to connect and interconnect those five words—like a word web. Their partner could help them if they were having a hard time. After each partner had their personal word web

completed, they then drew ten circles on a fresh piece of paper and did the same using all ten words. The idea was to share connections and combine the two word webs.

We then, of course, shared our connection word webs and discussed how different and/or similar they were. We also talked about how challenging it is to connect humans to other things in a non-consumptive way and how we may go about trying to change that, i.e., how we can assist or at least be a benign influence in the natural world.

By using a combination of words of their own and the solo sit experience, the students were able to come up with connections between things in the natural world and how they fit into it. The end result of this was a sense of ownership and empowerment as these were their own thoughts and ideas. If the visiting teacher wished, they could then take a word webs back to the classroom and make a huge group brain connection word web. This could also be done as a follow-up activity back at the centre.

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*Editors' Note: At the time of publication, Gail Fatkhoulina-Reddick worked at Mono Cliffs Outdoor Education Centre.*

## Response to Fatkhoulina-Reddick (1992)

By Allyson Brown

Four years after Gail Fatkhoulina-Reddick's article "Connecting the Natural World to Your Own" was published in *Pathways*, David Sobel (1995) wrote the following: "If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it" (p. 20). Both Fatkhoulina-Reddick and Sobel capture the importance of scaffolding children's experience with nature. The first step is to focus on building a meaningful connection to the environment, which could involve sitting on the forest floor and looking around, to then having children discover their own connection to natural systems. In doing so, the hope would be that, with appropriate guidance, they may transform those feelings and skills into adopting a stewardship mentality.

Two decades following Fatkhoulina-Reddick's original publication in *Pathways*, fostering curiosity and environmental inquiry is the focus of a popular teacher resource, *Natural Curiosity*, launched in 2011 by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The theory behind this resource compliments Fatkhoulina-Reddick's hike activities where the aim is for students to become personally invested in a collective learning process that is shaped by their own questions and theories about the world. This process also places them in direct contact and relationship with the natural environment.

Fatkhoulina-Reddick described her front-loading of the solo experience by having a discussion about what "connections" meant to them, followed by a group effort to identify some natural connections around them. This example of front-loading is an effective way to approach environmental education, as it does not assume knowledge, but rather provides tools to students who may not have spent much time in nature—an increasing trend over recent decades. The solo experience, or sit spots, can be foundational in

developing meaningful environmental connections, as many can describe a place that meant a lot to them, a place where they sat, made observations, watched as the seasons changed, and grew to love. While the practice may be more powerful if the sit spot is revisited, Fatkhoulina-Reddick described the potential benefit of a single opportunity during a one-day program with a visiting class at an outdoor education centre. Jon Young's *Coyote's Guide* can be referenced for further ideas of how to facilitate a sit spot.

The traditional educational curriculum can often leave students feeling disempowered when the focus is on the symptoms of changes in the environment. As a child, I was fortunate to have a natural connection within my own schoolyard. In a recent chat with the very teacher responsible for the development of that schoolyard habitat, Drew Monkman spoke of his learnings as a naturalist and environmental educator. Monkman believes that the only way you will care about the effects of climate change and loss of species and biodiversity is with a knowledge and emotion base that comes from actually being there and recognizing what will be lost. Fatkhoulina-Reddick discussed the importance of realizing how individuals fit into the natural world, and the significance of strengthening the human–environment relationship.

Fatkhoulina-Reddick's practical lessons geared towards grade seven students are very appropriate given that children are spending more time indoors and less time exploring nearby natural spaces. Her lesson design and theoretical perspectives are reflected in recent environmental education literature and research and are as relevant now, if not more so, as at the time of her publication in 1991.

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*Allyson Brown teaches outdoor education at Bishop Strachan School and is currently COEO's president.*

## Why and How I Tell Stories

by Zabe MacEachren (1995), *Pathways*, 7 (5), p. 6–9.

Why do I tell stories? The answer is very simple; because I believe in them. Once my life's path had taken me away from this answer and later returned me back to this answer. As a child, I believed in the magic of moonbeams, fairy dust, animals that could speak to me, and much more. By late adolescence, I thought that I was too smart for stories. I knew that T.V. shows came from Hollywood prop sets and magic was just illusions and card tricks. Science classes explained how animal mouths could not possibly create the wide variety of sounds required for language like ours—so how could animals speak to me? My parents did not seem to need fairy dust; so why should I?

