

Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL

Volume 8, No. 5,
October/November, 1996



OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION



Pathways

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Box 324, South River P0A 1X0
(B) 705-386-2376 (H) 705-386-0503 (Fax) 705-386-2345
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(B) 705-766-0578 (H) 705-766-9396 (Fax) 705-766-9677
e-mail: etchesjj@epo.gov.on.ca
- Western:** **Jennifer Jupp**
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(H) 519-836-1292
- Prof. Development:** **Brent Dysart**
457 Stillmeadow Circle Waterloo N2L 5M1
(B) 519-885-1289 (H) 519-885-2836
- Government Liaison:** **Wilson McCue**
Recreation Services Section
Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation
77 Bloor Street W., Toronto M7A 2R9
(B) 416-314-7680 (Fax) 416-314-7455
- Pathways Chair:** **Mark Whitcombe**
34 Blind Line, Orangeville L9W 3A5
(B) 705-435-4266 (H) 519-941-9966 (Fax) 705-435-4281
e-mail: mwhitcombe@headwaters.com
- Membership:** **Glen Hester**
20 Linn Cres., RR#3, Caledon East L0N 1E0
(B) 416-394-7860 (H) 905-880-0862 (Fax) 416-394-6291

COEO Office:

Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario
1185 Eglinton Avenue East,
North York, Ontario M3C 3C6

For information regarding *Pathways* or advertisement,
contact Mark Whitcombe at (705) 435-4266.

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Pathways Editorial Board

Chair: **Mark Whitcombe**
34 Blind Line, Orangeville, L9W 3A5
(B) 705-435-4266 (H) 519-941-9966
Fax 705-435-4281
(e-mail) mwhitcombe@headwaters.com

Mary Jeanne Barrett
RR#1, Orangeville L9W 2Y8
(B) 905-846-6060 (H) 519-942-0075
(B) Fax 905-584-9823
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Bob Henderson
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(B) 905-833-3333 (H) 905-898-0467
(Fax) 905-833-2085

Barrie Martin
c/o L.M. Frost Natural Resources Centre
Dorset P0A 1E0
(B) Fax 705-766-9677 (B) 705-766-2451
(e-mail) martinbb@epo.gov.on.ca

Barbara McKean
c/o Royal B.G. Box 399 Hamilton, L8N 3H8
(B) 905-527-1158 ext. 247
(H) 905-523-8961 (Fax) 905-577-0375
(e-mail) bmkcbean@mcmaster.ca

Tom Potter
School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and
Tourism, Lakehead University P7B 5E8
(B) 807-343-8843 Fax 807-346-7836

James Raffan
Faculty of Education,
Queen's University, Kingston
(B) 613-545-6209 Fax 613-545-6584
(H) 613-387-3568
(e-mail) raffanj@educ.queensuk.ca

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Let this be the continuation of the tradition of Pathways representing the voice of outdoor education in Ontario - last year more than 70 outdoor educators spoke through these pages!

This issue of *Pathways* has a strong element of continuity through it. The excellent Retrospective series spearheaded by Clarke Birchard continues with two articles dealing with the universities and with teacher training. Clarke also issues a call for submissions for the biggest part of the history of outdoor education in Ontario: that of outdoor education in the school boards. We are hoping the myriad of little and not-so-little local initiatives will be chronicled either by those involved or by those affected. Let this be the continuation of the tradition of *Pathways* representing the voice of outdoor education in Ontario - last year more than 70 outdoor educators spoke through these pages!

Another thread continuing through this issue research into the effectiveness of outdoor education experiences. Over the last years there has been a constant call for research validating outdoor education experience. Now we are getting local results stimulated by the collaboration between practitioners at the secondary and university levels. This issue includes the follow-up article on the research into the effectiveness of outdoor education experience in Mike Elrick's integrated programme. Last issue the research method centred around concept maps. This time the focus is on story-writing.

Then there is Nick Forsberg's article about his research into the effectiveness of outdoor education experience in teacher education. Parenthetically, Nick and others are working to build a strong interactive outdoor education community in Saskatchewan. He is looking forward to positive interaction with COEO members, through *Pathways* and through direct communication.

Please note Roy Cumming's request for people to participate in a research study concerning the long-term affects of a residential outdoor education experience, in this case at the Boyne. If you attended the Boyne River Natural Science School, or know of someone who did and would be willing to participate in this study, please contact Roy at the Boyne!

Several COEO initiatives have come to fruition over the past few months. One is the publishing of the *Pathways* Index. This document simultaneously exists in print (available from the COEO Secretary for \$10.00) and on disk in database or text format (available from Mark Whitcombe also for \$10.00). It is an efficient way of searching the growing collection of *Pathways* for that article that you think you remember. The Index is organized in print by author and by various keyword groupings. Electronically it is even more searchable. Thanks to Caroline Liffman who compiled the original database, and to Barrie Martin, MJ Barrett and Bob Henderson for their support!

COEO now has a web site: <<www.headwaters.com/COEO>>, as well as an email address:

<<COEO@headwaters.com>>. Ian Hendry and I put the site together initially. It is incomplete by its very nature and I welcome suggestions and help in maintaining and developing it.

The next issue of *Pathways* will have a section reacting to the past COEO Conference at Oshweken. The conference included a rekindling and resurgence of that old COEO people-to-people networking that is the real strength of this organization. If you were there, please send me your reactions and thoughts no matter how brief or how rough-hewn.

A disappointing note to end this Log Book: because of COEO's precarious financial position (read: recruit more members!), *Pathways* is only going to be published in full five times this year plus one short newsletter (instead of six full issues).

Mark Whitcombe

Dear Editor,

Though heavily into doom and gloom, I really liked James Raffan's article "About Boundaries" in the May/June issue of *Pathways*. It reminded me of some other people that deserved a mention such as David Allen of the Ontario Forestry Association who worked long and hard on that conference. That's not a criticism for you can never name everyone but David's name should not be forgotten.

As one of the lucky ones to be at the Without Boundaries conference at Dorset in 1972 I could relate to Raffan's mixed feelings. There were problems but there was a lot of enthusiasm, too, and I remember being very high on the potential of the organization and the outdoor education movement. The fact I am still a COEO member attests that I still believe in what was being attempted in those early days.

I think we all saw different meanings and different possibilities in 'outdoor education'. Certainly my bias was the potential it holds to acquaint young people with our natural resources and their management. Programmes like the Dryden High School Conservation Course and the Espanola Forestry Course still capitalize on learning in the out-of-doors with people who feel at home there - foresters, biologists, naturalists, farmers, and others.

I leaned towards a resources management approach and was somewhat ticked when the 'save the forests and save the world' mentality appeared to be more important to the membership. I had a bit of a problem getting comfortable with the physical education prominence in the organization though I had to give people like Kirk Wipper and Jack Passmore full marks for being there and contributing so generously. Through the years there have been many others come along: the nature study types, the aboriginal worshippers, the history buffs, the human rights champions, and others.

Like so many fields of endeavour outdoor education became complicated with too many messages and not much fellowship in the 'how to' aspects. It is hard to be enthusiastic about fellowship when the costs of getting together soar and the willingness of employers to help

with the bills declines. Unfortunately the economic squeeze has hit outdoor education along with forestry, agriculture and a host of other important but 'socially invisible' callings. Through it all, of course, there have been the continuing good works of people like Terry Carr at the Boyd Conservation Field Centre, Brent Dysart, and many others.

Raffan is right on when he notes the rising costs of education per pupil and the small political voice of 'outdoor education'. And he's right when he notes the many and complicated fields outdoor education attempts to serve. And he's right when he relates outdoor education to the best of teaching in any circumstances. But I am left with the feeling at the end that we really do not have a special place in outdoor education that we should abandon our claim to being unique and join forces with the rest in education. I have a problem with that thinking. I think we can all learn from others but I still prefer to think that there are special opportunities, special techniques, special methods that apply to the outdoor educator that do not apply to those in the indoor classroom, on the stage, or in film or electronic media. I think we have become too engrossed in the programmes and have not concerned ourselves enough with their production to make them award winners. Had the outdoor education experiences of our budget masters been better I doubt we would be seeing the cuts we are now seeing.

I'm away from active participation in COEO and don't really see getting back into it, but I sincerely hope that those who guide it will see it as special, important, valuable and worth working for long into the future.

As I write this I am reminded of the close connection I always felt between outdoor education and interpretation. In that connection I see in my mind's eye three people: a National Park Service interpreter at Jamestown, Virginia, whose name has long since passed but whose presentation still warms my heart and brings a tear to my eye. Jean Wansborough at Swansea Public School. And Betty Wires at the Dryden High Conservation Course.

The Parks interpreter announced at a stop

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along the the tour that at the next stop he was going to introduce us to a friend of his. As we followed along he jumped up and held the hand of a statue of a young woman. "This is my friend." he said. "Her name is Pocahontas." He then began to tell us about her and made her our friend, too. I've often thought about him and her as I've followed others droning on about plant names being heard only by those at the front of the line.

Jean gave a green magic lesson to a group of foresters. She passed a leaf and asked us to describe it. Not one noted it was green!

Betty, a land use planner, put us through role playing exercises in land use planning. An hour of her class was worth hours and hours of dull lecturing in the field.

We have so much to learn and teach about being effective educators in the outdoors no matter what the message, no matter what our special interest, no matter what the audience. The outdoors does present special demands and opportunities and I hope that COEO will continue to work with them.

Outdoor education is not some second-class activity because we wear outdoor clothes! Good grief, most teachers now wear outdoor clothes in the classroom every day. Maybe we have been more effective than we give ourselves credit!

Again, my thanks to James Raffan. He made me think.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Coats

P.S. I continue to read *Pathways* with much interest. Well done!

Sketch Pad

The artwork in this issue is out of the Retro-spective files. It is off an old COEO poster from the mid-'80's. The art is done by Bruce Hood - surely one of the most talented outdoor educators to contribute to COEO. Bruce is an excellent biologist and naturalist who went from a wildlife position with the Ministry of Natural Resources to become one of the initiators at Kortwright Conservation Field Centre. There he stimulated and created many of their early programmes. He has a marvellous way of taking some technical point and presenting it with creative flair and enthusiasm. A walk with Bruce through a woodlot was full of 'Wow!' Bruce is also a fine artist - as you can see! - and an

excellent potter. One of my personal treasures is a whimsical pottery caricature Bruce did for the presenters at the COEO Conference at Mono Cliffs. Bruce is also one of the most pleasant and genuine individuals - one of those wonderful COEO people connections! For the last decade, Bruce has been working in Eastern Ontario for the Ministry of Natural Resources, as a Stewardship Co-ordinator in Pembroke.

I was out paddling the other day pretending it was still summer. The naked trees reminded me otherwise, and renewed my appreciation for pines and tamaracks. My thoughts drifted to our Annual Conference last month. What a great way to kick off fall and another school year! For those of you unable to attend, you missed another great COEO event. Many thanks to Clare Magee and the conference committee for all their efforts. Special congratulations go out to this year's COEO Awards Winners: Rob Heming (Dorothy Walter Award for Leadership), the Etobicoke Board of Education (Robin Dennis Award), and Gina Bernabei (President's Award). We will retell the highlights of the weekend with you through *Pathways*. I'd like to share the President's Report with you, as well as share the ideas that came out of our Plenary Session.

The past year was a challenging one for COEO. A vision-setting task force looked at how best to bridge the gap between an ideal world and current realities. The following priorities were identified: creating a marketing plan to increase membership and cashflow; examining member needs and increasing membership services; revising resource binders for board members; strengthening regions and generating interest in smaller events, which would run regardless of numbers; getting COEO online with a web site; and identifying potential partnerships. These actions have either been taken or are on-going. EcoScope for Sustaining Wetlands and the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve are up and happening with COEO involvement. Northern Illinois University courses continue to provide P.D. opportunities and *Pathways* remains a well-regarded journal. The Constitution and By-laws were revised at our AGM.

I have officially taken on the role of President. Active recruiting over the weekend netted many new faces for the Board of Directors, who we welcome with open arms. Check inside the front cover of this *Pathways* to see who's who. We need participation from all COEO members. Your input/feedback is welcome at any board meeting or via phone or fax.

