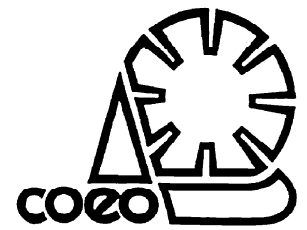


# Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Winter 2003, 15 (1)



## Social Difference, Justice, and Outdoor Education



# Pathways

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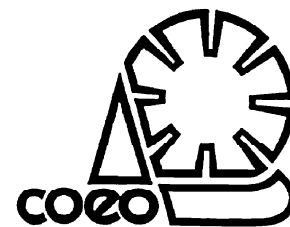
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## Caution: Education Is Very Messy! Social Difference, Justice, and Teaching Outdoors

by Liz Newbery

In a canoe, out on the lakes and rivers of the Boreal forest, the contradictions in outdoor pedagogy and identity began to nag me. Those contradictions led me to engage in many rich conversations with colleagues, and eventually to attend graduate school.

In my thinking and writing, I always try to explore some of the subtexts of outdoor education. I believe when these subtexts are left unexamined, they can work to reproduce what it is that we are trying to transform. How are understandings about race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality woven through both outdoor education theory and popular notions of outdoor travel? Who has access to outdoor experiences, and how is that access constructed?

This issue of *Pathways* draws together many educators who are wrestling with issues of justice, identity, difference, and outdoor education. A former professor once said that the job of a science teacher is to make the familiar, strange. What I hope we accomplish in this issue is to expose the simple as complex and bring the obscured into view.

To begin, I offer a story from the field — one that took place during an outdoor course I co-instructed for women survivors of violence that was, for me, enormously instructive and humbling. It illustrates, far better than abstract theory, how access to outdoor experiences is about much more than economic resources, how identities are lived in complex and unpredictable ways, and how educators may only ever partially understand the dynamics of their “classroom” and the messy process of learning.

*I was barely within earshot, pulling something out of my pack, when I heard a short, brittle exchange at the campfire. Joanne stumbled over Fara's name, saying it incorrectly. Fara expressed her frustration that on the last day of the course, her group*

*members could still not get her name right. Joanne fell silent and left the fire circle. We found her later under an old canoe that had been pulled up on shore, five minutes from the campsite. She spent a few hours there that night; Wendy brought dinner out to her and hung out while I sang Carly Simon and gospel tunes with everyone else.*

*I knew there was a lot going on, but the picture wasn't completely filled out for me until the next morning. I now realize that the picture isn't ever completely filled out. Fara had hardly slept and came to talk to Wendy and me about her unsettled feelings around the tension of the evening before. She was upset that she had been involved in the conflict, yet she also wanted to explain how she felt.*

*Having her name pronounced wrong was one in a series of events related to race and culture that had affected Fara. On her pre-trip questionnaire, Fara had written about her hesitation in coming on the trip, knowing that such outdoor trips are often “white space” and that she might be the only woman of colour. She had felt uncomfortable with some sexual comments made during the trip and related her discomfort to the particular sexualization of women of colour in society at large. Fara accurately saw the inability to have her name pronounced correctly as an indicator of the pattern of privilege in Canadian society; people don't often stumble over Anglo-Saxon names and don't often take the time to learn names unfamiliar to them. This pattern is symbolic of one much larger. Wendy and I had been hyperconscious of “isms” during the course. Given all of our pre-trip participant information, the vast differences in social class within our group, the fact that over half the members of our group identified themselves as lesbian, and that this was a course specifically for women survivors of violence, we were especially committed to creating an environment free of oppression. We were so naive to think that was even possible! We hadn't detected any overt racism, but fortunately we were at least smart enough to know that this didn't mean there wasn't any.*

*The previous day had not been easy for Joanne. We'd spent the day rock climbing, and she'd been painfully confronted with the limitations of her body, with the unavoidable presence of her disability. Several years earlier, she'd suffered a head injury that left her with headaches, difficulty balancing, difficulty remembering things, and occasional disorientation. The prospect of climbing and being off the ground was more than daunting to her. Yet the prospect of not climbing was also terrifying. It was perhaps the possibility of facing limitation. It was an emotionally and physically exhausting, but also good, day for her. That she didn't pronounce Fara's name correctly that evening could have been a function of her head injury and her fatigue. Her retreat to the shelter of the canoe was, I believe, in part related to how challenging the overall day had been.*

*Joanne, Fara, Wendy, and I sat down under a tree and talked. It ended up all right. We began an initial discussion about privilege, and about how differently it makes things look. It was great and important learning, for all four of us. But it wasn't easy for any of us.*

Clearly, during the course, talking about sex was complicated because some of the women in the group were survivors of sexual violence, over half were marginalized in a heterosexist world that regularly censors them, and others felt quite acutely their representation as "sexualized Other." The sexual comments that had reached my and Wendy's ears seemed benign and playful. Those that had disturbed Fara were made when we weren't around. But still, could we have seen this coming? Why are comments that seem playful to one person potentially threatening to another?

The ways in which adventure education and the Canadian outdoors are imagined created additional challenges for Joanne and Fara. Despite the rhetoric of "challenge by choice" and a framing that tried to problematize the way that expectations are so often constructed for us, the rock face became a metaphor of limits—societal and personal. Joanne did choose to climb. It was wonderful, and she loved it. And yet, I still think a lot about the social construction of choice.

When women of colour confront the outdoors as "white space," and when women with disabilities confront the ethos of learning through physical challenge, identity matters in visible ways in outdoor pedagogy. I suggest that identity *always* matters, and therefore understanding identity should matter to outdoor educators if we are to take seriously the business of becoming better teachers.

There are many strategies for challenging the current inequities of outdoor education, and we need them all. These strategies are

- to improve economic and practical access to outdoor activities (e.g., scholarships, gear loaning systems, daycare, outreach, urban outdoor programs)
- to examine the values embedded in some central ideas in the field (e.g., wilderness, adventure, challenge)
- to challenge the idea of the generic outdoor participant, a mythical norm that often encodes an assumption of whiteness, wealth, and ability
- to be willing to criticize unjust practices while also holding on to the promising aspects of outdoor teaching and learning
- to think about difference at the level of curriculum and program design

This issue of *Pathways* brings together divergent voices from a variety of perspectives. I hope we contribute to an ongoing conversation about teaching and living outside, and the ways we might do these things more thoughtfully and more justly.

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*Liz Newbery teaches outdoor education at McMaster University and is a doctoral candidate in York University's Faculty of Education. She thanks the talented Steve Tourney for artwork and also MJ Barrett, Jennie Barron, Cara Ellingson, Aparna Mishra Tarc, and Connie Russell for reviewing articles. The views expressed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the editorial board.*

## Innu Support and the Myth of Wilderness

by Jennie Barron

My starting point is the question, “How do we, as southern, urban, recreational canoeists, and environmentalists, connect with and speak about contemporary Aboriginal struggles in the places we visit?” To get at this question, first I want to take a deep look at something we often take for granted: the whole notion, or myth, of wilderness.

For a brief history of this cultural myth, let me outline an argument given in an essay by environmental historian William Cronon in his book *Uncommon Ground*. In his essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” he argues that wilderness, “far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity...is quite profoundly a human creation — indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history” (1996, p. 69). That is to say, when we use the term “wilderness,” the meaning that comes to mind is distinctly Euro-American and relatively recent in the history of ideas. As Cronon notes, if we look back a mere 250 years in North American and European history, we do not find people wandering around remote corners of the planet looking for the “wilderness experience.” He says it’s not that they couldn’t do so; they didn’t want to, for wilderness didn’t mean to them what it does to us today.

As late as the 18th century, the most common use of the word “wilderness” in the English language had to do with landscapes also described as desolate, savage, or a wasteland. According to Cronon, the connotations of wilderness were nothing like they are today; if you found yourself there, you would likely have found yourself feeling bewildered or terrified, hardly at peace with the universe. The wilderness was a place you went only against your will, in your darkest hours of fear. It was the antithesis of all that was orderly and good.