But, I consider myself very fortunate now for a few reasons. As an educator, I have learned the value of a good question and careful observation. Children do not doubt animals talk to them. Why do we educate this out of them? Children's lives seem proof that life is more joyful when one is a believer in stories. When working with tribal people, I realized that communities also seem healthier and happier when everyone believes in the old stories. So why do we quit telling them to the younger generation? Once I witnessed a ceremony where the whole community gathered together to beckon "the spirits" to remain in the area (amidst all the temporary construction and blasting that was occurring). Such deeper thoughts and beliefs only come from communities where stories are told by elders to support belief in "the spirits."

When I think of spirits, I think of Mickey Hart's words in his book, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*: "Two things draw the spirits to the crossroads. One is drumming, the other is storytelling." I believe these words very strongly on an intuitive/intellectual level, but how to practically explain what the spirits are is difficult. I had no storyteller or family of familiar stories to guide me.

Then one day I listened to a conversation between two Native coworkers about the little people the children believe in. "They are the land's spirits," said one. "We keep them happy and out of mischief by giving them gifts of tobacco and a little food. If they come by and find no gifts, they might cause trouble." So here was an answer that I could use. The little people seem to exist in Earth-oriented communities throughout the world and time. I had heard many tales of them by many names: fairies, cheekacos, nymphs, leprechauns. Then I started to look at pictographs more deeply and listen to legends and stories on a more intuitive level as well. The land's spirit was the magic of little people, communication between spirits, strange happenings under moonlight, and many of the magic things I had heard of in stories but had had educated out of me into the realm of "just imagination."

Now, when I am in my early 30s, I find myself a believer in stories again. I sense storytelling is a transforming process. A story gives us a chance to escape our everyday lives, our industrial growth process, our progress-oriented society, and shift toward more nurturing, sustaining communities with a land-based orientation, with a touch of the wild left in them. At first, the transformation may only occur for the duration of the telling, but eventually your abilities to visit the crossroads, where everyday life and spirits meet, will lengthen. Stories and offerings to the land will become more numerous. Wild places, where people and land relate, need us to revisit them more often, where we might encounter a little person and rekindle our beliefs in them. In these places, our actions will be influenced by the spirit's wishes; nature, wilderness, and joy will be nurtured once more.

I would like to twist one of John Muir's famous lines. Everything in nature is not just hitched to everything else. Everything in nature is also talking to everything else.

We must learn to listen, understand, and communicate in our true mother tongue, a language which comes from beyond our dictionaries and lips, but from deep down within us. Storytelling is the breath we all share; it is a vital relationship that must occur between plants and animals. If you have never heard a tree talk, perhaps it's because a tree has never spoken to you or you are waiting for a tree to speak English aloud as you have not as yet attuned yourself to the tree's language.

Wendel Berry writes, "in reality, industrial control of the media is among the most devastating forces threatening the vitality of the human." We can halt this threatening force by reducing its reality in our everyday life. Turn off the stereo and open a window to hear the bird's story direct from its beak. Shut off the T.V. and turn the chairs and couch around to form a more circular shape for conversation like a council of musk ox. Most importantly, we need to start telling stories so we will become familiar with the places stories can take us, and we can transform ourselves by using their special language powers to change our concept of reality. We must remember that two dimensional picture books will only take us so far. We need to use our peripheral vision through the process of storytelling to foster a more encompassing holistic view.



To many, telling a story may at first seem scary. Start small. Perhaps you are the type who only tells a story when in a one-on-one situation. Start like Forrest Gump did—sitting on a park bench just chatting about the little incidents of his life like when his mother tells him, "Life is like a

box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get." *Forrest Gump* was bound to be a

success as it is a series of simple stories strung together in a cyclical nature and told to a culture that is craving such simple tales. Whether you venture beyond the one-on-one story to the larger campfire circles or packed classrooms, rest in your nature—just remember to begin telling the tale.

When I prepare to tell stories to larger crowds, I often think of myself as a midwife attending the delivery of a birth. I am there to aid the birth of a story into others' reality. Hopefully, the delivery will go smoothly and transform our lives in some broadening manner. Like all births, some aspects I will have control over and some aspects of delivery I will not. At each telling I will gather experience beyond the realms of just book learning. The ultimate reward will be to experience how the story whisks people away to a place near the crossroads: where conversation between mouse and child are heard, where ant and toddler converse, where wolves and grandmothers sing lullabies

together. These are wild places where the spirits converge. The language may not be English, but there is language. Stories take us to a place where living creatures are all kin. At this place, ultimately, a consensus of communication will emerge to benefit all life forms. It is this communication and kinship to which I am midwife.