The Plenary Session at the conference was a panel discussion entitled "Back to the Future". The following statements were shared. The old axiom "It's easier to ask forgiveness than get permission" still seems to hold true for many people trying to get their classes "out of school". Some suggestions include starting in the schoolyard (no transportation costs or permission required). Educate parents; a slideshow

works well. Show how your programmes are curriculum linked so experiences can be embedded into the curriculum. (Mary Roberts at Sheldon Centre for Outdoor Education has produced an invaluable resource that cross-references specific programmes with the Common Curriculum outcomes. She will gladly share it with you on paper or disk - just contact her.) Work on the attitudes of other teachers so there will be fewer problems when it comes to interrupting class schedules. Be a role model for your peers - show them they can do outdoor education activities too. Hopefully, outdoor education will soon become part of teacher training across the province.

How do we do outdoor education with little or no money? Staying on site is one solution - how about a schoolyard naturalization project? Instead of travelling to a field centre, bring in a resource person. (Many of our displaced, multi-talented outdoor educators are now freelancing - let's support these entrepreneurs while benefiting from their expertise and enthusiasm.) Ask for help. Many of COEO's elders and other local resource people would be willing to help out. Look for stewardship and partnership opportunities, i.e., EcoScope, and The Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve. Fundraising is an ongoing challenge. We shouldn't sell ourselves short by always operating on a shoestring - quality programs require serious funding. Who are our potential financial supporters? (At Project DARE, we got the local Lions Club and Legion to buy snowshoes.)

What about COEO's future? We need to cross the threshold and believe in what we're doing: have a common vision. A long time ago, COEO published The Code of Recommended Practices in Outdoor Education. Now we need a Code of Recommended Programmes and Experiences. We need to research and document the greater need for outdoor education now, as our hope for the future. We need to revisit our budget and do some niche marketing to raise funds. A solid focus on our goals and what we CAN do will help bring folks together. We will aim to provide more services to members - more workshops, positive newsletters, and a journal with more hands-on ideas. We will try to reduce the red tape at the Board level to make it easier to achieve our goals. COEO runs on energy, vision and goodwill - things in shorter supply these days. We hope our enthusiasm is contagious and spurs on more folks to get involved.

*For those of you
unable to attend,
you missed another
great COEO event.*

*Many thanks to
Clare Magee and
the conference
committee for all
their efforts.*

*Now we need a
Code of
Recommended
Programmes and
Experiences.*

*Yours in the outdoors,
Linda McKenzie, COEO President*

OUTDOOR TEACHER EDUCATION : A 25-YEAR REPORT CARD

Bert Horwood

*...as part of the
exploration of what
it meant to be
human.*

Each week my piano teacher would take my music note book and write down the scales, studies and pieces I was to practise for the next lesson. And each week, I would approach the lesson with a mixture of dread and hope, for my teacher's expectation of a personal best on the performance of the music was relentless. I have similarly mixed feelings of concern and pride as I set out to write an account of the relationship between outdoor education and teacher education in Ontario. It seems only fair that a person who has written hundreds of "report cards" for students, most of them teachers, should now be called on to publicly assess his own work and that of his colleagues.

The assessment has three parts. The first is a story of learning opportunities for teachers in outdoor education, roughly parallel with the flowering of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO). The second part interprets problems and failures which lurk between the facts of that story. The third part identifies some lessons learned and the hope for the future.

A Brief History

Our story opens in the middle of exciting times for outdoor education. Somehow, without any specialized training themselves, a number of scattered university and teacher college instructors were teaching future teachers in the outdoors. Some of that work was done in the name of physical education, some was done as science, some was done as agriculture. A significant amount was done informally in the context of staffing summer camps for children and this element, if not the others, certainly reaches as far back as the early 1940's when staff of the Ottawa Normal School (to take just one example) and Ottawa teachers occupied major programme positions at the Ottawa YMCA Camps.

By the early 1960's formal Science Field Studies were part of teacher training at the London Teachers College and Norman Massey, one of the founders of that program, was about to publish his remarkable resource book of science experiences for children². Out of this programme emerged a number of central participants in the future training of outdoor teachers including Rod Bain², at University of Western Ontario, and Clarke Birchard of Bruce County and COEO fame.

Of those developments in London Clarke Birchard writes:

"We discontinued the special Field studies weeks...In its place we used a wide variety of sites in and around the city of London and infused outdoor education experiences into each course throughout the year. With the creative use of the "spare" periods of instructors and students, lunch periods and after-class times we did a more practical, relevant and pedagogically appropriate job. I also ran an after-hours, extra-curricular Outdoors Club which planned and ran its own programme of field studies visits tending towards academics rather than towards the "outers" concepts and skills."³

By the late 1960's Queen's had established an innovative teacher education programme which in its first five years provided outdoor work for most of the student teachers. Here the emphasis was more on adventure in the outdoors, but not to the exclusion of school subjects. And here, too, the intent was not to teach outdoor pursuits for their own sake, but rather as part of the exploration of what it meant to be human. In short, personal growth and development for both teacher candidates and school students was the main thrust brought to Ontario by Bob Pieh through his work at Queen's. Unlike the situation described by Clarke at London, the Queen's programme had its outdoor-related courses central to the curricu-

lum at first. Later, instructors at Queen's also found themselves looking for cracks in the timetable in which to squeeze the outdoor education work.

At about the same time, the Ontario College of Education (now Faculty of Education, University of Toronto) had found an energetic professor in the person of Bill Andrews. Bill's work emphasized the teaching of environmental science through field work. His many books and workshops, especially through the Environmental Science Teachers Association of Ontario, were highly popular.

In the 1960's other teachers colleges were also incorporating outdoor education, and to a greater or lesser extent they added their contributions when the colleges were merged with the university faculties of education⁴. Thus, by the mid-1970's there was an established component of teacher education for outdoor education at all grade levels in Toronto and London, and a full-fledged programme of teacher education at Queen's. In Ottawa, Paul Trudel and his colleagues were placing students teachers at the MacSkimming centre and, in the north, Bob Rogers at Laurentian University in Sudbury, was exerting his influence through his work in outdoor leadership.

All of that is but a summary of the trends in the pre-service training of teachers prior to the formation of COEO. But teachers cannot possibly learn all they need to know during their undergraduate and teacher preparation studies. The creation of deliberate outdoor-orientated courses and programmes in pre-service education was matched by the appearance of numerous workshops, professional development days, short courses, and additional qualification courses for practising teachers. Many agencies contributed to this effort. Norman Massey, who had moved from London Teachers College to the Ministry of Education, was instrumental in stimulating major workshops all across the province. The Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF) likewise established a science curriculum office, ably operated by Don Cooper, with a mandate to run workshops, many of them outdoors, for teachers. Similarly, local OTF

affiliates offered frequent professional development opportunities, most often in the context of subjects like geography and physical education as well as the sciences. The universities were also active in offering summer courses in outdoor education. Sometimes the courses were independent of Ministry of Education requirements and sometimes they led to additional qualification. Teacher associations such as the Science Teachers Association of Ontario, the Environmental Science Teacher Association of Ontario, and the Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation all included outdoor education reports and instruction in their conferences and publications. The creation of COEO was part of the explosion in these processes.

Three other Ontario Ministries were also players in the business of training outdoor teachers. The Ministry of Natural Resources contributed personnel and resources continuously from the earliest days of this story. COEO's "Make Peace with Winter" conferences, among many others at the Leslie Frost Centre, and Project WILD workshops are examples. In the 1970's the Ministry of the Environment had an education branch which sponsored annual weekend training sessions, usually at the Bolton Centre. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, under various names, was a stalwart supporter of outdoor education especially in the training programmes at Bark Lake. The incomparable Dorothy Walter, an officer of that Ministry, was a key person in supporting many of COEO's professional development projects.

In the 1970's and 1980's both pre-service and in-service teacher education underwent significant evolution. A highly-rated component of teacher education is the practicum. The development of outdoor education centres enabled beginners to be placed in centres for part of their student teaching practicum. This worked to the advantage both of the centres, who deployed student teachers in key staff roles, and the student teachers who were able to have a reasonably sustained, supervised experience in outdoor teaching⁵. Cooperative education

One of the peculiarities in this burgeoning situation was the lack of an official Ministry of Education qualification in Outdoor Education.

programmes in universities such as Waterloo and Queen's extended this mutual advantage to intervals ranging from 6 weeks to 4 months. The Queen's Co-operative programme in Outdoor and Experiential Education was unique in that it combined conventional post-baccalaureate teacher certification training with added emphasis in the theory and practice of outdoor and experiential teaching.

From the late 1970's onwards, undergraduate studies in Recreation became an important entry into the outdoor education profession. Programmes at the Universities of Ottawa and Waterloo (especially Co-op) were joined by the Outdoor Recreation programme at Lakehead University to graduate students who were competent and keen to become outdoor educators. One of the challenges for these programmes was to provide the background in academic disciplines required for teachers in addition to studies proper to recreation. In the case of Lakehead University this challenge was met by offering two concurrent bachelor's degrees, one in outdoor recreation and the other in an academic discipline.

One of COEO's early tasks was to promote advanced studies at the graduate level for outdoor educators. There were tensions in this process because many of the potential students were already advanced practitioners who were seeking greater depth and broader horizons, while other potential students, despite being experienced teachers, required more elementary professional development in content specific to the outdoors. The tension between theory and practice, and the perpetual need to be able to bring together an economically viable number of students in one place at one time, further complicated the search for a graduate programme.

COEO's efforts led to an arrangement with Northern Illinois University (NIU) whereby COEO would guarantee the enrolment for NIU courses to be offered at locations in Ontario. This arrangement was sanctioned by the then Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities and many Ontario teachers took advantage of the opportunity by taking a course or two, or by

completing an entire Master's degree programme including a period of residence at the Laredo Taft Campus in Illinois. By the early 1980's, Master's degrees emphasizing outdoor education, although more generally theoretical and sanctioned by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, were also being taken by Ontario outdoor teachers at Queen's, University of Toronto, and University of Western Ontario. Later, the Environmental Studies programme at York University became a source of graduate studies relevant to outdoor educators.

One of the peculiarities in this burgeoning situation was the lack of an official Ministry of Education qualification in Outdoor Education. It was frustrating for teachers not to gain specific recognition for their further professional education. The closest available qualification was the three-part additional qualification in Environmental Science. For some years, this benefit was attached to successful completion of the Co-op programme at Queen's. And numerous summer offerings of the Environmental Science Additional Qualification courses were offered with outdoor education emphasis at various sites. In recent years, perhaps the most consistent offering of these courses has been at Nippissing University where the list of instructors reads like a "Who's Who" of outdoor education in Ontario, including Brian Richardson, Kelly Lawson and Barrie Martin.

In addition to sponsoring and stimulating conferences, professional development courses and graduate studies, COEO has contributed to teacher education through its publications. The first newsletter, *Anee*, served to carry the Council's news as well as thoughtful and practical articles by members. A teacher can still find interest and stimulation in the pages of the old issues of *Anee*. COEO published other materials, mostly directories and reviews⁶, but also Bob Rogers' book on outdoor leadership.⁷ The Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation and the Ontario Ministry of Natural resources were allies and sponsors in these publication efforts. In 1989 *Anee* was replaced by a new-look *Pathways* and it now continues the tradition of bringing the best in outdoor education thought

and practice to COEO members. The continuing education of professionals is greatly served by having a forum in which to publish and exchange ideas.

The story of the education of outdoor teachers is the story of many paths coming together and travelling along together for a time. By the mid-1990's, the situation was changing again as more and more outdoor centres closed, pre-service programmes were cut back and other forms and styles of outdoor education emerged. The great flood tide of outdoor education from the 1960's to the 1990's was ebbing, and a new generation of teachers was learning to find its way through a new pattern of obstacles and opportunities.

Interpreting the Story

This history is necessarily incomplete. But it reveals enough to support some hard questions and answers. After enjoying 25 years of hired work as a teacher educator, I have to ask, "What is of value that would-be teachers learn when they are "being teacher-educated?" The pioneers and leaders in outdoor education in Ontario took no courses in outdoor education methods or theory. Many of the giants in the COEO story took their graduate work in education after having made their mark as outdoor teachers. Where did they learn the disposition, skills and knowledge they used to establish their work as outdoor educators? It is hard to evade a humbling interpretation: courses in outdoor education for teachers are not essential for innovative outdoor education to happen.