By the end of the 19th century, Cronon writes, the meaning of wilderness had been turned on

its head. This is when we find Thoreau declaring “in wildness is the preservation of the world.” This is when the North American public is starting to see in the wild spaces on their map a little piece of heaven on Earth. Yosemite and Yellowstone are declared the first American wilderness parks, and in the first decade of the 20th century we see the emergence of the movement to actually protect wilderness. Cronon writes, “In a mere fifty years, Satan’s home had become God’s own temple” (1996, p. 72).

How did that happen? Cronon cites two influential and pervasive cultural constructs: the romantic notions of the sublime and the frontier. The doctrine of the sublime derived from the theories of people like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. According to them, sublime landscapes were those where the supernatural lay just beneath the surface, the places where God was most likely to be encountered: on the mountaintop, in the canyon, the waterfall, the thundercloud, the towering forests. Cronon observes that the most popular and celebrated landscapes in North America tend to be sublime landscapes, as are most areas designated as national parks. (It is only recently that we have begun using other criteria—ecological criteria, for example—as a basis for judging and valuing less sublime landscapes, like grasslands or wetlands.)

The second cultural construct that helped turn wilderness into a quasi-religious icon derives from the romantic attraction to primitivism: “the belief that the best antidote to the ills of an overly refined and civilized modern world was a return to simpler, more primitive living” (Cronon, 1996, p. 76). According to Cronon, this European ideal of the primitive was embodied in (North) America through the myth of the frontier: the frontier represented not just the edge of “civilization,” but the whole process by which Europeans and easterners moved west, and “shed the trappings of civilization, rediscovered their primitive racial energies, reinvented direct

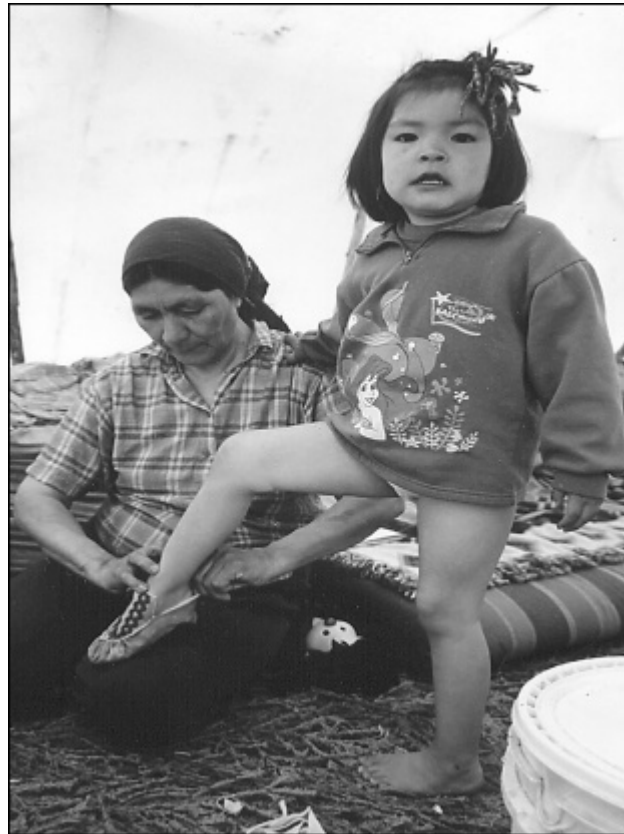
democratic institutions, and thereby re-infused themselves with a vigor, an independence, and a creativity that were the source of American democracy and national character” (1996, p. 75). In this way, the frontier — that is, the wilderness — became associated with the very essence of what it meant to be American.

In Canada, of course, the frontier myth looks a little different. For one thing, the frontier is to the north more than to the west, in the sense that the North has been more closely associated with our national character and self-image. But the mystique and the feelings of longing associated with the lands beyond the frontier are probably just as familiar to a large number of Canadians.

The point Cronon makes is that by the early 20th century, wilderness had not only become sacred — that is, imbued with the presence of God — it had also become inseparably associated with our respective national identities. To lose wilderness would be to lose our myth of origin.

My reason for giving you all this history of wilderness, of course, is to show just how culturally constructed the idea of wilderness is. “Wilderness” as we understand it today is largely the product of religious, historical, and cultural influences. By association with the sublime, wilderness has come to be sacred; wilderness has also been made more-or-less synonymous with “emptiness” — it is the place beyond the frontier.

Now, it is no accident that we recreational canoeists don’t live in the places we call “wilderness,” because the myth of wilderness is rooted in the idea that for a place to be really natural it must also be virtually pristine. The problem with the myth of pristine wilderness is that it is in many ways an illusion. You probably know that many places we consider pristine are not in fact “pristine.” Historians are just now learning about the history of modifications and adaptations of the land for human uses — including fire-setting, even the domestication of plants in the middle of places we think of as virgin forests. And you may also know that the establishment of the first large “wilderness”



parcs in the U.S. was made possible precisely by removal of the parks’ original inhabitants!<sup>2</sup> But the fiction of the pristine suppresses this history.

This is not just a matter of forgetfulness or even cruel irony. It’s more of a sleight of hand that some would say amounts to racism because representations of the wilderness as empty, unnamed, unmapped territory, as places awaiting discovery and ownership by Europeans have been used historically to dispossess Aboriginal people of lands they have used, travelled, named, and made homes in for thousands of years. One example is the original case of the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en (the ruling was later overturned by the Delgamuukw decision). Chief Justice Allan McEachern dismissively described the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en traditional territory as “a vast emptiness,” but noted that it nonetheless contained “immense forestry reserves...of great economic value.” The suggestion is that land is empty when the Aboriginal people claim it as theirs, but can become full when thought of in terms of logging leases and mining permits.

So here is where we encounter our contradiction. Many of us are wilderness advocates. We love the stunning places we visit by canoe. We want to protect them. At the same time, many of us recognize the terrible things that have been done by colonial governments in our name, and want to take part in healing and reconciliation with Aboriginal people. We want to support Aboriginal rights and see Northern people like the Innu regain their health, autonomy, and self-reliance, with a fair land base of their own. But when we try to bring together our concerns for both the place and the people of Labrador, we run into problems because the discourse of “wilderness” is highly restrictive when it comes to Aboriginal rights, and human rights in general.

I learned this the hard way. In May 1997, I took part in organizing a public talk by Innu leader Daniel Ashini in Toronto. Our group had decided to set the stage for Daniel’s talk by presenting a slide show prepared by another Innu support group in Vermont, who call themselves the Friends of Nitassinan. The slide show came with a prepared script, which gave me great discomfort to read, though I did not at the time understand quite why (nor did I have the knowledge or experience to narrate the slides without a script). After our somewhat stiff and self-conscious presentation of the slides, I got my first clue why I felt so uncomfortable. Daniel Ashini took his place at the microphone and began his talk with words to this effect: Although you may not have seen it in those pictures, there are people living in Nitassinan.

Daniel’s comment was brief and tactful, but it illuminated in a moment the contradiction inherent in the literature of the other support group: They call themselves “Friends of Nitassinan” and yet described their mandate as “Defending Eastern North America’s Last Frontier.” Where notions of the frontier — a fundamental part of the wilderness myth — imply emptiness, the word “Nitassinan,” meaning homeland, implies occupation. So what kind of human occupation can this contradiction allow? In a phrase, romantic primitivism.

Sure enough, if we go back to the slide show, we see ample evidence of an effort by the Friends of Nitassinan — however unconscious — to massage Innu reality and objectives so they conform to a romantic primitive image. This was done through their choice of images, as well as through what the script said, and what it failed to say (for instance, the slide show didn’t mention settlers or other Labradorians anywhere). Of 73 slides in the show, only six showed people. The Innu and Inuit were not even mentioned until slide #21, and the mention was indirect, with an image of a caribou skull left hanging in a tree. That skull, and the next slide, which showed ancient tent rings, was presented as “the evidence of the continuing occupation of the land by the Innu and Inuit” (as if that was the only evidence). And the text read: “The Innu and the Inuit are as much a part of the ecosystem as the animals. They have evolved together.” The script overall boiled down to one simplistic message: Save the Innu because they are part and parcel of wild Earth.