A few times in my life, when in the woods, I have been asked a question to which I only knew a story answer. Why do the birch trees have these marks? Why are these berries red? Within the story answer, the plants and animals talk, and lessons are learned about the trouble conceit or aggression can cause. I know no scientific answer involving genetics of tree biology or the physics of light rays to answer these questions any other way. Nor do I want to always give these kind of answers. Now when I walk through the northwoods, and see the birch tree's bark or the red bunch berries, I recall the lessons of the stories. It is as if these plants are talking to me now, recalling important lessons at my every sighting. If I knew more stories for each plant and animal I encountered in the northwoods, the northwoods really would be talking to me all the time as I walked and paddled around ... and the stories I hear really would be "proven" true.

I believe in talking to forests and animals, and I want others to also, so I tell stories. I hope that someday, once again, many communities, scattered throughout different bioregions, will also hear and listen to the nearby forest's and animals' messages. Won't that be a special day, when all live happily ever after? I want that fairy tale ending to come, so I tell stories, because I do believe in them.

### **The Four Stages to Story Midwifery**

There is no sequential step-by-step guide to how to deliver a story. You must discover through experience, your own path. The important thing is to let stories flow out of you so our communities will be populated with them once more. Especially those stories which guide us to the land of the

crossroads, where land's spirits and people communicate. I share below with you some lessons I have learned from my own experiences.

### *Story Conception*

A midwife has little control over this stage. Either you have a tale to tell or you are listening and seeking a story to which aid delivery. You just find yourself with or in a story all of a sudden. It is like daydreaming about a canoe trip. You envision bug free, sunny skies, calm waters, but deep down inside you really long for an unusual happening: to return with an adventure, story, a tale to tell. Sometimes the story will happen like spontaneous combustion. You will be on a walk and as a bird sings an idea will pop into you. It is a gift from the bird. Just give it the freedom to fly and soar.

Eat wild food harvested from the land or organic gardens of friends and perhaps the sustaining nutrients will be digested within you and come to blossom in a dream where a deer speaks to you or roots take you to a buried land. The conception of story usually occurs when the T.V. is off and you have gone for a walk. A book may add initiating juices, but remember to put down the book and let it grow inside you. Conception does not just exist in a 2-D T.V. and paper form.

### *Coming to Terms with a Story*

As a midwife with a story to care for, you are responsible for caring and nurturing it. Take care of yourself and the story. Give yourself the time to be with Story and all the feelings it entails and arouses. Practice expressing what Story arouses: the moments, the mood Story portrays and seeks as it grows. Practice various breathing modes, the pregnant pause, the expressing sighs and grunts. Remember, nature and the wild often speak best when we move beyond words into gestures with the body and touch.

*Birthing: The Telling Labour*

Sometimes you may be able to predict the actual birthing time quite accurately, but always be aware of a sudden contraction and cry that a story is to be birthed. As a midwife to a story, try to encourage a warm relaxing mood, do not fight the process or tense up too much. Light a candle, circle everyone around the campfire, inform others the story will begin after true silence is heard. Remember that a story is birthed through the mouth. Breathe. Once begun, the process has a life of its own, and you can only aid its delivery through gentle reminders to the mind to pause, use voice inflection, make eye contact to encourage listeners, and remember the special phrases and expressions to aid you through the intense parts. Do not get upset and rigid if something startles you or causes an unexpected difficulty. Just do your best to let Story's birth occur naturally. You and the listeners will be swept away to the wonders of the crossroads where land, animals, and spirits meet through the birthing of Story.

*The Afterbirth*

Once Story is told it will sit in your lap and need to suckle. "Is that true?" some will ask. Bring Story to your breast and reply, "Yes, it is all true." Remember that you have just taken the listeners through an amazing process, to an amazing place. Watch how they are transformed. Has their power to believe strengthened? Would an action to internalize the experience even further be beneficial? Remember to bury the afterbirth in appropriate soil, so Story can choose how to grow and re-emerge later. In some cultures you need specific permission to tell certain Stories. Story may also be nurtured through telling only in specific places or only in certain seasons and times. As a midwife to a story, you may need to inform others of this or remind yourself that Story will be raised not only by you now, but by others as well. For as long as someone remembers to ask for Story, it will live on. You can help by taking Story to certain environments, but

Story's personality will also decide this on its own. All Stories are real and need to be cared for when they are birthed into the land of the believers. Remind Story of what its transforming roots can do, and let Story grow strong and wild.