Another question arises from the large number of teachers (surely in the thousands?) who did study outdoor education, whether as part of their pre-service course work, as an intern or student teacher, or in an in-service workshop or course. If these courses and training were effective why is there not much more outdoor education going on across the province? Surely one would expect to see school children in every park and school yard; surely it is reasonable to expect that COEO would have

many hundreds of members; surely these well-trained and keen professionals would find ways to bring outdoor education into thousands of classrooms and also open and sustain their centres despite political intransigence. It pains me to infer that the great flowering of outdoor teacher training had little or no long term effect in terms of promoting the visible practice of outdoor education in schools.

There is a dilemma here. Some teachers (but not all) are major contributors to outdoor education without being specifically trained for it, and some teachers, specifically trained as outdoor teachers, do not make a contribution. The dilemma grows out of inconsistencies between what teachers do in practice and the specific content of their training. The apparent subject of study bears little consistent relationship to what graduates do with their knowledge and opportunities. This points to one of the imponderable variables in the results of teacher education and reflects the consequences of the freedom of graduates to follow a wide diversity of paths.

On another dimension, the placement of teacher education in the universities and the large amount of graduate studies in outdoor education has not produced a body of theory emerging from the field. Outdoor educators have developed a body of practice with relatively little development of a related understanding of their processes. In short, we have "know how", but we lack "know why". What outdoor teachers know about practice is idiosyncratic and unattached to a comprehensive, articulated theory of what makes outdoor education work. The persistent preference for the practical over the theoretical, and the limited research effort by those trained to do it, has left the field without firm foundations⁸. In the general field of teacher education, there is a similar lack of comprehensive theory, and that lack may also help to explain the dilemma of inconsistency mentioned above.

COEO's first 25 years seems to me to be like the blossoming of a great flower on the tree of education. A flower can be assessed for its beauty and perfume, and certainly COEO is a

The dilemma grows out of inconsistencies between what teachers do in practice and the specific content of their training.

What does matter is the total of their personal positive experiences with the outdoors 10, the attitudes and commitments they bring to their professional life, and the quality of the character and personality of their teachers.

thing of joy. But the real business of flowers is seed and a more profound assessment is to ask what difference the blossoming of outdoor education has made. From the perspective of teacher education, it is not enough to examine what teachers have done because the ultimate fruit of teacher education work is what pupils in the schools learn and do. It may be that 25 years is too short a time to fairly assess the results. But the view from 1996 is gloomy. The millions of school children who have passed through outdoor centres alone⁹, not counting the additional numbers who participate in outdoor education within their individual schools, might be expected to reveal themselves, for example, as environmentally sensitive and aware voters, municipal and board of education representatives and even MPPs. But this has not happened on a noticeable scale. There is no evidence at the municipal level and certainly not at the provincial level that outdoor education ever happened.

Looking to the Future

I have drawn three related interpretations from the history of teacher education in outdoor work. First, there is a dilemma in outdoor teacher education: on the one hand, able and creative outdoor teachers exist without taking any formal studies in outdoor education, and on the other hand, the effects of outdoor teacher education have been less than might be expected. Second, there is little development of a disciplined body of integrated practice and theory. Third, the majority of graduates of outdoor programmes (taught by the graduates of outdoor teacher courses) do not display great value for either the environment or the process of outdoor education.

How can we explain these disturbing interpretations of the report card, and what is the hope for the future of outdoor education? To find answers to these questions is critically important because it is only from such answers that outdoor teachers, especially within COEO, can make progress in the next 25 years. I have the highest of hopes for the future. And to say

what those hopes are and why I have them, I'll offer some possible explanations for the problems detailed above.

It seems to me that the subject of a course, or a programme of study, is highly over-rated as a predictor for what it might or might not do for a person who takes it. It really doesn't matter whether teachers take courses in outdoor education or not. What does matter is the total of their personal positive experiences with the outdoors¹⁰, the attitudes and commitments they bring to their professional life, and the quality of the character and personality of their teachers. In short, "What a teacher is may be more important than what a teacher knows"¹¹. Courses in outdoor and experiential education will continue to be valuable to the extent that they exemplify and instil attention to learning in a context of personal growth and development. Most valuable of all is inspiration of the kind that inspires future teachers to be inspiring themselves.

Teacher education efforts are wisely directed toward encouraging teachers who have strong outdoor backgrounds to enter the profession and towards inspiring the kind of commitment that can make good things happen. Here is an example of such influence, contained in a letter from a teacher (who happened to have been raised in a strongly environmentalist family) to one of his professors.

"I have, over the years changed my outlook and perspective on what we educators have been doing in the class. I have also come to the conclusion that with or without the help of of the school board, if you really believe [that] what you are doing is going to make a difference .. then go for it!"¹²

Another line of explanation lies in the continual marginalization of outdoor work in schools and colleges. The decision of the Ontario Ministry of Education, in the late 1970's, to not establish a certificate or qualification specifically in outdoor education, and the subsequent absence of the education ministry from co-operation with groups like COEO is an instance of this marginalization at the highest level. In the schools, even from the start of our

story at London Teachers College, long term use of outdoor facilities has been dispensable, and outdoor teachers were forced to find the cracks in the timetable (lunch hours, weekends, etc.) into which to fit their work. Ironically, the willingness and adaptability of the outdoor educators to take advantage of the smallest opportunity worked against the movement because administrators saw that it was not necessary to provide better time and space for outdoor education. The perception of officialdom that outdoor education was a marginal option was confirmed.

In circumstances where the key Ministry is absent as a player and outdoor education is perceived as a marginal activity without a real curriculum home, it's not surprising that many beginning teachers who otherwise might have been keen to teach often outdoors would quietly yield to staffroom pressure to conform to a less disruptive, indoor mode of teaching. It's not surprising that teachers are inhibited by the difficulty in obtaining time, buses, and even permissions to use the school yard. What is surprising, puzzling and optimistic is the number of exceptions that persist.

The marginalization of outdoor education and deep cut-backs, in combination with emotionally and intellectually powerful teacher education experiences, has led to an active, lively underground network of outdoor educators. It is hard to visit a park, send a message on an Internet list of outdoor people, or even have dinner in Yellowknife's Wildcat Cafe without meeting someone who is linked into the network of former students, interns and instructors in some form of outdoor education. Members of the network may be part-time teachers or guides, full-time interpreters or administrators, or freelancers between contracts, but somehow they keep in touch with each other and keep a kind of faith together based on shared experiences and values in outdoor education. This highly informal network is almost global in extent. It reveals to its members activities and practice which are invisible to outsiders. In times of threat it is a positive adaptive advantage

to be invisible.

If this explanation is valid, it means that part of outdoor education is a kind of underground mycelium. The energy and the knowledge is there, active, diverse and safe. Given more hospitable conditions, this network can be expected to bear fruit. The vitality of the network is part of the hope of the future.

There are individual teachers in individual schools and outdoor centres scattered across the province who are quietly persisting in what Jim Raffan calls the practice of good teaching¹³ by spending significant periods of time with their students outdoors or at least out of school in some form of experiential education. These teachers and their work, although a challenge to teacher education, also contribute to the hope of the future. The ones I know (for examples, Jeff Peters, Gail Simmons, Mark Whitcombe, Cheryl Dell, Chris Bresnahan, MJ Barrett, Heidi Mack, and Gina Bernabei, to mention only a few) have certain characteristics in common: they have all spent significant parts of their lives outdoors, either working on the family farm, or at summer camp, or in field work of some kind. They all believe that their job is to provide stimulating experiences for their students and create the conditions in which the students make personal meaning from those experiences. These teachers all have a critically thoughtful view of their own work; they tend to make corrections and changes and rarely ever do things the same way more than two or three times. They are ingenious and tirelessly energetic in finding ways under, around or through administrative barriers. They are largely indifferent to the disapproval of their peers who prefer not to disturb anyone. All these teachers have studied some discipline or other. But not the same one. There are field biologists, agricultural experts, geographers, English scholars, nurses, physical education majors and so on. It doesn't matter what the head holds so long as the heart is right.

And how did teachers like these get their hearts right? It was by meeting inspiring mentors. It was by catching the belief that teaching experientially is good teaching, and

They all believe that their job is to provide stimulating experiences for their students and create the conditions in which the students make personal meaning from those experiences.

*Broaden the view
of outdoor
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through inspiration to the kind of confidence that says, "Go for it!" Teacher education programmes have no special monopoly on inspiring mentors, as will be noted from the fact that there are outdoor teachers who received their primary motivation in places where there are no teacher education courses. The critical and hopeful element somewhere in the past of these teachers is a spirit which came to them in their encounters with their work. A canoe trip with a Bob Henderson, or the framing of a house with a Karne Kozolanka might provide such an experience, enough to last a professional lifetime.

The teachers of the present and future, however they were trained, are finding ways to provide powerful out-of-school experiences for their students. Some are moving into the private sector in ecotourism, community development, environmental consulting, therapy, and adventure touring and more. Many are finding and exploiting remaining cracks in government programs. Others are developing and teaching secondary school integrated packages, some of which take the students off school premises for as much as 40 percent of the time. The highly refined courses from the Institute of Earth Education continue to develop, and that organization does its own teacher training. Local action, like having students grow a "wild" area in the school yard, continues to be an option. Another hope of the future is that teachers like these and alternatives like these continue to exist.

Now, in imitation of my piano teacher, I write out an assignment for outdoor teacher education for the next 25 years. Broaden the view of outdoor education so that it becomes understood as experiential education. Extend the target group of teachers from outdoor specialists, to include every teacher and develop ways to deny marginalization. Maintain the many different sources and paths by which teachers come to the profession and the broad diversity of destinations to which they go. Promote frequent, prolonged experiences for children in the outdoors. Starting with the fragmented pieces of excellent research already published, develop a

comprehensive theory for the field. Above all, ensure that all teacher education work has a high level of emotional and intellectual content so as to inspire potential teachers with spirit, high resolve, ingenuity and confidence.

NOTES

{1} Massey, N.B., (1965). Patterns for the teaching of science. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada.

{2} It is very dangerous to name individuals because other worthy persons are bound to be left out. However, in this kind of reflective article, I've chosen to run the risk and name exemplary individuals, recognizing that those named represent many others who, while unnamed, will be well known to readers.

{3} Birchard, C. (1996). Personal Communication. See also Outdoor Education - Without Boundaries, Proceedings of 1972, pp 126-130, in which Clarke gives a full description of the programme at London Teachers College.

{4} In the 1970's, the Ontario teachers colleges, which had specialized in training teachers for elementary grades, were closed, and many of their programmes and staff were taken into university faculties of education. This move brought teacher education for all grade levels together.

{5} Student teaching placements in outdoor centres may also have had a disadvantage by failing to situate outdoor teaching as part of a classroom teacher's work. Practice teaching in centres suggested to student teachers that outdoor education properly happened only in centres.

{6} For example, see Strano, D. & Henderson, B., (1995). The importance of outdoor education in school curriculum: A compilation of research. Toronto; Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario.

{7} Rogers, R.J., (1979). Leading to share, Sharing to lead. Toronto; Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario.

{8} For a fuller treatment see Horwood, B., (1996). Outdoor education research and the schools. In MacAvoy, L. (Ed.) Proceedings of the third biennial research symposium of the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors. (In press.)

{9} Michelle Richardson, in her 1990 survey with Paul Eagles Outdoor education centres in Ontario boards of education, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, reported 483,134 student-days of outdoor education in outdoor centres for 1989-90 alone.

{10} Nancy Peterson's unpublished MSc. thesis (Developmental variables affecting environmental sensitivity in professional environmental educators, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, 1982) shows the importance of life experiences in the outdoors.

{11} Faculty of Education, Queen's University Calendar, 1971.

{12} From a personal communication of Bob Briehl to Bud Wiener. Quoted with permission.

{13} Raffan, J. (1996). About boundaries: A personal reflection on 25 years of COEO and outdoor education. *Pathways* 8(3), 4-11.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many thanks to colleague and friend Jim Raffan for critically reading an earlier version of this article. Errors and wrong-headed interpretations which persist are strictly the author's responsibility.