This is a problem, not only because that message is easily contradicted by the tragic images (gas-sniffing youth, etc.) we see on TV and in the papers, but because it is based on the delusional desires of the so-called support group more than on the actual goals and realities of those whom they profess to support. And when supporters project those desires onto the Innu, it can lead to major problems.

First, this sort of Chief Seattle-ization, this romanticization of real people, puts the Innu on a pedestal from which it is impossible not to fall. It creates the expectation that the Innu, or Aboriginal people in general, should live more honourably than we do, and not make the same mistakes. So when Aboriginal people litter, overhunt, log, or build hydro dams, they are doubly condemned: High expectations produce bitter disappointments.

The second problem with this kind of representation is that it perpetuates the idea that Aboriginal claims to the land are only legitimate if Aboriginal people continue to live as their ancestors did 100 years ago. This is a silly



expectation to have of any ethnic group. In fact, opponents of the Innu have used this way of thinking to argue against Innu land rights by claiming that the Innu are no longer “traditional” because they take planes to their hunting territories and take along store-bought food. This is an idea supporters have to challenge, in the name of fairness, pragmatism, and the right of the Innu to self-determination. We have to learn to see tradition not as stasis, or preservation of a thing or technique, but more as the thread of continuity that links past, present, and future in a dynamic flow. Moreover, the continuation of traditional life in the modern day is often, in fact, enabled by planes, radios, Ski-Doos, and other modern means.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the discourse on “wilderness” in support work is that the idea of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for real people to live permanently inside its boundaries, and no way for them to make a living. This may be where it’s hardest for supporters to reconcile their environmental priorities and their wish to support Innu self-determination. It’s not that the political goals of environmentalists and Innu are fundamentally incompatible; many Innu themselves choose to speak as protectors of the land, and they choose to work with environmental groups as allies. No, the problem with such Aboriginal-environmental alliances is more that it’s too easy to assume that our issues and goals are the same, or at least more similar than they

really are. Consequently, those who insist on seeing Nitassinan as that last-chance place to preserve wild Earth are often shocked and dismayed if and when the Innu decide it’s in their best interest to embark on joint ventures, engage in forestry, or benefit from a mine. Even if those developments are carried out in ecologically and socially responsible ways, many environmentalist supporters often can’t bring themselves to support them.

This is not to say that the Innu do not have a special culturally-rooted relationship to the land. But in my experience, when Innu speak about their concerns for the land, they do so not as primitives or innocents in the wilderness, but as participants in a peopled and productive landscape. Their concerns for the land and animals are inseparable from their concerns for their health, and their way of life — that is, life in the country, or *nutshimit*. (Notably, Innu discourse is different from that of environmentalists — they, like most Northerners, tend not to speak of “wilderness,” but rather of “the land,” “the country,” or “the bush.”) In contrast to the discourse of wilderness, their words convey a sense of there being a place for humans in nature, not alienated from it.

So how do we connect with and speak of contemporary Aboriginal struggles in the places we visit? Whether we call ourselves environmentalists, recreational canoeists, or

wilderness advocates, I think we need to recognize the origins of our own perspectives on the lands we call “wilderness”; that is, the cultural and historical roots of the myth that has cast us as visitors-only in these stunning places. In describing these places for others, we need to choose language that, far from suggesting emptiness, reflects and respects the prior occupation and



continuing use of these lands by Aboriginal people. We need to admit that the interests of recreational canoeists, of urban environmentalists, and of Aboriginal people are different: at times, closely aligned and complementary, but nonetheless distinct. Consequently, we need to take great care not to appropriate (and distort) another's cause to bolster our own. Finally, where our interests do not coincide or complement each other, we need to feel free to admit some disagreement. For instance, where we may recognize Aboriginal title to land and support the Aboriginal right to self-determination, we need not always favour all the things that are done with this right (e.g., if they include environmentally unsustainable practices).

In closing, I want to note that the challenge of reconciling our advocacy for wild places with Innu support is not just about making room for Aboriginal rights. It's also about the challenge we all face, of bringing our love of "wilderness" to bear on the places that we ourselves live: those local, less pristine, less sublime places that make up most of the natural world. It is not enough to save large tracts of wild lands that only the few most privileged among us can ever visit, and then only for a few weeks a year. Certainly there are substantial ecological non-human benefits to wild lands conservation and protection; for that reason these are laudable and important goals. But they can also lead us to fetishize certain distant and beautiful places as an escape from the forsaken lands we inhabit, driving an ever-deeper wedge between who we are and where we want to be. As Cronon writes, "to the extent that we celebrate wilderness as the measure with which we judge civilization, we reproduce the dualism that sets humanity and nature at opposite poles. We therefore leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honourable place in nature might actually look like" (1996, p. 81).

This is today's environmental challenge: not just to preserve wild lands and species, but to transcend the human-nature dualism at the basis of the "wilderness" myth. If we can do this, we will have found not only a comfortable co-existence for environmentalism and Aboriginal rights, but also the philosophical basis for a new

view of humans as belonging to this Earth. As we strive for ethical, sustainable, and honourable living, we will be welcoming ourselves back home.

## Notes

1. This article is based on a speech. The term "we" originally referred to the speech's intended audience: self-identified wilderness canoeists and enthusiasts who are virtually all non-Aboriginal and who live, for the most part, in urban southern Canada. I do not, however, assume that all readers of this article share this, or any other common background, and so here the term "we" refers simply to any or all who share this cultural reading of the term "wilderness." I therefore now leave it to the reader to determine if s/he is a part of this "we." The term "we" is also employed as a casual and very general pronoun, which I have retained as part of the spoken flavour of the original presentation.

2. Cronon gives the example of the Blackfeet, who to this day are often accused of "poaching" on the lands of Glacier National Park, lands which were originally theirs and were ceded by treaty on the condition that the Blackfeet be permitted to continue hunting there (1996).

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## The Representation and Appropriation of Indigenous Cultures at Ontario Summer Camps

by Ty Hamilton

I recently worked at a summer camp where the camp director decided to dress up in a stereotypical Plains Indian costume for a campfire program one evening. He proceeded to tell a story based on the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) oral tradition, but it was unlike anything I had learned about in my Indigenous Peoples Studies classes at McMaster University. Nevertheless, the director insisted to both staff and campers that the entire event was a legitimate part of the Algonquin culture. This experience caused me to think more extensively about the practices of representation and other issues around Indigenous cultures in outdoor education.

Curious to learn more, I set out to study some of the implications of different approaches to presenting material on Indigenous peoples at Ontario summer camps. During the fall of 2000, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the directors of five summer camp programs. While dominant culture urgently needs to learn more about Indigenous cultures and the colonial realities of the place we now call Canada, we also need to be cautious and self-reflective about how we approach such education. Common representations of Indigenous cultures, which include cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, can be linked to wider practices of colonialism. We need to work towards education about Indigenous culture that moves beyond stereotypical images and stolen ceremonies to begin addressing historical and contemporary colonial realities.

### Camp Traditions and Stereotypes

One of the stated goals for the use of Indigenous material at the camps in this study is to educate campers about Indigenous cultures. However, three of the camp directors I interviewed continue to use programs that were developed in the 1920s and 1930s and that have been changed only superficially. This material tends to promote three common stereotypical images of

Indigenous peoples: the Generic Indian, the Dying Race, and the Noble Savage. I use the term “Indian” intentionally when I take up discourse about Indigenous peoples that generates these stereotypes, images, and preconceptions. Such stereotypes are not unique to camp programs. They have existed in dominant society in various forms since the first contact between Europeans and the 2000 distinct cultures Indigenous to North America (Berkhofer, 1978).

Despite the diversity of these distinct cultures, the idea that Indigenous peoples are essentially one generic group has been reproduced since Columbus first coined the term “los indios” in a letter written in 1493 (Berkhofer, 1978). Labels change with each new incarnation of the Generic Indian, but Indigenous peoples are still often grouped together into one culture. Further, even individuals who are aware that each Indigenous culture is distinct have often failed to recognize that members of a culture will not always speak with one voice (Snow, 1994).