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Editors' Note: *At the time of publication, Zabe McEachren was teaching at the Lac La Croix Native Reserve in Northwestern Ontario.*



## Response to MacEachren (1995)

by Zabe MacEachren (1995), *Pathways*, 7 (5), p. 6–9.

I was directing a summer camp in northwestern Ontario with Native youth and elders. We had begun to make baskets the day before by harvesting birch bark. Marie Allen, the elder I worked with, had instructed us all on how to put out a tobacco offering and say a prayer before we harvested the bark from a living tree. We had then begun some initial cutting and shaping of the bark to aid our basket drying in the desired form.

As we ate breakfast that morning one of my staff informed me someone had been up the previous night stealing cookies. I turned to Marie and asked for her thoughts on what I should do. I held a deep respect for Marie's view on many things, for she had previously shared with me accounts of being raised by her grandparents who lived off the land during the time the railway was being built. Marie answered my question with a story:

When I was a young child I wondered who would know if I took something. I asked my grandfather, "Who would know if I took something?" He stated, "Someone will always know if you take something." I went off and thought about this. But I didn't know who would know. I went back later and asked my grandfather, "Who would know if I took something?" He replied, "They will know."

As she spoke the last line, Marie did what her grandfather must have done: she reached out from where we were sitting and patted the base of a big white pine tree.

Deep down inside me I felt an epiphany arise.

I was teaching and learning how to make birch bark baskets with this Anishinabe elder with long gray hair tied in two braids and a wonderful smile. I had willingly participated in this new practice of giving an offering of tobacco and praying to the



birch trees as a sign of respect. Now I had just heard how this elder had grown up (had her consciousness fed) with stories of how trees and other things in the forest were capable of watching her. As I watched this elder continue to eat her breakfast I realized how she had been birthed into a world where it was possible that the earth was living and capable of somehow communicating with her. Her world was far different from the one I had been birthed into with stories coming from Hollywood through a TV screen shaping my consciousness. We were sitting nearby in the same forest, but our worlds were vastly different due to the stories that had shaped our childhood. At that moment, I realized how different the world would be for me if I had grown up with the same kind of stories that had nurtured this woman's childhood: Stories full of morals that support an understanding of the land as being capable of watching me; of knowing what I was doing—both good and bad.

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*Presently Zabe MacEachren is on sabbatical preparing to write about the difference between learning through oral storytelling cultures and learning through research investigation techniques. This topic allows her to paddle into a remote area where a scientist once studied gravity and Native people lived full-time off the land.*



## Response to MacEachren (1995)

By Emma Brandy

It seems practically perfect that almost 20 years after Zabe MacEachren's "Why and How I Tell Stories" was published, the 2013 fall COEO conference included a core theme focused on storytelling. I had the pleasure of attending Zabe's session and was struck by the relevance and importance of the art of storytelling within outdoor education. This session reminded me that although technology keeps advancing, cities keep spreading, and education becomes increasingly structured, there remains a fundamental need to share stories about places that inspire. I still see this now, almost a year later, through Pathways' choice to re-publish Zabe's piece on storytelling.

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend the day in a Voyageur canoe with a group of grade seven students from a Toronto school. We paddled from Harbourfront, across the channel to the Toronto Islands and back, on a misty and magical day. I found myself a witness to the creative minds of the young adolescents in my boat. We spent the majority of the time singing and telling scary stories. We encouraged each other to make stories up off the top of our heads based on our surroundings. To my surprise, I heard myself start to speak about a time I walked the Isle of Skye in Scotland. To follow the "scary" theme we had been developing throughout the day, I of course embellished some parts, and as Zabe recommends, allowed the story to birth itself. I saw enraptured faces, sparkling eyes, and jaws partially open in anticipation. I had found myself an audience and it was incredibly powerful. This experience seemed to confirm what Zabe speaks of in her article: that "storytelling is a transforming process. A story gives us a chance to escape our everyday lives." Sharing personal narrative not only gives us a chance to escape our everyday lives, but it also gives us an opportunity to explore our lives more deeply.