Bert Horwood, having retired from the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, is looking forward to the unfolding of the next 25 years without having to do much about it.

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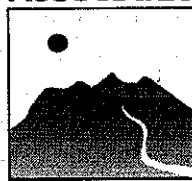
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The Leadership Roles of the Bark Lake Camp and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation

By Dorothy Walter

Two people, neither of whom are well-known to COEO members, had a profound influence on the establishment of the camp, its philosophy and the principles of learning upon which its programmes were built. The first, Gordon A. Wright, is the feisty gentleman in his eighties who lives in Alliston, Ontario; and the other is Robert E. Secord, whose untimely death in 1993 meant the loss to us of "Mr. Sport and Recreation".

Gordon, as Director of the Physical Education Branch of the then Department of Education, after establishing the Ontario Athletic Leadership Camp on Lake Couchiching, searched out the Bark Lake property. It was bought and in 1948, the Ontario Camp Leadership Centre was established. Its purpose was to train camp counsellors to meet the needs being expressed by non-profit camps. It was an auspicious year to start. If the camp road had not been built and if staff had not become firefighters, the area would have been wiped out by fire. Re-organization within the Department of Education led Gord Wright to move to Ottawa as Director of Fitness and Amateur Sport.

Robert "Bob" Secord's influence started in the late 60's when the Centre was transferred to the Community programmes Branch of the Department of Education where Bob was the Director. His support for Bark Lake was constant. Bob's staff had a background in recreation and adult education; and for the first time, a Consultant position was established specifically to serve the provincial camping and outdoor education community and organizations. This position also included responsibility for the programme at the Ontario Camp Leadership Centre. Contact was initiated with the related provincial organizations and the "help-

ing" role of the government was launched. (Dorothy Walter was the first person to fill this new position.) Recreation, as a right of everyone, gained recognition through the formation of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation. Bark Lake Camp remained and flourished through this era with Bob Secord in the position of Assistant Deputy Minister, as position he filled until retirement.

The reason for Bark Lake's existence and for its success was the dedication of everyone associated with its operation to provide opportunities for personal learning which, in turn, helped the organization they represented. It was unique - a government programme dedicated to supporting, initially, leadership development of youth who would become camp counsellors. "Unique" because no other province or country had this resource. By the late 60's, its reputation grew nationally and internationally. Coincident with the move to the Community programmes Branch, three significant events for Bark Lake occurred. The Bark Lake director retired after many years of serving the camp; an in-depth report on youth was written; and we were introduced to a philosophy of learning which was new, exhilarating and challenging by organizational development consultants that would influence, immediately, the way in which Bark Lake's goals would be achieved.

Transition

The Centre's courses had been right for the times - teacher oriented, skill focussed and with pass/fail goals. Its results were supported by the sponsoring groups but many a young person attended a final banquet knowing they would not receive the camp crest - the symbol of

graduation. Girls attended in July and boys in August. Little activity occurred in the "shoulder" seasons.

The 1970's

1970 arrived. Bark Lake started its new leadership role with camping and the outdoor education communities. Bob Wiele, Dal Broadhead and "Blues" Chapman were our facilitators as we committed the Ministry and staff to change. Group-centred learning was established with development of leadership qualities and personal objectives as the goal. It became known as the summer of "What do you think?" as the response to any and all questions! Consider the challenges: find a Director and programme Director ready to handle change; find staff compatible to work in pairs as Resource Counsellors with 16 camp counsellors - a group they stayed with for 21 days, and possessing good leadership skills and camping skills. Then the pair started over again with Course 2 and finished up the summer in skill teaching teams for the student Outdoor Skills course. In order to have any youth attend, the traditional sponsors had to be convinced to continue to send their CITs to Bark Lake. Archie Hubert and Jackie Salmona worked the magic with staff and the 16 year olds. The new era was launched.

Outdoor skills courses were offered, in August 1971, to grade 10 and 11 secondary school students who were potential leaders from Outers, Geography and Science Clubs. Word got out. The place called Bark Lake was accomplishing success. Teachers soon began to realize that their students returned with skills, enthusiasm and a great potential for leadership. After hearing from these teachers, it seemed natural for the planners at Bark Lake to approach the Ministry of Education to partner us in an Outdoor Skills course for teachers. The response shouldn't have surprised us - so we did it on our own in 1973. The Ministry of Culture and Recreation approved the concept and the budgeting, and staff enjoyed the challenges - and there were lots.

Leadership and Outreach

Under Bob Secord's leadership, there was a trust of staff recommendations and a readiness to support new learning opportunities for people and organizations. Support meant philosophical, financial and personal. The work atmosphere was productive and Bark Lake and camping and outdoor education organizations benefited. Bark Lake, years before, had given significant leadership annually for the non-profit camp directors' workshop. It now functions successfully and independently as the Ontario Camp Leadership Workshop. Teachers from the skills courses started to bring their school groups back in the "shoulder" seasons. Seniors who had been camp leaders in earlier days established, with Bark Lake's help, a successful annual camp known as S.A.B.L.E.

Provincial organizations, including COEO, held annual meetings and special workshops at the site. The resources of the Consultant's budget helped develop skill leadership course content such as that incorporated into the O.R.C.A. and the co-operatively written document "Code of Recommended Practices of Outdoor Education in Ontario" (COEO, O.T.F. and O.C.A.). An exchange of counsellors between Belgium and Ontario was initiated through the same resources including a visit to camps in Belgium by the Consultant!

Someone would be overlooked, so it would be unwise to start including names of staff who made significant contributions to the resources, the site and the innovative programme options: the Leadership Staff Manual, or "bible"; the Trillium Fitness Trail; the GIVE-GET registration process; magic fires for the opening campfire (if the flaming arrow didn't get stuck on the zip line); the unique formation of kayaks for the I.Y.Y. celebration; the first group of teachers who forgot that EAST is a significant bearing if you are orienteering through the bush - and had us waiting back at camp with lit bonfires to guide them in. That's a learning similar to the need for quick response when a teacher's course candidate suffered hypothermia while out on a sailboard. The high point for many was, when under the creative management of Rob Heming,

the ropes course became a unique high ropes installation. Under skilled tutelage from Carl Rohnke, the staff became known for their quality of instruction and their success with participants from all courses and all groups.

Budgets, Grants and Revenue

Bark Lake belonged to its public and was dedicated to its clients. The Ministry of Culture and Recreation/Tourism and Recreation (etc.) had to justify and fight for the Operation and programme budget. Our first teachers' course brought our first revenue and it was applied directly to reduce our catering budget - a bit unorthodox - so unorthodox the process was stopped by General Revenue. In 1987, after side-stepping the issue for years, the expectations of the government was a goal of financial self-sufficiency. By 1995, the revenue generated could have accomplished this but, again, it had to go into general revenue for Ontario.

Similarly, the budget allocated to camping and outdoor education organizations had to be justified but there was great pride in the Division for this place and these programmes. The Consultant's time spent at many meetings of the Boards of the Ontario Camping Association and COEO meant insight into need for specific grant support for the submissions. It also meant not-so-subtle prompts about grants for retreats to do long-range planning and, would you believe, facilitation of more effective Board meetings.

New Era

By the beginning of 1987, new courses under the skilled direction of Rob Heming, the Centre Manager, addressed new needs of youth: Youth Leadership Challenge programme linked with the Safe Schools Task Force as a major partner is a good example of change. Other innovative partnerships were formed.

The camp site itself during the 70's was intended to be a model for camp directors to see in action. Original cabins were replaced by four styles of accommodation. Despite being meant to influence the trends in camp architecture you

might say it wasn't Bark Lake's greatest triumph. It just meant we had four sections with four very divergent designs.

In the late 80's and early 90's, however, site changes happened and the new buildings were startling. We outgrew the old dining room. The new building has since been copied at another camp. With long-range plans for year-round use came the building of Oak Centre. Its comfortable, elegant design changed the face of the east side of camp and supplied a much-needed adult centre. The A-frame cabins it replaced were skidded across the ice and an outpost site was established.

The leadership role of Bark Lake and the Ministry dedication to the participants and their affiliated organizations meant thousands of people were "Bark Lakers" and the success, the outreach, the nostalgia had profound influences - like a pebble dropped into a pond. The perpetual aim of the programmes to be on the cutting edge; the sensitivity to help young counsellors to deal with re-entry; the willingness to bring in famous resource consultants from the U.S. and overseas; the need to be accepting of new trends and consequences of asking the chef to cater to our first vegetarian staff members; the two staff always dressed in formal attire for dinner on the Teachers' Course sailing out-trip; the excitement of also having another "first" - youth with prostheses; youth with cystic fibrosis who excelled in the leadership courses; the dedication and time spent by staff on in-depth evaluations; the kick-line of staff who always sent the course participants with an energetic version of "We'd love to linger a little longer" at the final breakfast.

Watching a sunset on Bark Lake was a memorable experience. Watching the sunset of Bark Lake causes pause and the question, "Why?"

DOROTHY WALTER retired from the position of Camping and Outdoor Education Consultant for the Ministry of Culture and Recreation/Tourism and Recreation/etc. where her responsibilities included The Ontario Camp Leadership Centre (Bark Lake).

She is an honorary life member and long-time supporter of COEO.

Pathways asked a number of COEO members where they were introduced to COEO and where they had their most memorable outdoor education experiences as professionals and leaders. Respondents described fond memories of workshops, conferences, courses and/or their students' visits to Bark Lake.

"One of the things that I always thought was special about Bark Lake was that it gave people the confidence to try things that they had never done - whether it was sailing, orienteering, canoeing, high-ropes initiatives or overnight camping for the first time. Teachers would gain

such commitment and become skilled and competent enough to go back and implement those experiences with their own students."

"The staff teams at Bark would get together at the end of the camp periods and read the evaluations from their students. Often their responses were so heartfelt and so moving that it was scary but awesome to think that we had that much influence. Kids would write things such as 'These were the best two weeks of my life.'"

A Call for Submissions to Pathways Retrospective Series

The articles being published in the 1996 issues of *Pathways* in recognition of the twenty-fifth anniversary of COEO are being enthusiastically appreciated by many readers.

Vol. 8, No. 1 contained an article by Lloyd Fraser recalling many of the people, events, dates and places of our first twenty-five years. In Vol. 8, No. 2, Clarke Birchard described the climate of thought and some of the important formative influences of the late sixties and early seventies that contributed to the rapid growth and spread of outdoor education in Ontario and the founding of COEO. Issue No. 3, includes Jim Raffan's reflective look at the first COEO Conference, the hopes and dreams that were expressed there, comments on what has happened since and some challenges for the present and future.

Upcoming issues during the remainder of 1996 will include

accounts of twenty-five years of outdoor education in Conservation Authorities; the leadership roles of "Bark Lake Camp" and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation as well as The Leslie Frost Centre and the Ministry of Natural Resources; Universities, Community Colleges, Teacher Education institutions and Camps.

What's missing from this list - the school Boards, of course. How would one write a twenty-five year history of outdoor education in the school boards of Ontario? As far as we know, no one person has a complete picture of these developments and how they happened and yet we agree that having such a record would be invaluable in the future for those wishing to build or rebuild facilities and programmes for outdoor education.

At the July '96 meeting of the *Pathways* Editorial Board it was agreed that we would deal with this seemingly unwieldy topic by seeking authors to

write profiles, "life stories", histories or case studies (what should we call these?) of a cross-section of school board programs. This series of profiles should include some of the early starters and a variety of models such as urban and rural, large and small, southern and northern, wealthy and "shoestring". It would be useful to have information such as when and how the programmes and services were started and how they changed over the 25 years, site features, ownership and tenure of properties, staffing, etc. These profiles might include the data already existing in the Catalogue of Programmes and Services with lots more descriptive information.

If you would be willing to compile and write the history of outdoor education in your school board (or have suggestions on who should/could) please contact Clarké Birchard of the *Pathways* Editorial Board.

Fire Dragon in the Night

by Mary Roberts (assisted by Ellen Marshall and Dennis Turkben)

My perpetual Tuesday night stress at Sheldon Centre for Outdoor Education: What am I going to do for evening programme? I wanted something really awesome but nothing in my evening programme repertoire was fitting the criteria I had in mind. "Hey, Ellen, Dennis, you've been to Sheldon a million times - what do you want to do for evening programme?"