Three camps in this study presented material that perpetuates the myth of the Generic Indian. The directors of these camps generalized all Indigenous languages by referring to the name of their respective camps as “a Native word,” rather than attributing the names to a distinct language of origin such as Cree, Ojibway, or Mohawk. These camps also use “decorations” based on the art and artifacts of many Indigenous societies, again without acknowledging their distinct origins. A common example of this phenomenon found in many Ontario camps is the totem pole. One director, fairly new to his camp, expressed uncertainty about the history of the totem pole and much of the other “Native-themed” objects around his camp. He stated that while he did not know the precise history of his camp’s pole, its purpose was “certainly to recognize... [the] canoeing heritage that was given to us by the Native peoples around us.”

This statement exemplifies the problems that can arise when we assume that symbols from one Indigenous culture apply to all. None of the Indigenous cultures from Ontario create totem poles. The depiction of these symbols at an Ontario camp, as well as the incorrect belief that these symbols represent the surrounding Indigenous cultures, could mislead campers to assume that all Indigenous cultures are the same.

The figure of the Generic Indian also appears in a type of Council Ring campfire program that was once commonly called the “Indian Council Ring.” The Council Ring is essentially a campfire that re-enacts appropriated Indigenous cultural themes. While not identical at every camp that performs this type of ceremony, Council Rings have much in common. They involve storytelling, songs, prayers, dances, and often presentations by the campers. The campfire area may be surrounded with objects such as totem poles, tepees, or paintings on large tarps. The “chief,” often one of the senior staff members, might wear a plains-style headdress while reciting “Hiawatha’s Departure,” an invented story based on Haudenauasnee (Iroquois) oral tradition. This supposedly Iroquois story is often followed by the Omaha Tribal Prayer. Other common elements featured include peace pipes, dances, and stories. Only one director stated that he was careful to provide some cultural background for the different pieces of his Council Ring. While providing cultural background information may teach children about Indigenous cultural diversity, presenting these diverse cultures as part of one Council Ring also unfortunately teaches that the songs, stories, and ceremonies of different Indigenous peoples are compatible.

### **The Problem with the Noble/Ignoble Savage Dualism**

The figure of the Generic Indian often takes on different sets of characteristics based on stereotypes such as the Noble Savage and the Ignoble Savage. Although the camp programs often present the Noble Savage image, the two images serve as opposite ends of a false dichotomy. The Noble Savage describes the Indian as living free and virtuous in a state of nature, whereas the Ignoble Savage describes the Indian as uncivilized and primitive. This false

dichotomy only allows Indigenous peoples to exist as one or the other and nothing in between. The Noble Savage myth predicts behaviour so ideal that Indigenous peoples cannot achieve it (Sheehan, 1973). Thus, when Indigenous peoples resisted colonial expansion instead of embracing “civilization” (a process that would have meant the loss of their cultures), Ignoble Savage images arose to justify their extermination (Sheehan, 1973). It is significant that the western genre of dime novels emerged to perpetuate the Ignoble Savage stereotype at the same time as the physical dislocation and extermination of Native peoples in western North America. This literature served to justify the “Indian Wars” in the American West and continues to do so in new incarnations (Berkhofer, 1978). The Noble Savage image presented at these summer camps once again holds Indigenous peoples to a standard they cannot meet. When they fail to do so, campers may return to conceptualizing Indigenous peoples as modern Ignoble Savages.

Council Rings incorporate pop culture images of “Chiefs” and “Medicine Men” in buckskin and feathers, and these are more than Generic Indian images. They also promote the Noble Savage stereotype. While these images could be understood as positive, they do not create an accurate, realistic, or complex picture of Indigenous peoples for campers. Much of the material for modern-day Council Rings originated with the Taylor Statten Camps. Of the three camps that perform Council Ring programs, two use the Statten model, while another uses a similar format that contains some identical elements. Ernest Thompson Seton, founder of the Woodcraft League, was a key figure in the development of much of the Indigenous-themed material from the Taylor Statten Camps. He promoted the figure of the Indian, in Noble Savage incarnation, to serve as a suitable role model for children (Francis, 1992). On Seton’s use of Noble Savage images, historian Daniel Francis states:

Seton and the camp leaders were well aware that they were presenting an idealized image of the Indian. They were not really interested in teaching youngsters about actual Native people. They wanted an Indian, as Seton wrote, “with all that is bad and cruel left out” (Francis, 1992, p. 145).

One story from the Council Ring that demonstrates the way that Indigenous peoples are portrayed as Noble Savages is “Hiawatha’s Departure.” Like Seton, two of the directors I interviewed believed that the story offers a positive model for campers. In the story, the young “braves” must walk on burning embers to determine who will replace the departed chief. The boy who is mentally tough enough to successfully complete this ordeal then goes into the woods for an all-night vigil to further prove his bravery (Eastaugh, 1968). In the Council Ring, Hiawatha serves as a stereotypical Noble Savage role model for campers, modelling toughness, independence, and a connection to nature.

Contrary to the Council Ring story, new chiefs of the Haudenauanee, from whose oral tradition Ayonwatha (Hiawatha) originates, are chosen quite differently. Each clan inherits certain offices in the Confederacy Council. A clan mother chooses who will become a new chief, and her decision must first be approved by the consensus of the clan. She also holds the responsibility of communicating the complaints of the people to the chief, and has the power to remove him if necessary (Lyons, 1992). Today, the Confederacy Council exists alongside an imposed Band Council consisting of elected chiefs. These methods of selecting a chief may not have met the story’s

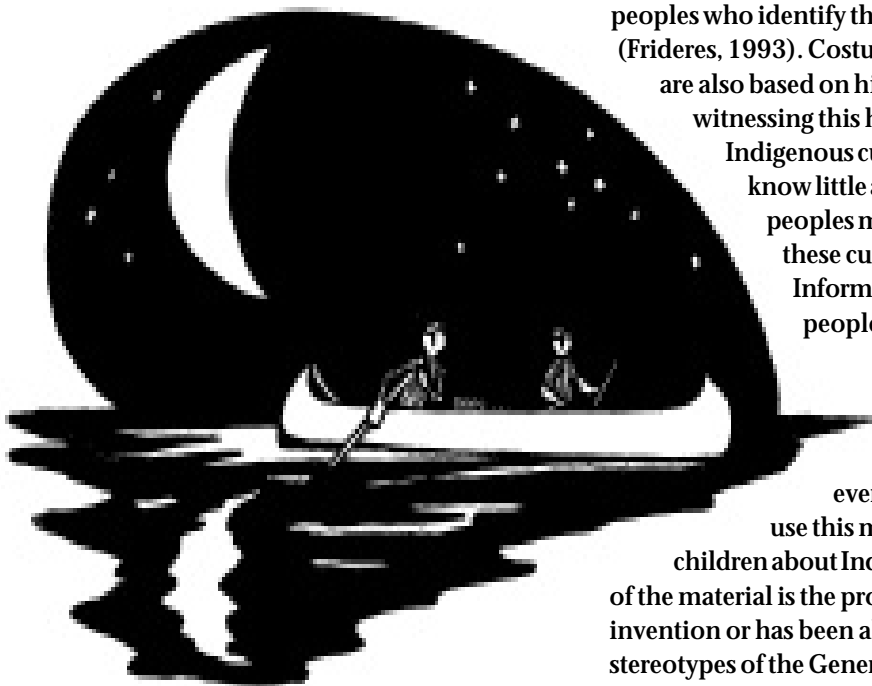
original goal of “reaching to the child’s level of interest” (Eastaugh, 1968, p. 1). Additionally, having the decision in the hands of a clan mother undermines the machismo of dancing on hot coals.

Another common myth about Indigenous peoples is that there is a generic “Indian race” that is doomed to become extinct. Non-Indigenous photographers, authors, artists, and anthropologists have been far more interested in how Indians lived prior to contact with Europeans than how Indigenous peoples live in contemporary times (Berkhofer, 1978). They perceived any changes from an idyllic, pre-contact state as signs of the Indian race’s death rather than cultural adaptations and changes as signs of the living.