There is an immense feeling of surrender the moment a story is released from the body. The moment at which it reaches its audience is to be treasured and remembered. To allow the mind to be creative and unstructured is something of a rarity in today's educational and socio-ecological climate. With increasing access to the Internet at the swift touch of a finger and with the pressure to keep up with the fast-paced and fact-based world, it can be difficult to find that calm moment to allow the mind to run free. For me, wild outdoor places provide a substantial relief from that pressure. As an outdoor educator, it is this understanding that is the foundation for what I teach and how I choose to teach it.

The stories we share have the potential to inspire others. Whether they are told orally, through writing or through research, stories and narrative are unique methods for sharing pertinent lessons and expressing deeper parts of ourselves. We only have to remember how to let the stories come forth. Part of this remembering involves re-learning how to deeply listen to an inner voice, and to the voice of others. Stories can be told and re-told, but we must also choose to actively listen with an open heart. It is with an open heart that I entered into my day with those grade seven students. It is because of this that I was able to share authentic parts of myself through story, and my students were able to share authentically with me. As an outdoor educator, this is finest outcome I could ask for.

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*These days Emma Brandy focuses mainly on outdoor and environmental education, connecting people to vital and organically farmed food and writing for change. Emma lives and works in Toronto and the wilderness.*

## Wilderness Erotica

By John Kaandorp (1991), *Pathways*, 3(5), p. 36.

It struck me this past summer after paddling on Lake Superior—while thumbing through picture books of the area (*The Haunted Shore*), that many if not *all* of those photographs—indeed, perhaps all wilderness photography—has a strange but significant connection (for me) to photographic pornography/erotica. What do you think? I sense many parallels between the two and am having fun thinking about them. For instance, when I look at photos of “wilderness,” I feel as far removed and voyeuristic about the image/place and knowing that place as I might when viewing or having viewed erotic photography. I don’t know that [person] behind the “come-hither” stare. What is *not* being said here? I get almost exactly the same feeling when looking at majestic sunsets over Shield country or mountaintops. I say, “I don’t know anything about that!” “Why?” is the interesting question for me right now.

I feel the same way about my own modest attempts at “wilderness photography.” One image comes to mind readily. I have

a *beautiful* slide of the sun setting from a white-sand beach on Pukaskwa and it looks idyllic—not to mention near tropical. But it wasn’t, it was cold and damp and black-fly infested! I took that photo and leapt back into the warm, bug-free confines of the tent. Looking at that photo, it tells very little about the environment—it’s idealized and sensationalized and almost shamefully UNTRUTHFUL. ...what it omits to relate is *more* important than what it *does* relate. Sure, the “mechanical eye” has its limitations, but this is not the point. The limitations lie in our perception of what the camera relates—a shoddy, sentimental, half-truthed version of a “Blink” of *reality*. It doesn’t convey “a slice of life” or for that matter “a slice of a trip.” It may do more harm than good...

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Editors’ Note: At the time of publication, John Kaandorp and his wife Christine were teaching in Cape Dorset, NWT. This was an excerpt taken from regular correspondence with members of the editorial board.



## Response to Kaandorp (1991)

By Jessica Dunkin

John Kaandorp's "Wilderness Erotica," a short meditation on wilderness photographs that appeared in the August 1991 issue of *Pathways*, invites readers to think more critically about photography. The piece calls into question photographs as faithful representations of reality. What a photograph "omits to relate," Kaandorp argues, "is more important than what it does relate." In the case of a "beautiful slide of the sun setting...on Pukaskwa," absences include the inclement weather and a cloud of bugs. This anecdote encourages readers to think about the limitations of the camera as technology, but also what exists beyond the frame of a photograph. In particular, Kaandorp is interested in how we as viewers are implicated in these acts of framing and meaning-making. He challenges the belief that photographs offer some semblance of reality, "a slice of a trip." He is clearly concerned that representing wilderness in such an "idealized and sensationalized" way is harmful, although he is never explicit about the specific nature of this harm.