We decided we wanted to do a game with flashlights, and a dungeon, and a dragon. We put together the best elements of all the terrific camp games we knew from our collective experience and came up with Fire Dragon in the Night - in less than twenty minutes.

Since that Tuesday night in 1994 'Fire Dragon' has become a Sheldon Classic.

Equipment Needed

To play 'Fire Dragon' you need a well-defined playing area with all sorts of great hiding places, a dark night, 3 adults, 6 flashlights, 1 whistle, 1 pylon for each team and 1 noisemaker for each team (2 spoons work really well).

'Fire Dragon' Rules

1.) Each team will have a 'Keeper of the Sound'. This person will use a secret sound that their teammates will recognize. (Demonstrate the noisemaker.) The 'Keeper of the Sound' will be placed in the playing area by the 'Game Leader'.

2.) The object of the game is to get your whole team from the dungeon to your 'Keeper of the Sound' before the other teams do.

3.) When your whole team is together with the 'Keeper of the Sound' you call out your 'Victory Cheer'. This lets all of the players know that the game is over and they must return to the dungeon to be counted.

4.) In the playing area between the dungeon and the 'Keepers of the Sound' there are 'Fire Dragons' roaming. If a 'Fire Dragon' shines a flashlight on you then you must go to the dungeon.

5.) The only way to be released from the dungeon is to have one of your teammates kick over the pylon (key). Each team has their own pylon.

6.) There is absolutely no running allowed in this game. It is not safe to run in the forest at night. You must sneak!

7.) The only sounds that should be heard in the game are the noisemakers, the occasional "Fire Dragon" roar and the 'Victory Cheers'.

8.) A whistle indicates an emergency. All players must return to the dungeon to be counted if they hear a whistle.

9.) The 'Game Leader' can always be found at the dungeon.

Before Going Outside:

- organize the teams - around 10 kids each. It's easier for the kids if you use previously established groupings, i.e., work groups

- each team needs to delegate a 'Keeper of the Sound', agree on a secret sound signal, and invent a 'Victory Cheer'

- the 'Game Leader' must check that there is no duplication of secret sound signals or 'Victory Cheers'

Take the students to the Playing Area:
Explain the game boundaries and the locations of the dungeons.

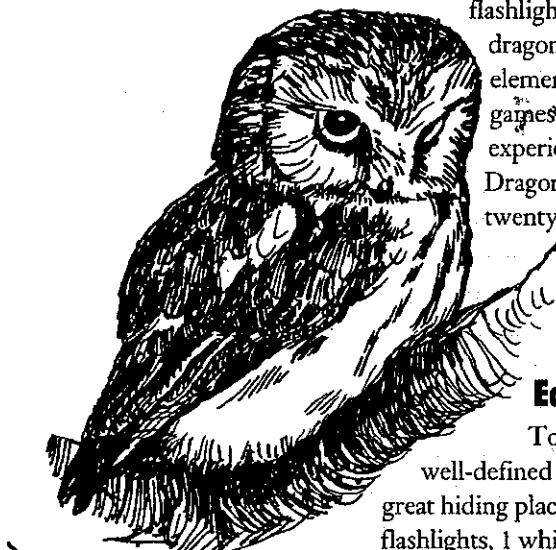
Review safety procedures for if you get lost.

What does a whistle mean?

Where can you find the 'Game Leader'?

No running!

The 'Game Leader' takes the 'Keepers of the Sound' and places them in the playing area. (Not too far away for the first round, a little further for the second, and so on.)



The 'Fire Dragons', meanwhile, are supervising the teams in the dungeon area. It's a good idea to practice the 'Victory Cheers' at this time.

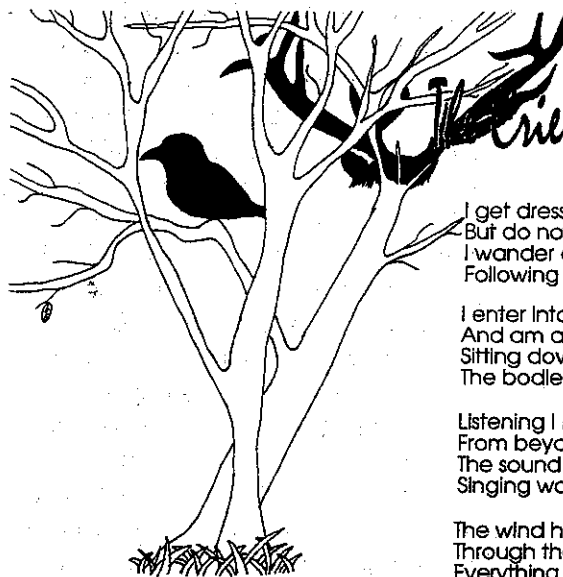
When the 'Game Leader' returns to the dungeon area the game begins. Release the 'Fire Dragons' first (each armed with a spare flashlight). Then let the prisoners go.

In Conclusion

I know what you're thinking. Where is the educational value in this programme? I wrestled with this for a time myself. My answer is that some things we do as outdoor educators don't need to be justified within the context of curriculum documents. Playing an excellent game outside on a dark winter night with friends has a value far beyond bureaucratic jargon. Having fun is important!

Mary Roberts teaches at Sheldon Centre for Outdoor Education where she is doing fine work on the connections between formal curriculum and the residential experience. Her goal is to get every kid happily muddy! Ellen Marshall and Dennis Turkben were Grade Six students from East York at the time they helped Mary design 'Fire Dragon'.

Having fun is important!



The Cries of Nature

I get dressed to go,
But do not know where,
I wander around,
Following my destiny.

I enter into nature,
And am alone.
Sitting down I notice,
The bodies of mother nature.

Listening I hear cries,
From beyond vision,
The sound of birds,
Singing wonderful melodies.

The wind howls,
Through the tree tops,
Everything is so peaceful,
Everything is so quiet.

The peace is broken,
By the sound of destruction.
The tin horses trot by,
Slowly killing the cries of nature.

We don't even worry,
Or even think about it,
When we decide to fix it,
The cries will be gone.

By: *Dwayne Donnelly*

USING STORY FOR A HIGH SCHOOL INTEGRATED CURRICULUM PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

by Bob Henderson, Sona Mehta, and Michael Elrick

OEE needs to be more research conscious and research active.

In 1994-'95, a one year research study was conducted to assess the Community Environmental Leadership Programme (C.E.L.P.). The curriculum integration programme, C.E.L.P., was then in its first year in the curriculum at Centennial Collegiate and Vocational Institute within the Wellington County Board of Education, Ontario.

This study used concept mapping as a measurement tool. (see *Pathways* Vol. 8, No.4, July/August 1996, pp11-18) The following year, in conjunction with teacher Michael Elrick, it was decided, rather than simply continue the concept map programme assessment to enlarge our sample of findings, that we should explore other possible assessment tools. Apart from the obvious benefits to conducting research toward programme assessment, important both politically and most importantly to advance educational understanding and quality, we were keenly conscious of the larger need for the field of Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE) to encourage research in OEE overall.

We feel that research, in this largely practitioner-rooted domain, will be encouraged by, 1) creating researcher/practitioner partnerships or better still practitioner-conceived and -conducted research inquiry, 2) showing the effectiveness of "modest" inquiry into programme assessment, (research conducive to teacher's time and background) and, 3) offering a more open approach to ensure student-generated data most appropriate to experiential learning and hence most useful and relevant to teachers and students alike. We hoped to engage in all of the above by way of example. OEE needs to be more research conscious and research active. The time is upon us when political considerations demand increased accountability. We need to be able to show

others in concrete empirical terms (based on factual information, observation or direct sense experience) that we can answer the critical questions, "What is going on here?" and "Is it worth doing anyway?" The times demand research into our educational offerings and the times can be seen as an opportunity, a springboard encouraging increase pedagogical understanding and therefore a bettering and continuing of educational programmes.

METHOD

Following up on the concept map study (see *Pathways* Vol. 8, July/August 1996, pp11-17), we decided to explore the idea of students (n=20) offering a written story concerning their notions of schooling with a pre- and post-programme visit.

With teacher, Michael Elrick, we decided that student stories would provide an open format for students to choose their particular concerns. The collective information would be more student generated instead of researcher imposed (by way of the researcher framing the boundary of student response by choice of his/her questions).

We also felt that the collection of pre- and post-C.E.L.P. stories could be rich in general anecdotal information as well as specific detailed data. Again, equally important was the point that the study would be within the teacher's wherewithal to continue in subsequent years.

A meeting two days prior to the students' class time set aside for writing their own story allowed for us to discuss what is meant by story. Their stories might take the form of a parable (once upon a time), a fictional account (created characters and circumstances), non-fictional

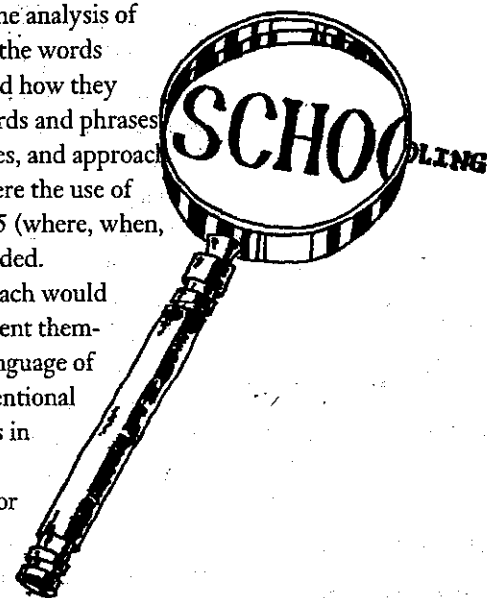
(specific events and people). The stories might be general overviews or refer to specific moments. They would have 15-20 minutes to write a quick story. The stories (pre-C.E.L.P. and post-C.E.L.P.) were not evaluated in any way within the schooling content, and all work was anonymous.

Students would have access to our final research report. The experience of "schooling" pre-and post-C.E.L.P. was the theme of their responses. The conditions paralleled the earlier concept mapping project.

We provided a general structure that allowed for a story analysis strategy. Based on the earlier concept map work, we selected words that were most often used by students (in the previous year) in both positive and negative ways. Of the following 14 words, students were to incorporate at least seven or eight in their telling: challenge, friends, teacher, future, responsibility, teaching, groups, boring, evaluation, community, trust, fun, conflict, learning. There was no maximum limit to the number of

these words that they used. The analysis of the stories involved recording the words selected from the above list and how they were used. Key additional words and phrases were noted. The overall themes, and approach to the stories were noted as were the use of person, first or third, and a W5 (where, when, who, why and way) was recorded.

We felt that a story approach would allow students to directly present themselves; to present the direct language of their lives as students in conventional school settings and as students in the unconventional C.E.L.P. curriculum integration, outdoor experiential programme. The stories were meant to be exemplary of these two different schooling settings. This one request, that the stories be exemplary, was strongly highlighted at both the pre- and post-C.E.L.P. explanation sessions. The students were given two days following the explanation sessions in



ANALYSIS

WORD	PRE C.E.L.P. RESPONSES			POST-C.E.L.P. RESPONSES		
Community	6-	6N	2+	0-	4N	10+
Fun	8-	3N	12+	8-	5N	20+
Group	5-	0N	9+	0-	2N	11+
Learning	7-	1N	12+	1-	2N	11+
Challenge	4-	3N	10+	1-	6N	6+
Friends	3-	5N	20+	0-	5N	21+
Teaching	12-	6N	4+	0-	1N	10+
Teacher	31-	12N	9+	0-	7N	12+
Future	5-	8N	0+	1-	3N	9+
Trust	4-	1N	3+	1-	1N	13+
Conflict	10-	1N	0+	4-	7N	3+
Boredom	6-	2N	1+	3-	2N	4+
Evaluation	5-	1N	0+	0-	1N	3+
Responsibility	5-	4N	0+	0-	2N	8+

TABLE 1. Word Tally of 14 Word Options to include in Student Stories.