The Dying Race myth is pervasive in the camp directors’ discussions of the Council Ring. Two of the three directors whose camps use Council Rings both used almost exclusively the past tense when talking about Indigenous peoples. When one director discussed the “authenticity” of the cultural elements within his Council Ring, he stated that the components may not be performed exactly as they “used to be done.” Missing is the acknowledgment that there are Indigenous peoples who still perform ceremonies, not to mention the large numbers of Indigenous peoples who identify themselves as Christian (Frideres, 1993). Costumes for the Council Ring

are also based on historical clothing. After witnessing this historicization of Indigenous cultures, campers who know little about Indigenous peoples might not understand that these cultures still exist. Information about Indigenous peoples in contemporary times is not a significant part of these programs.

Though a goal stated by every camp director was to use this material to educate children about Indigenous peoples, much of the material is the product of outright invention or has been altered to fit the stereotypes of the Generic Indian, the Noble



Savage, and the Dying Race. This undermines the goal of educating campers about Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are diverse and complex; the perception that they exist within a generic Indian culture maintains rifts in understanding between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of North America. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples cannot live up to the ideal of the Noble Savage stereotype, and it is unrealistic for colonizing peoples to hold such expectations.

The Canadian government and non-Indigenous North Americans will be unable to forge a new relationship with Indigenous peoples understood only through myths that are overly positive or negative. Such myths also mask historical and contemporary realities of colonialism in North America. Lastly, the myth of a Dying Race also justifies assimilationist philosophies that try to encourage or force Indigenous peoples to give up their cultural heritage and rights in favour of membership in the colonizing culture. While some of the Indigenous-themed programming at these camps could at first glance appear worthwhile in providing campers with fun, entertainment, and positive role models, these programs can also be linked to the perpetuation and reinforcement of stereotypes that have direct consequences for the lives of real Indigenous peoples and the ongoing colonization of the land we call Canada.

**Camp Traditions and Cultural Appropriation** Inseparable from these invented or altered Indigenous traditions, and the liberal mixing of Indigenous material into camp activities, is the issue of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is the adoption or use of cultural elements without sanction. Camps may be appropriating aspects of Indigenous culture with the intent to educate campers or help them form connections to the natural world. However, whatever the motive, cultural appropriation is exploitation, and “[this] exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo” (hooks, 1992, p. 22). Play-acting the roles of imaginary Indians, as discussed above, does nothing to support Indigenous peoples, nor does it provide an accurate education about

contemporary or historical realities for Indigenous peoples. It merely provides a false solidarity with the oppressed, while the play-actors continue to participate in the oppressive structures of colonial society (Churchill, 1994).

While some components of the Council Rings are complete fabrications, others such as the Omaha Tribal Prayer, Zuni call to council, Seneca Song, Hoop Dances, Owl Dance, Rabbit Dance, Pipe ceremonies, and Stone Giants story (Eastaugh, 1968; Pearse & Taylor, 1985) have been directly appropriated from various Indigenous cultures. Many Indigenous peoples have spoken out against the appropriation of their culture and spirituality. In response to cultural appropriation by youth programs, Beatty Brash states that Lakota and Dakota people who follow their spirituality believe that all aspects of their lives are sacred. Thus, they find the use of their prayers and ceremonies outside of their cultural context to be offensive. They consider common errors, like mixing up the order of invoking the Four Directions, to be blasphemous (Brash, 1982). Many Omaha people are also offended that people outside of their culture are using their prayers. With regard to such appropriation by a YMCA program, Corrina Drum, an Omaha woman, states: “This is a religious prayer of my people and it is sacrilegious for the Y-Guide program to use it” (qtd. in Brash, 1982, p. 190). As outdoor education scholar Gordon Oles aptly states: “By attempting to adopt Indian Ceremonies into their adventure leadership programs, these well-intentioned but misguided leaders have desecrated things that should have remained sacred and holy” (Oles, 1992, p. 20).

Not surprisingly, it is difficult for many Indigenous individuals to witness people from colonizing cultures perform ceremonies that Indigenous cultures are struggling to reclaim. McClellan Hall, an outdoor educator of Cherokee descent, walked out of a “so called ceremony” (Hall, 1992, p. 53) performed by a non-Indigenous man in a full headdress of eagle feathers at an American outdoor education conference in 1984. Hall’s people had been struggling in the courts for years to legally use eagle feathers for religious purposes (Hall, 1992).

One of the camp directors indicated that, through Indigenous-themed programming, his camp hoped to help preserve Indigenous cultures. This kind of attempt at preservation is what Haida/Tsimpsian scholar Marcia Crosby describes as the “salvage paradigm” (Crosby, 1991, p. 274). This is a process that attempts to “save” aspects of a “dying” culture. When the dominant culture dictates that another culture is dying and incapable of preserving its own heritage, the dominant culture documents and thus gains ownership of the “dying” culture. Furthermore, the “dead” culture is commodified because its remnants become valuable as dominant society assumes that they are the last “pure” examples of that culture. The dominant culture conveniently ignores the survival of the “dead” culture by setting criteria for cultural pureness that do not allow a culture to change and adapt to contemporary circumstances (Crosby, 1991). These camps’ attempts to preserve aspects of Indigenous culture through appropriation not only fail to help Indigenous peoples, but also further promote the myth of a Dying Race and other stereotypes.

### Changing Camp Traditions

One of the most significant changes in the depictions of Indigenous peoples at the Taylor Statten Camps is that the staff now tries to discuss the origins of the Council Ring, totem poles, and Indigenous-themed art. While Taylor Statten III (Tike Statten) acknowledges that he uses some stories taken from Indigenous cultures, he insists that the Council is essentially a “White man’s participatory play.” He refers to much of the material as “White man’s baloney.” He tells campers: “No, this is not an Indian Council Ring, this is a White Council Ring.” Before the Council Ring, he discusses the history of Indigenous cultures at the camps, including “the Noble Savage image.” He also talks about how the Canadian public conceptualized the figure of the Indian in the 1920s and 1930s when the camp was formed, and how his grandfather and Ernest Thompson Seton made up a Council Ring based on these stereotypes to teach lessons to campers. Statten also tells the campers that the representations at his camp are not representative of the “true situation for Native people today.” He then discusses contemporary realities for Indigenous peoples in Canada and mentions that Indigenous

peoples come from many cultures, have many views, and do not all live on reserves. He also has, on occasion, talked about social issues from the news and discussed the difficulties in Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Within the framework of his frank discussion of the origins and implications of the council, Statten sees the Council Ring as an educational opportunity. He believes it offers a chance to teach children about stereotypes and the contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples, including their relationship to Canada. However, the degree to which campers could understand the discussion and its implications for the Council Ring would likely depend on the age of the campers, and for how many years they returned to the camp. For those campers who listen and understand, the experience may indeed be educational. However, I wonder if the image of the chief in the headdress around the campfire lingers after the understanding of the problems of Noble Savage imagery fades? A worthwhile discussion about issues of colonization does not mitigate the ethical issues involved in presenting appropriated or fabricated material. This also brings up questions of cultural appropriation and how heavily stories or ceremonies can be altered and still be considered appropriated. According to Statten, the current Council Ring is almost entirely invention. Invention, however, is no less problematic than appropriation.

According to Statten, though, the Council Ring also provides additional benefits. He claims that the content, while not necessarily “authentic,” has positive moral messages. Having given the Council Ring content much thought, Statten feels that the benefits outweigh potential problems if he frames the council with an open discussion about stereotyping and the contemporary realities for Indigenous peoples. It is interesting to note that other camps continue to use the Taylor Statten Council Ring without such discussion.