I can't help wondering if Kaandorp is expressing concern about authenticity, a loaded term that has routinely been used by outdoor enthusiasts to police access to wild places and participation in outdoor pursuits. While Kaandorp is focused on the parts of the wilderness experience that are obscured in photographs, I am as interested in human absences. In much wilderness photography, it is not just the photographer that is outside the frame, but also others occupying the same spaces and travelling the same routes. Much like tourists seeking to capture sites without other tourists in the way, campers tend to prefer their images free of people. Wilderness, by definition, is to be void of humans. Solitude is a prerequisite for an authentic experience of nature. When people do figure into wilderness photographs, they are almost always white, able bodied, and at leisure. Racialized communities and people with disabilities are routinely excluded, as are

those who inhabit wild places for work rather than play.

Kaandorp's perception of the wilderness photograph as voyeuristic and inherently deceptive inspired him to think about wilderness photography as being akin to pornographic images. While I appreciate the point that Kaandorp is trying to make about the limits of photographic representation, I am wary of the parallels he draws here. The sense of distance and inauthenticity that Kaandorp ascribes to erotica is true of all photographs. Aren't all photographs but an impression of a time or place that is inherently incapable of being captured? Why then single out pornographic images? What does it accomplish? At first glance, Kaandorp's deployment of erotic photography appears playful and provocative. Upon further reflection, however, it is hard to ignore the moralizing tone implied by such a comparison.

Nevertheless, I appreciate the opportunity "Wilderness Erotica" offers to reflect on the power of photographic representation. Circulating images are not benign. Rather, as Kaandorp's piece makes clear, they enable certain ways of seeing and thinking about nature. Wilderness photographs have tended to present an idealized nature, one that is empty of human presence, but particularly people of colour, people with disabilities, and people at work. As outdoor educators, we need to think about the ways in which such images affect who gets outside and how.

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*Jessica Dunkin is a historian of gender and sexuality. She is, at present, a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen's University. Her research explores the intersections of gender, sport and leisure in late nineteenth century North America.*

## You Say you Teach Outdoor Education eh?

By Bob Henderson (1989), *Pathways*, 1(1), p. 27.

In 1983 I enjoyed a canoe trip in the Canadian barrens. I remember a post trip chat with an Inuk hunter/electrician named Paul in Eskimo Point while waiting for a flight homeward. I had first met Paul on the land days earlier, camped with his family. He asked me, in an Inuit round about way, what I did for a living.

I quickly inflated my chest, exhibited every sign of pride and felt an odd link with this fellow countryman. I said with confidence, "I teach Outdoor Education" looking for a smile, support, connection, that I expected from this cohort of sorts. I got a look of bewilderment and my chest sank. He looked skeptical. This was a look I had seen before. Of course, he didn't know what Outdoor Education meant and wanted more, I thought, though his expression said otherwise.

I started to explain that "down South" Outdoor Education works to inspire generic character skills through adventure and experiences that are transferable to all life and learning and that Outdoor Education stimulates awareness, understanding and care/action for our natural world. As I stumbled through this, it became clear that my estranged friend was now even more bewildered and that my own deep-rooted confusions regarding this work of Outdoor Education were exposed. His response was wonderfully appropriate. "That's different! Do you have to teach that? Things must be really bad down there." Quickly we changed the topic and I had my tail between my legs for the rest of the evening. We were both quite embarrassed.

Later I retraced my emotions and Paul's reaction from my naïve sense of connection with this man in his "homeland" to our mutual estrangement by culture and circumstance. I had to re-map feelings and wordings. For it is a well understood tenant in Experiential Education that "experience is not what happens to a person, experience is what a person does with what happens." (Thanks to Aldous Huxley for that gem.)

It was not the way Outdoor Education was described. It was that it has to exist at all that seemed strange; as if such learning can be a separate subject. This is what bothered Paul and what through Paul hit me like a ton of seal blubber. Generic skills, skills that produce skills, like assessing limits and potentials, compassion, resourcefulness, persistence and an understanding and sensitivity to the natural world are hardly appropriate as low level priorities for any culture. An Inuit hunter would be particularly confused about this one.

They are foundational. If this has to be taught in school as a "fringe subject" at best, then clearly it has lost its place as BASIC; as a foundational imperative towards personal competency and ecological consciousness. And if it is not basic and imperative, then my culture has lost its marbles. Similarly, when we need courses in Values Ed (and we do) we have lost values and ethics, I fear.

So I remain embarrassed for my culture, for Outdoor Educators, and obviously for myself personally. For we (culturally) have displaced priorities and confused what is basic, leaving us NOT well-grounded on the Earth. Outdoor Education is about RELATIONSHIPS. This is basic to life and learning. There should really be one "R", not "the 3 R's", when we think of "back to basics". Paul knew all this and told me with a look of dismay.