LEGEND:

- = word used in negative context
- n = word used in neutral context
- + = word used in positive context

...to explore the idea of students offering a written story concerning their notions of schooling with a pre- and post-programme visit.³

which to reflect on their most exemplary story.

Table 1 represents the findings of a word tally from the selection of fourteen words provided of which students were encouraged to employ seven or eight. The words were treated as being used by the student in a positive, negative or neutral manner. Neutral signifies that the word was perhaps being introduced or meant to lead to another point or neutral in context. Positive and negative connotations were therefore recorded only when the meaning was very clear. Occasionally, words very similar to the provided words were used, for example; community - family, evaluation - assignment, teacher - leader. When the meaning and context were interpreted as being used interchangeably then, for example, family would be added to the community word tally. On the other hand, if family was used in connection to a reference such as "cultish" behaviour, then that was taken to imply another idea than the notion of community, positive or negative. This potential confusion was not common however. Students tended to streamline their vocabulary with the words provided.

most significant. Hence, teachers and conflict were referred to strongly as negative elements of conventional schooling. Future, responsibility, evaluation and conflict received not one positive reference.

An analysis of the post-C.E.L.P. word tally suggests a positive response to schooling. Thirteen of 14 words were reported more positively. Only "fun" was reported significantly as negative (8 negative responses) usually in connection to the lack of fun associated with working through group conflict resolution. This too explains the 4 negative responses for "conflict" which is the only word with more negative. One can interpret from the word tally that the C.E.L.P. curriculum responses than positive. Most significant are the responses to community (17 positive compared to 2 positive from the pre-C.E.L.P. story), trust (13 positive compared to 3 positive), responsibility (8 positive compared to 0 positive). From the negative standpoint, 7 of 14 words receive no negative references while with the pre-C.E.L.P. stories the only zero reference words were from a positive standpoint. Table 2 reviews the comparison of zero word-reference with the post-C.E.L.P. story as compared to the number of references with the pre-C.E.L.P. conventional schooling stories.

integration programme with an emphasis on outdoor experiential learning maintains the strong social presence (friends: 21 positive C.E.L.P. / 20 positive Pre-C.E.L.P., group: 11 positive C.E.L.P. / 9 positive Pre-C.E.L.P.) within student schooling life, but adds a strong component of community building (community: 17 positive, 4 neutral, 0 negative post-C.E.L.P. / 2 positive, 6 neutral, 6 negative Pre-C.E.L.P.; trust: 13 positive, 1 neutral, 1 negative post-C.E.L.P. / 3 positive, 1 neutral, 4 negative Pre-C.E.L.P.). Clearly the nature of teaching and the teacher are more highly regarded from a post-C.E.L.P. schooling standpoint. This may well reflect not only the added rapport of concentrated time with one teacher but also the role of the students as teachers themselves teaching younger grades within the mentoring structure of the Earth keepers component to the programme. Finally it should be noted that students

NEGATIVE PRE-C.E.L.P. NEGATIVE C.E.L.P.

Teaching	12	0
Teacher	31	0
Community	6	0
Evaluation, responsibility, group	5	0

TABLE 2

Table 1 illustrates that the pre-C.E.L.P. schooling experience stories were generally negative given the words provided. Nine of the 14 words were reported more negatively. The more positively noted words (fun, group, learning, challenge and friends) helps illustrate the social life themes that dominated the positive components of the conventional schooling stories overall. A differential of 10 between positive and negative references was selected arbitrarily as

selected the alternative C.E.L.P. offering and therefore were perhaps already discontent with conventional high school schooling.

The following are a collection of quotes from student stories that speak for themselves. They were selected based on variety of themes and reflective of a dominant view.

PRE-C.E.L.P. STORY EXCERPTS (Conventional Schooling)

"I was so upset that throughout the whole semester we got taught by a T.V. Yes, not that we don't watch enough T.V. as it is. Also the old world philosophies [of] some of the teachers. Especially when they say double-spaced, single side of a page. What the hell is that? Hello, that's a huge waste of paper."

"School is supposed to get you set for the future, but for me, it hasn't done anything but give me lots of homework. The teachers don't seem to care about what they are teaching."

"She [teacher] wanted us to learn to solve and work together as a team. That's where I decided that I loved that type of learning. I knew I wanted to learn things that way."

"... you don't work as a group, it is all individualized, like a jail."

"I find that the only part of high school I like was the social part because without friends at school it becomes very boring especially if your teachers are not very interesting. In high school there is no sense of community because there are so many people and you don't know who you can trust or what friends are really your friends."

"Hey there goes Johnny, the average Joe. Buried in repression, knowing the beauty of life by watching nature films reproduced on a television set."

C.E.L.P. STORY EXCERPTS

"and I wasn't too worried about our evaluation because I was wanting to do my best at all times."

"I found that the class was forced to be closer that what I was used to. The rainstick was

the way we broke down our problems, I found this was a waste of time."

"CELP is the best school you can go to!"

"Our teaching experience also taught me a lot. For 2 months we got to step into a teachers' shoes. The job was very tough and sometimes very frustrating, but I can honestly say I enjoyed teaching."

"CELP is such a big change from everyday school life, here at CELP we learn in many different ways. We also learn how to learn in different ways. Here in CELP we are one community learning in different ways helping each other out as we go."

"It is going to be hard to go back to school in the future because during C.E.L.P. there wasn't much of a sense of time. If something didn't get done one day, we would do it the next."

"She doesn't consider it their "classroom" at all. To her, it's like a meeting place for friends."

"In our community we have a rainstick. We sit in a circle and discuss our feelings about our problem/conflict. Sure this process has a lot of bad emotion, but also some good ones. Not to say that bad ones aren't OK, because this is what helped us grow in a big way."

DISCUSSION

Feedback from students to their teacher suggested that the concept map approach for student generated data collection is preferred by them to the story approach. Many students complained that they are "not good writers". Some students complained that the activity wasn't fun and that the need to incorporate specific words was senseless. Some could not help but connect the writing of a story to "mundane" school work or to evaluation. Such student criticisms were entirely absent from the previous years concept map study. In short, the story approach appears to be less novel, less fun and less liberating overall than the earlier concept map study from a students' perspective.

However, we were struck by the honesty of students' responses and their ability to "cut to

the chase", i.e., "decorated with a diploma of regurgitation". The stories tended to be clear and direct in language and intent.

The language used by students overall reflects differences of the two schooling experiences. This was not only evident by the students word selection from our given list of 14 words, but was also clear in the overall stories themselves. The impact of group conflict-resolution skills and strategies produced a noticeable language particular to the group. For the post-C.E.L.P. stories the emphasis of the word community was pervasive and the notion of creating circles for dialogue was common. The rainstick strategy was clearly a powerful social skills learning experience. The language of the pre-C.E.L.P. stories was more individually focused, much more written as 'I' than 'we'. 'We' was more common with the post-C.E.L.P. stories. The post-C.E.L.P. stories tended to be longer, and although not significant, there was a greater tendency to be creative, i.e., written in a parable form - "once upon a time", or using a drawn-out metaphor, i.e., schooling as a river.

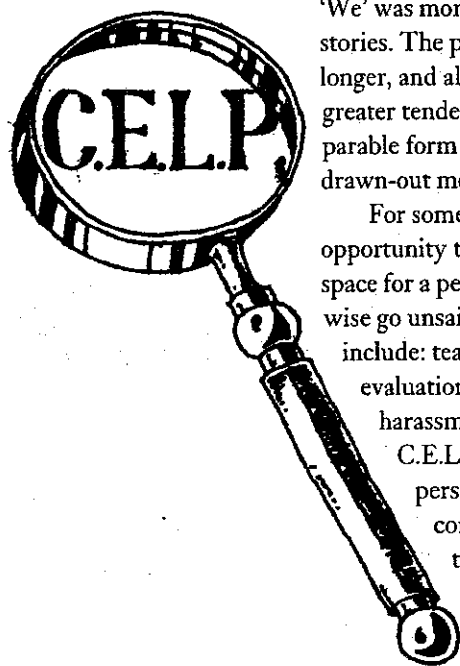
For some, the story writing proved to be an opportunity to safely use the time and reflective space for a personal statement that may otherwise go unsaid. Examples of such statements include: teacher choosing favourites, unfair evaluation criteria and an example of sexual harassment within the mostly negative pre-C.E.L.P. stories; and dealing with personality and communication concerns as well as offering praise to the teacher as leader and praise to themselves as struggling teachers with both exciting and perhaps overwhelming responsibilities within the mostly positive post-C.E.L.P. stories.

The stories, in their directness, also inform us of challenges within the C.E.L.P. programme. Many students wrote of a "fear" of returning to the conventional schooling system. There is clearly a need to facilitate a positive re-integration to the traditional schooling model. The fear is compounded by a lack of understanding of C.E.L.P. among their traditionally schooled peers. One student indicated that C.E.L.P. was

considered to be a "slacker" course in comparison to other curriculum offerings, and several students remarked that they were "outcasts" within the school context. As with any new programme, time is necessary to educate one another about the value of such course offerings and the students themselves will be the best educators by virtue of their personal experiences. From the students stories, we could surmise that general programme appreciation among their peers and teachers would likely ease their re-integration. It is important however to note that while re-integration represents a challenge to these students, they all were able to share the "greatest semester of their life", which is an invaluable experience. The goal of this research is to both highlight the positives and inform the practitioner about where further development could lead.

CONCLUSION

This study into the programme assessment of the 1995-'96 C.E.L.P. class in curriculum integration with an outdoor experiential emphasis suggests that the notion of schooling in the pre-C.E.L.P. conventional schooling setting is significantly different that the notion of schooling following the C.E.L.P. schooling experience. The C.E.L.P. experience was a positive experience for this group of students that specifically fosters: an increased community spirit to an otherwise clique-oriented or individual based relational orientation; communication skill development through group living (skills that appear to go largely unattended to in the pre-C.E.L.P. context); a healthy rapport between teacher and student; a more valued sense of relevant life long learning (mostly based on inter- and intra-personal learning); and a de-emphasis on evaluation. School as a social realm (conforming to a social group is time consuming, difficult and trivial, yet necessary), a sense that school lacked relevance, and a dissatisfaction with teacher/student relationships were dominant themes of the pre-C.E.L.P. stories. The 1995-'96 C.E.L.P. experience for students may appear to have undermined many curricular



content items as group conflicts proved to dominate certain times.

The disciplinary content was presented but appeared secondary to the immediate learning that comes through resolving group conflict. This was absent within the '94-'95 concept map study group. Perhaps the integrated school subject matter just does not inspire a story in the same way of the intra and inter-personal realms. In a few cases, concern was raised for the difficulty to be experienced with re-entry into the conventional high school setting for the upcoming year. This concern was present within the '94-'95 study but tended to be viewed more positively, i.e., as an interesting challenge.

As a research study into programme assessment, the story approach offers rich qualitative data offering the student voice into the dynamics of conventional schooling and the C.E.L.P. programme. The stories brought all together strengthen one's understanding of the meaning of schooling in both settings with the data being student-generated. The word tally and analysis serves as quantitative data that pinpoints differences. The study is modest in scope, well suited to the practitioner within a practitioner/researcher partnership and highlights the point that outdoor experiential learning settings can benefit from student-driven, open research tools that may be most relevant and accurate.

Researcher and educator Karen Warren recently stated in an interview context;

"Unless we [experiential educators] continue to create a theoretical base through developing ideas, a body of literature and a dialogue, we risk being solely technique oriented. Yet if we don't support practitioners who are at the leading edge of the potential for experience to transform education, we will end up with research lacking application and empty theory. The challenge is to develop partnership and balance."⁴

Our impetus to work together as researchers and teachers was born in this understanding. We hope to serve the large practitioner emphasis within Outdoor Experiential Education by offering this modest programme assessment tool and our finding will add to the theoretical base for developing further understanding concerning outdoor experiential curriculum integration.

Bob Henderson teaches outdoor education at McMaster University. Sona Mehta is a graduate of the Arts and Science Programme, McMaster University. Michael Elrick is a teacher at Centennial Collegiate and Vocational Institute, Guelph, Ontario, and a graduate of Physical Education from McMaster University.