Two other camps in the study moved away from presenting campers with material similar to the Council Ring. Robyn Mitz, director of Camp Wanapitei, has seen pictures from 20 years ago when the staff dressed in feather and buckskin costumes for “Indian Night.” She also remembers

attending a similar program when she was a young camper. As a child, she never questioned the accuracy or the appropriateness of this activity. A relatively new director, Mitz believes that instructors and camp directors of her generation feel less comfortable “appropriating [culture] and teaching stories that [they] don’t know about” and that are told from non-Indigenous perspectives. The other camp’s director stated that videos and pictures from his camp’s past showed activities that were similar to “playing Cowboys and Indians.” Like Mitz, he felt that these activities were inappropriate.

As an alternative, these two camps attempt to provide campers with opportunities to meet and interact with Indigenous peoples who live near the camps or in the areas the campers visit during canoe trips. These trips provide an opportunity for the campers to meet Indigenous peoples both in their communities and on their land. They also try to show a more genuine history by visiting historical sites that are significant to local Indigenous cultures as well as the fur trade and other aspects of colonial history.

Another benefit of camper interaction with Indigenous communities is that any stories or other culture that the children experience is a result of sharing, not unwanted appropriation. Wanapitei campers have met Indigenous trappers working on the land who are sometimes willing to share stories. Mitz was excited that one such trapper from the local area was going to come to one of their campfires and share stories with the campers. Despite these positive steps, Mitz remains concerned about cultural appropriation. She struggles with the fact that she and her campers travel by canoe, an appropriated technology. She also feels ambivalent about sending groups to travel through and camp on Native lands. She and her staff often discuss these issues together. They try to remain connected with neighbouring Indigenous communities, and have ongoing discussions about what is appropriate, and how to talk to their campers about Indigenous issues. The camp also maintains connections with the Native Studies department at Trent University.

Despite this careful reflection, meeting Indigenous individuals for such a short time can be problematic. Campers can witness behaviours that fit stereotypes in what might be their only experience with an Indigenous culture. For example, one of the campers’ backpacks was stolen during a visit to a First Nations community. Mitz was quick to point out that this could have happened in downtown Toronto. However, since an Indigenous person stole it, a few of the staff and campers made judgments about Indigenous peoples in general. She reflected that the staff could have done more to talk about stereotyping before the trip because some of those children may now associate that particular community only with the theft.

In situations such as these, as well as more positive interactions with Indigenous peoples, facilitation and debriefing of experiences could have a significant impact on how campers see Indigenous peoples. Discussion and activities surrounding visits are critical. They help ensure campers avoid making generalizations based on such limited experience and avoid interpreting their brief encounter with an Indigenous person through a worldview based on stereotypes. Campers also need to know that many Indigenous peoples live in urban areas, and that different communities from the same culture can be very different. In the cases of the camps I investigated, the responsibility of this work rests primarily on the individual trip leaders who provide campers with background information relevant to the trip, as well as lead discussions about the events of the trip as they unfold. It would be very challenging to find camp staff and trip leaders with the knowledge, experience, and sensitivity to facilitate these experiences well.

### Conclusions

Since first contact between Indigenous peoples and the colonizers of North America, stereotypes of the Indian have changed little. Despite increasing awareness of the diversity of Indigenous identities and experiences, the Generic Indian, Noble Savage, and Dying Race stereotypes remain prevalent in present-day North America. Non-Indigenous North Americans have also appropriated aspects of Indigenous cultures for their own use. Unfortunately, some summer



camps in Ontario continue to expose children to Indigenous peoples stereotypes and cultural appropriation. This is inconsistent with the camps' goals of educating campers about Indigenous peoples and showing respect for Indigenous cultures. Given the current issues of land-claims negotiations and Aboriginal rights, non-Indigenous North Americans need to begin moving beyond their mythical understanding of Indigenous peoples.

The camp directors cited in this study stated they also used Indigenous-themed material to provide positive role-models for youth, to create a sense of community at the camp, and to foster connections with nature. Several of these goals can be accomplished through alternative means. Invented and appropriated Indigenous stories can be replaced with other stories. Tales of voyageurs Elliot Merrick, Ernest Shackleton, Albert Johnson, and many others make fine storytelling material, particularly if they are placed in their colonial context by the facilitator. Likewise, there are folk songs and just-for-fun camp songs that would no doubt be as effective as the invented songs of an imaginary Indian in helping create a sense of community. Furthermore, connection to the environment is also possible without cultural appropriation. Zabe MacEachren (2000), for example, has written extensively on the potential for using craft to forge connections to the more-than-human world.

The possibilities for ways to educate campers about Indigenous realities, create a sense of community, and foster connections with nature are limited only by our willingness to search for and create alternative programs to those that misrepresent or appropriate Indigenous cultures.

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*Ty Hamilton is currently pursuing a BEd at UBC. This article is a condensed version of his undergraduate thesis. He would like to thank Rick Monture and Bob Henderson for their guidance throughout this project.*

## Queering Outdoor Education

by Connie Russell, Tema Sarick, and Jackie Kennelly

When some of Deborah Britzman's colleagues first heard about her work in what was then the emerging field of queer pedagogy, she recounts their surprise: "It is as if the listener cannot believe her or his ears, it is as if I had spoken in another language. One difficulty that borders these conversations is that for many of my colleagues, questions of gay and lesbian thought are, well, not given any thought" (Britzman, 1995, p. 151). The three of us find ourselves in a similar position. With the exception of a small group of feminist outdoor educators (Bell, 1996; Bradash, 1995; McClintock, 1996; Warren & Rheingold, 1996), outdoor environmental education has been overwhelmingly silent about the ways in which our theories, practices, and research have been "heterosexualized."

### Background

To begin, it is important to remember that the word "queer" is contested and thus problematic. Commonly used as a pejorative, it has been defiantly reclaimed. For some, "queer" signifies a noun or adjective and acts as a short form for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and transexual." For others, however, the word can also be a verb that focuses not on individuals but on actions; in queer pedagogy, the shift to the active form of the word denotes changing the emphasis from educating *about* queers and *their* struggles with homophobia to a more serious and sustained interrogation of how all of us construct *our* identities.

The classification of people based on their preferences for particular sexual acts is a relatively new phenomenon in Western culture. Jonathan Ned Katz (1996) notes that the first public use of the word "homosexual" was in 1869, and it first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1901. Soon after, a taxonomy of "sexual species" was developed and described in medical texts. Heterosexual reproductive sex became to be known as the norm and other sexual acts classified as deviant; this has been named "heteronormativity."

One of the primary goals of queer pedagogy becomes, then, the identification and challenging of this process of normalizing heterosexuality and of devaluing anything perceived as outside of this norm. It is our contention that outdoor environmental educators are in a unique position to do precisely that because heteronormativity depends upon very particular constructions of what counts as natural. A dominant narrative within Western society is that heterosexual reproductive sex is natural because it contributes to the perpetuation of the human species, and that other forms of sexual activity do not occur in the natural world.

Until recently, research on other animals seemed to "prove" this point. For example, Donna Haraway (1989) writes about how researchers saw what they wanted to see and portrayed gorillas as existing in nuclear families (pp. 33, 41) and chimpanzees as heterosexually monogamous (p. 78); neither representation is accurate. Even when researchers did note the presence of non-heterosexual activity, their reports were rarely published. Indeed, as Bruce Baghemi (1999) asserts, evidence contrary to the heterosexist norm was

...often hidden away in obscure journals and unpublished dissertations, or buried even further under outdated value judgments and cryptic terminology. Most of this information, however, simply remains unpublished, the result of a general climate of ignorance, disinterest, and even fear and hostility.... Equally disconcerting, popular works on animals routinely omit any mention of homosexuality, even when the authors are clearly aware that such information is available in the original scientific material (p. 87).

The climate has changed somewhat and research on other animals that specifically names practices that do not fit the heterosexual norm are finally

appearing in both academic and more popular literature (Baghemi, 1999). For example, research conducted by Canadian primatologist Paul Vasey on female Japanese macaques engaging in same-sex behaviour for pleasure is rightly seen as cutting edge work and has generated much media coverage such as a magazine article in *Equinox* (Vasey, 2000) and an interview in the documentary *Out In Nature* (Loyer, Menendez, & Alexandresco, 2000) which recently aired on the Discovery Channel. (This video is an excellent resource for senior secondary classes and university classes.)