This embarrassment does not bring despair. It reinforces commitment and a sense of mission. Not meaning to sound ridiculously devoted, commitment and mission here imply intention and integrity, qualities that themselves seem displaced these days.

And another thing, it's difficult to burn out from this prospect point!

That conversation was a landmark. It now inspires direction towards what we do and conversely, what we shouldn't do. I look forward to the day when I meet Paul again and tell him, "I'm just a teacher now, Paul".

## Response to Henderson (1989)

By Greg Lowan-Trudeau

Eminent Tewa scholar, Gregory Cajete (2014) recently delivered a keynote lecture at an Indigenous education symposium. As expected, he shared inspirational examples of the groundbreaking initiatives with which he has been involved over the past 40 years. However, Cajete also shared excerpts from a similar keynote that he delivered in the early 1980s outlining the challenges facing Indigenous education along with potential solutions. Sadly, he reflected that, while significant progress has been made in many areas, we still face similar challenges to those encountered by educators in past decades.

Upon reviewing Henderson's (1989) piece, I was struck by the similarities between his critical reflections on the field of outdoor education and the sentiments shared above by Cajete. By humbly juxtaposing his own cultural and pedagogical assumptions with those of Paul, his Inuk conversation partner who was so much more connected to the Land than most southern outdoor educators could ever begin to imagine, Henderson revealed a deep gap in Western-style outdoor education that haunts us to this day.

However, despite such persistent existential challenges, I believe that great progress has been made in the past 25 years. As a Métis educator, I can attest that there has been a dramatic rise in the authentic involvement and contribution of and leadership by Indigenous peoples; many outdoor programs now go well beyond using Nature as a challenging context for general "character building" to foster critical socio-ecological personal and group transformation.

Encouraged and emboldened by leaders like Henderson, Indigenous and allied voices have risen to build an increasingly complex critical dialogue related to fundamental questions such as these:

- How can Indigenous peoples together with their knowledge and traditions be respected in outdoor education (Lowan, 2009)?
- What is the role of non-Indigenous educators in decolonization (Root, 2010)?
- How might we travel respectfully in Indigenous territories? (Grimwood, 2011)

However, as Cajete noted in his reflections on the challenges still faced by Indigenous education today, 25 years later outdoor education and educators themselves continue to grapple with competing ideals. Like Henderson, I routinely negotiate such tensions myself, and have experienced embarrassing conversations and had my hand slapped by Elders for boasting too boldly about my prowess as an outdoor educator and adventurer. At other times I have received a solid bonk from a low-hanging branch to remind me to pay attention in the forest rather than day-dreaming of perfect eddie turns.

Despite the proliferation of integrated programs across Ontario and other parts of Canada, outdoor education, like Aboriginal education, remains a fringe or add-on subject in most jurisdictions. It has not become an integral aspect of most schools, and educators still struggle to get their students outside. However, as outdoor educators we know that the potential benefits are worth the fight. And so we continue, one step, paddle, or pen stroke, at a time. Thanks Bob.

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Greg Lowan-Trudeau teaches at the University of Calgary.

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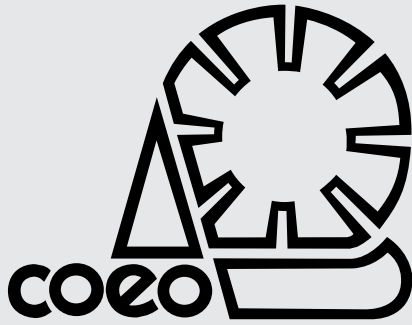
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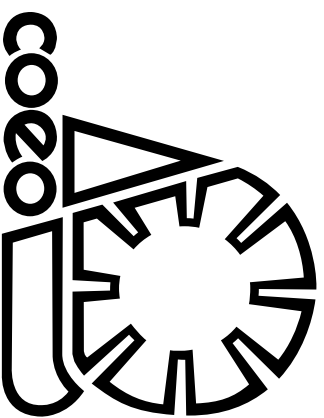
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Eastern (EA)	Victoria, Durham, Peterborough, Northumberland, Hastings, Prince Edward, Renfrew, Lennox and Addington, Frontenac, Leeds, Grenville, Ottawa-Carleton, Lanark, Prescott, Russell, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry
Northern (NO)	Parry Sound, Nipissing, 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

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