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The art used in this story is provided by Heather Edwards. Heather is currently a third year Honours student, combining English and Political Science, at the University of Alberta. She can be reached at 12511 - 40th Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T6J 0S7.

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BEYOND THE WALLS: EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION OUT-OF-DOORS AND PAEDAGOGY

Dr. Nick Forsberg, Faculty of Education, University of Regina

"A classroom without walls contrasts with a teacher's formal training and creates a picture of unbridled behaviour problems, students disappearing over the horizon in defiance, and a general nightmare of unanswerable questions and "uncatchable" kids. The result is that most students receive formal education indoors and must then apply it to the outside world on their own. This type of teaching subtly tells students that they learn when they are inside the classroom and stop learning when they are outside of it. School divides life into learning time and non-learning time, when actually the essence of life itself is constant learning." (Link, 1981, p. 3)

Introduction

Going beyond the traditional classroom and taking 'schooling' outside its walls to the out-of-doors is critically important in the lives of children. Providing out-of-door educational experiences for be-coming teachers is also critically important for personal and professional development. Understanding this reality within the scope of pre-service teacher education requires that programmes provide prospective teachers with experiences that embrace and nurture this philosophy. What is teacher education doing to ensure that prospective teachers understand this perspective and even more importantly, what is teacher education doing to engage prospective teachers in their own out-of-door educational experiences? If one wants to ensure that children experience education beyond the classroom, then it seems only fitting that teacher education go beyond its own traditional classroom.

Moving Beyond Walls in Teacher Education

Learning teaching through the out-of-doors is an integral component in the teacher education programme at the University of Regina. The Off Campus Residential Experience, or what is commonly referred to as OCRE, embraces and nurtures this philosophical orientation. OCRE is a foundational component to teacher preparation and has been in existence in the elementary teacher education programme for twenty-four years. Student teachers in their pre-internship year engage in the two-and-one-half-day experience once in the winter semester and again in the fall semester. The OCRE exists in the teacher education programme because it is believed to play a significant role in the metamorphosis of a student teacher to teacher. The simple fact that this unique experiential education component has survived for over two decades, considering the current fiscal restraints governing education, addresses the value, importance, and the contribution the experience makes to the teacher education programme.

This paper is an overview of a qualitative study entitled, "An Exploration of Experiential Education through the Out-of-Doors: Possibilities for Pedagogical Growth". The focus of the study was to understand the lived experience of student teachers learning teaching in the out-of-doors through the Off Campus Residential Experience. Particular interest concentrated upon the possibilities this unique out-of-door experiential education opportunity held for nurturing student teachers' pedagogical growth and ultimately what role such experiences could play in teacher education.

The research associated with the study was exploratory and inductive emphasizing process as opposed to ends and had no predetermined hypotheses. This study did not espouse a dictum which professed that a 'truth' to the OCRE be revealed. But rather, generalizations and understandings in the form of themes identified by the participants emerged through an interpretation of the data. These themes provided the working hypotheses for understanding the student teachers' lived experience.

Because the research was an interpretative study of the lived experience of student teachers, the research design emerged from the qualitative paradigm. Merriam (1988) describes qualitative research as having "multiple realities - that the world is not an objective thing out there, but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring" (p. 17). More specifically, I was interested in descriptions and explanations and I wished to re-search a phenomenon the way it was. Thus, a qualitative case study approach was utilized. According to Merriam, qualitative case study is "an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena" (p. 2). Furthermore, this research method, because it is based on the "discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3).

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A combination of data collection methods were utilized to portray a more comprehensive perspective of the student teachers' lived experience. Pre- and post-OCRE questionnaires,

observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were all used. This array of methods ensured triangulation (Stake 1988) and provided greater validity and credibility to the study.

The collection and organization of the data provided what Patton (1980) calls the case record. This process required me to read through the data several times and jot down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins. As a result, categories were identified. Adopting the work of van Manen (1990) a thematic analysis was then carried out on the categories. The emerging themes were clustered under three possible inclusive themes. The first theme addressed an understanding of Self through the OCRE experience. The second theme was concerned with an understanding of Self and Other. The third theme centred around an understanding of Self with Environment.

Using this framework, I began to story and re-story an interpretive synthesis for six student teachers who were participants in OCRE and agreed to be a part of the study. Each interpretive synthesis resulted in a text known as a phenomenological description (van Manen, 1990). The intention of this description is to be an example or as van Manen states, "an icon that points at the 'thing' which we attempt to describe" (p. 122). These phenomenological descriptions reflected the lived experience of OCRE for each of the six student teachers.

By understanding the student teachers' lived experiences one comes to understand the re-search of the study. This re-search enlightens the theory and practice of teacher education. It encourages those of us involved in teacher education not only to hear the voices of student teachers but, more importantly, to listen to these voices.

Student Teachers' Voices of Lived Experience

The voices of lived experience address how student teachers construct meaning of OCRE. These voices also reveal an interpretation of

They viewed the teaching and learning process as having more to do with the real world and about life itself.

meaning while experiencing this transformation or metamorphosis of student teacher to teacher. Henderson (1992) explains that, "students are builders of knowledge who actively construct the meaning of their lessons on the foundation of both their past experiences and their personal purposes" (p. 5). The three themes of Self, Other, and Environment which emerged and gave credence to student teachers' lived experience also provided the foundation for this meaning. Through an interrelationship of the three themes an awakening of the self personally and professionally was realized. As one student teacher described,

"The more you know about yourself I think the more effective teacher you will be. The more you know your weak characteristics and your strong ones the better you will be. OCRE helps you develop a sense of who you are. It's something that I will probably never forget for the rest of my life."

The student teachers came away from the OCRE with a cultivated understanding of paedagogy. This perception may be attributed to their own realization of a merging of the personal self with the professional self. Moreover, no longer did student teachers see teaching and learning with children as being something that only occurs during a specific time period and only in a four-walled classroom. But rather, they viewed the teaching and learning process as having more to do with the real world and about life itself. A student teacher explains the realization in this fashion,

"It's definitely made me excited about integrating different subjects and taking students outdoors. It's really opened my eyes to the understanding that school does not have to be solely in a school setting."

She continues,

"My OCRE experience has allowed me to develop an even greater appreciation of nature and therefore has motivated me to take "school" to the out of doors where my students can learn while exercising, having fun and gaining an appreciation of nature and how it is interrelated with life."

This realization in essence portrays a student teacher's initial understanding of

paedagogy. Aoki (1992) describes paedagogy as "a leading of children" (p. 3). Through a reflective process and the construction of meaning of OCRE, student teachers are drawn nearer to understanding themselves personally and professionally. This merging of the personal and professional self is part of the transformative dimension and metamorphosis of becoming a teacher and to an enlightened understanding of what really constitutes paedagogy.

Student teacher voices of lived experience also shared insights to the hidden curriculum of teacher education. Anecdotes which expressed the competitiveness of on-campus university life or talked about OCRE as being a chance to get away from the stress of course work speaks volumes about the nature of a teacher education programme. In the same breath, these voices also identified the OCRE as an opportunity for student teachers to view faculty as "real people" and as a chance to get to know them in a more personal way simply because, "you can see them as they are and you have a lot more time to sit and talk". The relationship was reciprocal, as the OCRE also provided faculty with an opportunity to see and understand students as something more than an identification number or percentage found on a class list. One student teacher described the relationship like this,

"It is a chance for faculty to see students for who we are rather than by our average marks."

Listening to Voices of Lived Experience

These few vignettes communicate aspects of the lived experiences of student teachers' involved in teacher preparation. Teacher education must become attuned to these voices and possibly re-visit the programme and re-view the curriculum-as-planned. Listening to these voices which emulate the curriculum-as-lived, may encourage a faculty of education to re-orient itself pedagogically.

Out-of-door experiential education opportunities like OCRE have a vital role to play in

the development of teachers. If the belief comes to be realized that these experiences do play a prominent role in teacher preparation and that such experiences create a place of possibilities for aspiring teachers to understand paedagogy, then these experiences must no longer be viewed as a fringe benefit in teacher education. Having OCRE go beyond the perception of being an 'extra' in teacher education at the University of Regina is not something that will be dismissed immediately or necessarily all together. However, the more teacher education explores what it does by becoming attuned to who it does it to, the greater the chance will be that out-of-door educational experiences such as OCRE will come to be realized for their possibilities in teaching.

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Are all nature experiences educational?

Constance L. Russell

"BLOW!" "ELLE SOUFFLE!" So yell a group of whalewatchers excitedly as they observe the puffs of expiration and, if they are close enough, the backs of whales breaking the surface of the sea. Other groups are far less verbal in similar situations and regard the whales with arms crossed and feet up, as if watching television.

While admittedly not as sexy as studying the whales themselves, I spent this past summer in Tadoussac, Quebec (at the confluence of the Saguenay and St. Lawrence Rivers) watching whalewatchers. I did so because whalewatching expeditions are often touted as transformative environmental educational experiences and there is simply very little data to back these claims up.

I must admit that I came to this research with a healthy dose of skepticism. My earlier research on travel whose focus was orangutans left me wondering whether ecotourism is preaching to the converted (Russell, 1994, 1995). Returning to Toronto this fall, however, I have a much muddier view of the whalewatching phenomenon. Granted, there were a few tourists who grumbled that the whales didn't perform well enough for them and that Marine Land or Sea World was a better experience. There were others who I suspect left Tadoussac no more interested in or committed to whales than when they arrived. Overall, however, most tourists reported being moved by the sights and sounds of whales in the wild and said that they had indeed learned a great deal out on the boats and were now committed to finding out even more.

Perhaps a good sign. But even those tourists who felt that their whalewatching experience was educational raised concerns about the number of whalewatching boats out on the water and were worried that the whales were being "loved to death." They were asking, in my opinion, a very important question. Even if there are positive educational spinoffs, is

whalewatching worth the possible costs to the whales?

While most of you probably have not taken your students whalewatching, I think many of the issues facing outdoor educators are the same. What, if anything, are students learning with us in the outdoors? And, do they learn "enough" to justify our presence there?

Central to outdoor education theory and practice is the importance of nature experience. Heeding John Dewey's assertion that early experiences "help decide the quality of further experiences, by setting up certain preferences and aversions" (1938, p.35), it is troubling to observe the seemingly rampant aversion to nature in Canadian society. John Livingston maintains that many of us are suffering from "experiential undernutrition" in that we live almost entirely surrounded by other humans and human artifacts (1994, p.119). David Orr, for one, blames current educational theories and practice (1992).

Outdoor education can offer a subversive challenge to the human-centred worlds most people inhabit. Indeed, outdoor educators often suggest that "familiarity with nature fosters friendship with nature, and based on this friendship, people develop a commitment to living lightly with simple means, that is, more in harmony" (Pendleton, 1985, p.104). It is not only the knowledge that is derived from such experiences that are important, then, but the relationships that evolve from knowing one's neighbours (Quinn, 1995).

Thus, when I question whether students are learning "enough", I do not mean to ask whether we crammed in oodles of scientific facts on a particular day. Yes, facts are important. But I also want to know whether students thought of the day as primarily an escape from the drudgery of daily schooling and nature as only a recreational resource. I also want to know whether students felt some glimmer of connec-

I have a much muddier view of the whalewatching phenomenon.

tion to the nonhuman and perhaps felt moved to advocate on behalf of nature.

In my very core, I do believe in the importance of childhood and adult experiences of, in and with nature. Yet the niggling doubts remain: Are the educational benefits enough to warrant the damage we inevitably inflict on the lands we traverse?



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Connie Russell is a doctoral student at O.I.S.E., University of Toronto and can be contacted by email (crussell@oise.utoronto.ca) or snail mail (252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6).

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Punching Holes in Escarpment Protection

Environmental gains in terms of legislation and policy are always hard-won and never, it seems, securely enshrined. So it is that a year ago, in *Seasons* magazine (35:4), the Federation of Ontario Naturalists reported "disconcerting rumours" regarding the dismantling of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) and the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC). While this worst-case scenario has not yet been realized in full, there is reason to fear that the provincial government is taking a piecemeal approach to the same sorry end.