### What Has This Got to Do with Outdoor Education?

Many environmental and outdoor educators already focus on the implications of various constructions of nature. For example, *Pathways* has often contained articles that criticize the popular idea of nature as solely a resource for humankind. Examining the ways in which our ideas about other animals have been “heterosexualized” is simply an extension of this work. Further, environmental educators influenced by ecofeminism and environmental justice have been very interested in the ways in which various constructions of nature, race, and gender intersect and oppressions are linked. For example, historically, exploitation of particular human groups such as women, blacks, indigenous peoples, and queers has been justified

*“Why, for instance, is a male guide who excels at campsite cooking considered ‘gay’ and a female guide adept at portaging considered a ‘dyke’?”*

on the basis of these groups being deemed to be closer to nature, that is animalistic, irrational, savage, or uncivilized (Bell & Russell, 2000; Selby, 1995, pp. 17–20).

On another front, critical outdoor educators recognize that the nature experiences they offer are not always interpreted in the same way by all participants, and some argue that queer youth need to be offered specific programs and a safe space to address their unique concerns (Bradash, 1995). Others feel that outdoor education practices, generally, need to be re-examined for the ways in which they reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, Martha Bell (1996) critiques the underlying macho ethos of much outdoor education where the model of a competent outdoor instructor is the white male. Karen Warren and Alison Rheingold (1996) describe an exercise they use to disrupt the underlying heteronormativity of the prescription of traditional gender roles. On canoe trips, they facilitate role-playing exercise in which

...only the women (who are playing masculine roles) are allowed to handle the canoe, tie it on top of the van, and paddle out to the island. The men’s role (playing the feminine role) is to be supportive and encouraging. While the gender-bending exercise usually creates some extreme stereotypic actions by the students, when we process the experience... students are usually astounded by their reactions and the issues raised (p. 126).

While such exercises are always in danger of further reifying gender roles, when well facilitated, they can provide a space whereby “masculine” and “feminine” and heteronormative gender role socialization can be explored. Why, for instance, is a male guide who excels at campsite cooking considered “gay” and a female guide adept at portaging considered a “dyke”?

Heteronormativity has been actively enforced in outdoor and adventure education. For example, Denise Mitten (1997) describes the transition of



Outward Bound from an all-male bastion to a mixed-gender organization. Resistant at first to hiring female staff, some males expressed concern that “Amazon types” (code word for lesbians) would be hired; it should come as no surprise that queers hired at that time often remained in the closet (Mitten, 1997). This is an example of “lesbian baiting” whereby women working in the field, regardless of their sexual orientation, are labelled as lesbians in an effort to discredit them, provoke denials, or encourage the adoption of more traditional gender norms (McClintock, 1996; Mitten, 1997). Lesbian baiting only works, of course, in homophobic contexts. Mary McClintock (1996) rightfully asks, “[W]hy does lesbian baiting happen in outdoor and adventure education?” and responds that “the primary reason is that wilderness, the outdoors, and outdoor activities have traditionally been considered an arena for men to prove and exhibit their masculinity” (p. 244).

Queering outdoor education also forces us to expand our ideas of what counts as appropriate outdoor experiences and what counts as environmentalism. One example is EcoQueers, a Toronto organization that provides “a space for those looking for nature walks, camping trips and gardening tips, but also for folks wanting to challenge more critically the objectives of gay

liberation and gay discourse” (Gosine, 2001, p. 36). Such organizations, Andil Gosine (2001) asserts, directly challenge stereotypes such as the gay man oblivious to or uninterested in environmental concerns: “to be gay and male, the story goes, is to fully indulge in capitalist consumption” (p. 35).

Another example is “eco-grrls,” a label used to describe young women (usually of secondary school or university age) who are not only interested in environmental concerns, but also challenge traditional gender roles. The “caricature of an eco-grrl,” according to Kim Fry and Cheryl Lousley (2001), “wears Mountain Equipment Co-op clothes with a backpack and hiking boots, complemented by unshaven legs, no makeup and a bandanna covering her hair” (p. 25). Adopting a uniform more commonly associated with lesbians allows eco-grrls “to reject and subvert overwhelming beauty pressures and the male gaze” (Fry & Lousley, 2001, p. 25). Yet another example is the “Radical Cheerleaders” who have had a growing presence in political protests around both social and environmental justice issues. Gregory and Dinner (2001) describe one such male cheerleader: “Corey puts on a black shirt and red skirt and sticks plastic pompoms into the makeshift stirrups of a pair of combat boots... Corey joins the radical squad, a group of 25 young men and women with sexy

legs and defiant grins.” These youth have taken a “conservative icon” and “hijacked [it] into a form of political theatre” (Gregory & Dinner, 2001, p. 26). None of these examples fit the stereotype of the traditional environmental activist or outdoor enthusiast.

### Conclusion

The intent of this paper is not to offer a set of guidelines for queering outdoor education, but instead to make space to speculate upon a few possible ways that queer pedagogy can enrich our work in the outdoors. From recognizing and addressing the heteronormative assumptions that influence the outdoor classroom, to subverting gender norms that are oppressive, to noticing the cultural constructs through which we view nature, queer pedagogy is rife with possibilities for outdoor educators to challenge the status quo of heterosexism and sexism. We hope this paper will spark new ideas, foster dialogue, and encourage critical analysis of outdoor environmental education theory and practice.

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## Exploring Social Class in Outdoor Environmental Education

by *Ingrid Sikorcin*

You could sense the fear and excitement in their voices as they descended into the cool, dark caves, headlights on, ready to explore the unknown. The 15 students crawled, slithered, climbed, and laughed their way through crevices formed by retreating glaciers, not wanting to leave, elated at the thought of returning for more adventures. I witnessed this last summer during a day outing to Warsaw Caves with 6 to 13 year olds. I was a volunteer leader for a program with the main goal of providing outdoor and environmental education opportunities for children who may not otherwise have them due to cultural, economic, or social barriers.

All children do not have the same opportunities to experience “wilderness” or natural rural environments, and I believe that such experiences provide beneficial recreational opportunities that allow for team building and skill building. More importantly, they also provide an ideal setting for developing ecological literacy and fostering pro-environmental attitudes and values. While I still hope that some of these objectives are attainable, I have become increasingly aware of the “messiness” that surrounds such goals and their underlying assumptions; this has led me to question my own intentions as an educator. Using my experience with the Inner City Outings program as an example, I will begin to uncover some of these assumptions and explore their implications for outdoor environmental education.

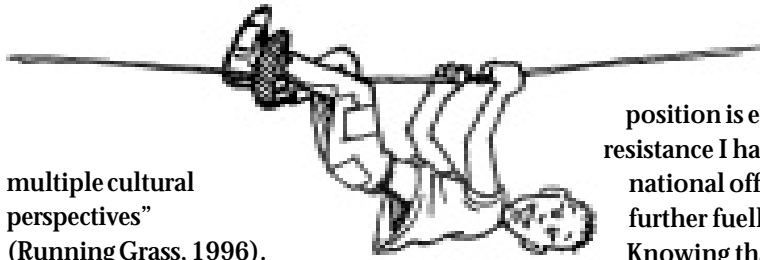
Environmental education has many definitions and manifestations. Traditional environmental education programs often work towards fostering a reconnection to the natural world and espouse the importance of nature experience, often of the wilderness variety. They aim to address the following question: “How can we hope to recognize and reaffirm our deep interconnections with the rest of nature if we fail to venture beyond the classroom walls?” (Bell, 1997, p. 133). By

providing experiential education opportunities in the outdoors, it is often expected or hoped that environmentally-conscious attitudes, values, and behaviour will follow.

While nature experience is important, it is often assumed that such experiences are accessible to everyone and interpreted similarly by all participants. This is simply untrue (Russell, 1999). Despite their well-meant intentions, many environmental education programs have been rightly critiqued for not adequately addressing the social, political, and economic forces and structures that create and maintain ecological crises such as the loss of natural habitat and arable land, unbridled development, increases in air and water pollution, and waste accumulation. Specifically, many of these programs have been criticized for not addressing issues of power and the importance of understanding and attending to race, class, and gender as mediating factors.