The NEP is the first and largest-scale land use plan in Canada in which environmental protection is given the highest priority. It is administered by the NEC whose role it is to review development applications and to ensure that any development which occurs is consistent with the broader public interest in environmental protection. Far from stone-walling development along the escarpment, the NEC approves, in fact, more than 90% of the development applications that it reviews. In other words, it prevents only a small fraction of proposed development schemes from going forward. Nevertheless, even this small fraction raises the ire of those who resent any and all government "interference" in their pursuit of economic gain, and their complaints are now falling on sympathetic ears at Queen's Park.

Recent government actions are undermining the NEC's ability to protect the escarpment. These include:

- a 37% cut to the NEC's budget
- the closure of one NEC office
- a regulation passed by the Ministry of Environment and Energy exempting pits and quarries that were licensed before 1975 from development control (pit owners and operators would no longer have to apply to the NEC for development permits for quarrying and related activities, thus preventing the NEC from determining the environmental suitability of such activities)

- the unceremonious dismissal of the NEC

Board chair Joan Little and four other NEC Board members known for their strong environmental advocacy positions

This last and most recent change has outraged environmental groups who regard quarrying as one of the greatest threats to the escarpment. Ironically, it was because of public concern about the impacts of pits and quarries in the 1960's, '70s, and '80s that the Progressive Conservative government of the day introduced laws to protect the escarpment and passed the NEP. Yet, as Stewart Elgie of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund puts it, the new regulation "rolls the clock back twenty years to a time when quarry operations on the Niagara Escarpment were treated like quarry operations on any other industrial land in Ontario".

In light of these changes, the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), an umbrella group of six environmental organizations, has called into question the government's commitment to Niagara Escarpment protection. At risk is the ecological integrity of an extensively forested 725 kilometre ribbon of wildness that winds its way through the otherwise tamed and fragmented landscape of southern Ontario. Granted World Biosphere Reserve status in 1990, the escarpment is composed of a rich diversity of habitats and micro-climates. It is home to 300 bird, 53 mammal, 36 reptile and amphibian, 90 fish, 30 fern and 37 orchid species as well as the oldest trees in eastern North America - eastern white cedars up to 1,650 years old. The question now facing the people of Ontario is whether we are willing to jeopardize the continued well-being of these escarpment inhabitants for short-term economic gain.

CONE is pointing to the need for an aggressive education initiative so that the protection of the Niagara Escarpment can be approached with understanding, interest and action. COEO and the Association for Canadian Educational Resources are already involved in this effort through the Niagara Escarpment

At risk is the ecological integrity of an extensively forested 725 kilometre ribbon of wildness that winds its way through the otherwise tamed and fragmented landscape of southern Ontario.

Biosphere Reserve Network (NEBR Network), a community outreach program. NEBR Network is a project funded by Environment Canada's Action 21 program and it involves Niagara Escarpment communities in environmental monitoring. It is intended to create a central repository of information and data about the Biosphere Reserve and to activate grassroots support for the Niagara Escarpment. Surveys and forest inventories have already been started at two outdoor education centres (Bruce, near Warton, and Boyne, near Shelburne) and at the Royal Botanical Gardens.

Those interested in the project should contact Richard Murzin, at (905) 877-5191. Those who share CONE's concern about the escarpment's future can obtain copies of CONE's position paper regarding the NEP and the NEC. Phone (416) 960-9606 or fax (416) 960-0020.

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Anne Bell is a graduate student at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University and a director of the Wildlands League chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.



Western Region Climbing

Greetings from your Western Region Representatives, Ally Myers and JJ (Jennifer Jupp). Check your calendars Western and Central members! Plan to attend a fun active climbing event at the Guelph Grotto Climbing gym on Dec. 7, 1996, at 2:00 p.m. Call JJ at (519) 836-1292 for details. Bring friends - non-members too!

Boyne River Research

The Boyne River Natural Science School is attempting to find out what impact the school has had on students over the years. We are looking for people who attended the Boyne between 1973 and 1986 as students in either Elementary or High School. The study is in the form of a short questionnaire that will take about 5 minutes to fill out. If you attended the school in this time period or know of someone who did and would be willing to participate in the study, please contact:

Boyne River Natural Science School
RR4, Shelburne, Ontario, L0N 1S8
(519) 925-3913 or the
Toronto line (416) 857-4160.
Contact person:
Roy Cumming (519) 925-3079 /
rcumming@aurocom.com

"Vanishing Habitats: the Southern Ontario Woodlot"

"Vanishing Habitats" is a 12 minute video for primary and secondary school audiences. Produced by G2 Communications with a grant from the Friends of the Environment Foundation, it is available at no cost to educators. It is hoped that this video, if used as part of environmental, geography or outdoor education programmes, will help to raise awareness about the loss and fragmentation of forests in southern Ontario, and about subsequent threats to wildlife, particularly migratory songbirds. For your free copy, contact Gordon Wood, 195 Brunswick Cresc., London, Ontario, phone: 519-472-1332; e-mail: 76462.2742@compuserve.com

Sustainability

The Sustainability Project produces excellent little business-card-size cards that are available on request. The text points out that to move effectively towards sustainability the goal must be clear. The back side of the card goes on to give points that can focus discussion and speed resolution.

Sustainable activities:

- 1) use materials in continuous cycles.
- 2) use continuously reliable sources of energy.) come mainly from the qualities of being human (i.e., creativity, and spiritual and intellectual development).

Non-sustainable activities:

- 4) require continual inputs of non-renewable resources.
- 5) use renewable resources faster than their rate of renewal.
- 6) cause cumulative degradation of the environment.
- 7) require resources in quantities that could never be available for people everywhere.
- 8) lead to the extinction of other life forms.

"We can no longer have everything we want. But we can be more than we ever imagined."

Sustainability Project, PO Box 374,
Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0
(tel: 613/269-3500)
email: sustain@web.net
web: <http://www.cyberus.ca/choose.sustain>

Do You Ever Wonder?

by Julie Gabert

Do you ever wonder how much water drips into an ant hole when a gentle morning frost melts? Or, if a woodpecker ever gets a head rush from hammering his face into trees? Does it ever cross your mind to count all the petals on a wild sunflower; or to sit in one spot for hours and watch the moon ease its way across the morning sky? I wonder. I wonder sometimes. I wonder if anyone really even cares.

Does it matter? I mean, we've got jobs to do . planes to catch . stocks to invest in . bills to pay . TV to watch. We've got important stuff going on here. Big stuff . crazy stuff . stuffy stuff. Sometimes I wonder what it's all about? Really.

There's more. There has to be. Just look at the wild animals . they know something that we've forgotten. An insight that we lost long ago; somewhere between Quaternary times and a trip to Wal-Mart. Somehow, in the midst of time, we drove our primitive side into submission, saturated our hunger with fast food, and thought all our troubles were over. So now, we of "higher intelligence" live in a plastic world with plastic values and false illusions.

And I wonder . does anyone ever wonder anymore?

What's so important about wondering . being curious, intrigued, fascinated by something as small as an ant hauling off it's evening meal? Perhaps it's because wonder keeps us on our hands and knees, crawling in the dirt like Edward Abbey (1968), submerged and directly in touch with our environment. Isn't that after all how we get closer not only to nature, but ultimately to ourselves?

The insight of wild animals can be truly enlightening. Just look at wolves for example. How do they know so much about life? What's their big secret? They sleep outside, get stuck in the rain, have to hunt in the dark every night, and have no retirement plans when they get slow and old. What's the big advantage? How do they get so totally immersed in living?

Wolves live simply, directly, and matter-of-factly. Unlike the human race, they are wild, free, and fully awake. Trapped in our own human walls, we look to the wolf and see something wild, something mysterious, something we admire, yet fear. The wolf brings us memories of human's primitive past in the

wilderness. Since we as a society absolutely fear going backwards to that primitive past, we willingly close our minds to the knowledge of the wild . the ways of the wolves.

Perhaps Barry Lopez (1978) was right, we as a people need to recognize that we really don't know anything. There are no absolutes, no single answers. But, if we keep returning with a sense of wonder, we may someday begin to understand.

Along those same lines, Annie Dillard (1982) strongly advocates living life to the fullest by not passing up any of life's little opportunities. She talks about the tenacity with which the Weasel lives it's life . fully free and out of necessity. A strong contrast to our contrived lies of "happiness". From the weasel, Dillard (1982) says, "I might learn something of mindlessness, something of the purity of living in the physical senses and the dignity of living without bias or motive. The weasel lives in necessity and we live in choice, hating necessity . "(p. 33). She goes on to say, "I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go . "(p. 34).

What is our one necessity? What is this business of life all about? Dillard (1982) implies that because we are not wild, our necessity should be to live in the present . pure and mindless. Similarly, the Inuit culture has a word for this called "Nuanaarpuq." It means taking extravagant pleasure in being alive! It is being aware of and enjoying the present moment.

Can't we learn something from the wolf, the weasel and the Inuit language? In living simply and directly in the present, they are consumed in wonder which enlightens not only their surroundings, but also their lives. They are awake in the way Thoreau (1971) strived for. They are free.

Mary Oliver (1978) feels that embracing life, tuning into our senses, and being aware of the simple little acts and experiences in our lives will help us to be more in touch, in a position to reach beyond the ordinary. This implies that there is much more to a simple, aware life than meets the untuned eye. Perhaps it's spiritual, as Annie Dillard (1982) implies; or intellectual as Thoreau (1971) believes. It could be different things for different people, but ultimately will

*And I wonder...
does anyone ever
wonder anymore?*

add some depth and dimension to lives.

How can we attain wonder? It would be nice if we could just go to the mall and shop around for it, or tune into a certain channel on TV and wait while it soaks into our essence via osmosis. That would certainly be the 20th century thing to do . but, as we know, it just wouldn't work.

No, to find wonder we first have to backtrack . we have to imagine our early days when we saw life as bright colours, curious sounds, soft carpet or cold vinyl floors. These were the days when we could get totally immersed in anything . directly and simply. As children we lived here and now. Fully awake. As adults however, we are not here, but there . not now, but before and after. We live in the future and the past. Searching for directness, but unable to grasp it.

One way to save ourselves, is to learn more from wild animals. Watch how the wolves, weasels, ants, birds, and all of the creatures of earth celebrate life, trust their instincts, and live directly.

Another way is to learn from observing and playing with little children. They look closely at new things, make noise, grab objects, fall down, get up, crawl in a circle, laugh and scream. Dirty clothes don't matter . satisfying their curiosity matters.

Another way to keep ourselves from sinking into the ordinary is to challenge ourselves to do something spontaneous every day . off the cuff, unplanned, crazy, silly, fun! Take a safe risk at least once a day. Keep on your toes . be alert, let yourself wonder.

Go play in the mud. Get completely dirty caving, mountain biking, puddle jumping, or just hiking around in the woods. Play in the rain or roll around in mud on the shore of a shallow lake. Live directly, get dirty . really dirty! You can always shower later.

Open your eyes and look closely at things. Little things, big things, ugly things, weird things, all things . things we take for granted. Feel smell, taste, listen. Let your senses come alive. Submerge yourself in the senses. Be free.

Get up early with Abbey and Thoreau and watch the sun come up as others sleep. Days are short so why not get a jumpstart with the birds while enjoying the peace and solitude of a crisp,

frosty walk alone. According to Aldo Leopold (1968), there are no property lines in the early morning . everything is free range . no boundaries exist. There is a sense of aloneness in the morning, miles of freedom.

Everyone is capable of wondering. We all have the capacity to question and inquire within ourselves. It's just a matter of tuning into our surroundings and letting ourselves be fascinated with more than just high-tech expensive equipment. Let yourself take joy in smelling a small wild flower, or watching a squirrel busily collect acorns for the long winter ahead. Allow yourself to smile when you see a small child skipping home from school. Look at a fallen leaf and closely examine it's shape just for the fun of it.

I think that is the bottom line. Fun. Have fun. Life is not such a serious business after all. We need to let ourselves play. It relieves stress, connects us more with our primitive side, and helps us maintain child-like attitudes. In the end, fun and wonder will keep us alive and thriving.

So go, get up, turn off the TV and play. And while you're at it, remember to take extravagant pleasure in being alive! After all, life's too short not to.

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Julie Gabert teaches Outdoor Education at Hollins College in Roanoke, VA, and works seasonally for The National Outdoor Leadership School. She is often found covered in mud.