Giovanna Di Chiro (1992; 1996) has critiqued mainstream environmental organizations for ignoring the environmental injustices experienced by communities of colour and low-income communities. In the spirit and politics of critical theory, the work of environmental justice activists has sought to acknowledge the “specific experiential and historical realities” that shape a community’s perception of its relationship with nature (Di Chiro, 1996, p. 303).

One solution to the monoculturalism of environmental education has been to focus on local contexts where students may be able to connect abstract environmental issues to their lived environments. For example, Martil-de Castro (1999) writes of her attempts to ground environmental education in the lives of her urban students. Also growing in popularity is multicultural environmental education where “content is influenced by and taught from



multiple cultural perspectives” (Running Grass, 1996).

Another example is school ground naturalization projects which have become an increasingly popular means to engage students in transforming their physical surroundings and which can provide students with opportunity to participate in an authentic form of activism (Grant & Littlejohn, 2001). These more critical forms of environmental education often pay close attention to issues of class, race, and gender.

Over the past three years, I have been attempting to practise critical environmental education with Inner City Outings (ICO), an outreach program of the Sierra Club which aims to provide outdoor education opportunities for youth and adults who face some type of barrier to participation, whether physical, social, or economic. The program was founded in 1971 in San Francisco and currently boasts 48 groups in the United States and one in Toronto; all are non-profit programs organized by volunteers. The Toronto group was formed in the winter of 1999 and has approximately 20 volunteer leaders working with two community agencies in planning and conducting the outings for children aged 6 to 13.

Even before the first meeting ended, I began to contemplate the “privileged positions” inherent in our group’s name. The term “inner city” has many negative connotations associated with it, and I didn’t want an already stigmatized group of children to be labelled even further. And while I consciously addressed the issue of power by suggesting that the children be the ones to rename the group, I did not initially acknowledge my position of power and privilege in being the person who first decided that the group should be renamed. I continue to struggle with this issue, particularly because my own personal history locates me in similar (although never the same) socioeconomic contexts as many of the children and because I must admit that I now do

have privilege and power as an organizer and leader. This position is even further complicated by the resistance I have experienced from the program’s national office in changing our group’s name, further fuelling my desire to change it! Knowing that the term in question is often, if not exclusively, considered derogatory and knowing that I do have the power to change it, I am inclined to do so. (We finally decided on an interim name, Children’s Summer Outings.)

Throughout this program, I continuously found myself reflecting on my own positions of “disadvantaged” and “advantaged.” Although I grew up in a public-housing community and had low socioeconomic status, I was fortunate to have a parent who loved spending time in the outdoors and made it a priority to go camping for a few weeks each summer, regardless of the financial and temporal sacrifices that had to be made to do so. Through these regular and mostly positive experiences, I developed my own affinity and love for natural environments and wildlife, which in turn has created in me a desire to help provide similar opportunities for children in comparable financial circumstances.

I read with interest Martil-de Castro’s article argument for grounding environmental education in the lives of her students. She critiqued the tradition of wilderness outings in specific rural locations that are widely emphasized as “mere fantasies...since [her students] cannot access such sites in their urban environment nor can they afford to travel to destinations offering them” (1999, p. 15). I agree with and commend Martil-de Castro’s commitment to developing a localized environmental education curriculum, one that allows for not only exploration of and affection for urban environments, but also an analysis of the environmental issues with which residents must contend. However, at the risk of perpetuating dominant nature and environmental education narratives, I am left with a question: Why is it that some of us may never have the opportunity to hike, canoe, star-gaze, swim, or just be present in such wilderness settings, while others may have many such experiences? And

considering this inequality in experience, why is it not being addressed with arguments that would advocate for similar opportunities for all children?

I have come to understand that class is not an isolated identity position but one that intersects with gender, race, sexuality, ability, age, and ethnicity, among other factors. That being said, disrupting classism is a particular priority for me, and I wish to critique a system which prevents some individuals from engaging in particular types of nature experiences. I realize that I do this at the risk of promoting the dominant form of environmentalism which prioritizes “wilderness” and conservation campaigns at the expense of environmental crises affecting urban, low-income, and racialized communities. I do this, though, while attending to the call for environmental educators to be critical of ourselves, our theories and our practices, and with a commitment to diverse, grounded, and socially and environmentally just environmental education theory and practice.

I want to be involved in a form of environmental education where connections are made across various terrains and social positions. For instance, a series of outings could link an urban section of a river familiar to participants at its mouth to its headwaters, and everything in between and beyond. Issues such as water cycles, water pollution, animal habitat, Indigenous history, rights, racism, development/urban sprawl, sustainable transportation (including the pollution created by taking a bus to the river’s headwaters), spirituality, and stewardship could all be explored. Looking at the demographics of outing leaders would also be a good starting point to deconstructing classism and racism.

Incorporating rural and urban outings and issues of environmental racism and classism has been more challenging than I anticipated with ICO, especially from an organizational point of view. Initially, the ICO National Steering Committee was resistant to critical dialogue. For instance, organizers scheduled a “sensitivity workshop” at their national conference only after I made a request to include a plenary session on environmental racism and classism. Unfortunately, it was not

deemed worthy of a plenary and was watered down by framing classism solely as an issue that could be fixed through improved interpersonal interactions rather than through addressing systemic problems. As well, attempts to encourage local volunteer leaders to conduct urban outings has been less than successful.

One solution I can envision to this inertia would be to seek out and network with children’s agencies already engaged in some type of urban environmental education or justice projects, such as community gardening or stewardship projects. While the ICO has yet to break free of more traditional approaches to environmental education, I remain hopeful that this will occur in time and with effort.

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## Designing Adventure: All for One and One for All

by Kathy Haras and Brian Lisson

Over the past decade, the number and diversity of ropes course participants has increased (Rogers, 2000). The physical, cognitive, social, affective, and cultural differences among group members has made it more difficult to effectively meet the needs of all participants using common, well-established cooperative games, problem-solving initiatives, and high and low ropes course activities. Some individuals require a high degree of challenge to achieve the learning and growth associated with adventure experiences. Others will not even contemplate participating in moderately challenging ropes course activities. Because individual perceptions of challenge vary, activities created for a supposed norm may actually meet the needs of only a minority, and the meaningful participation of diverse individuals may be unintentionally limited.

An inclusive attitude and accompanying actions convey that everyone is welcome, respected, and able to make valuable contributions to the group (Dattilo, 2002). Adventure leaders are in a position to facilitate inclusion by building options and adaptations directly into the design of an activity or program.

Very often, facilitators take the approach of making separate, individual accommodations to activities based on age, gender, ability, cultural background, or socioeconomic status. However, sometimes the changes made for one individual may conflict with those that benefit another. Additionally, such adaptations are often limited in scope, centring out a person with a readily identifiable need while ignoring the diverse needs of all group members. In contrast, this article will explore the key premises of adventure education and introduce principles that adventure leaders can use to create a single, exciting design that includes all individuals.

### Adventure and Education

Adventure program designs tend to be based on two fundamental beliefs. On one hand, there is the belief that participating in adventure promotes learning and growth (Priest & Gass, 1997). Difficult

and demanding first-hand experiences expand participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Individuals are actively engaged because of the unfamiliar environment, perceived risk, and unpredictable outcome of the activities. Success, although uncertain, is designed to be achievable (West & Crompton, 2001) and attaining a novel and challenging task is fun and engaging (Rohnke & Butler, 1995). As a result of success, participants develop a sense of efficacy that encourages further participation that may lead to learning that can be applied to everyday life.

The second key belief is that adventure must be entered into voluntarily (Priest & Gass, 1997). Choice allows participants to make decisions about their involvement and empowers them to take responsibility for their own learning and growth (Lisson, 2000). When there are multiple options available for involvement, choice becomes a way into the adventure experience rather than a way out. In many cases, choice increases the internal motivation to participate, and these two beliefs work together to promote learning.

Participation in adventure and making choices about one's involvement can, however, work in opposition. When individuals choose not to participate, they limit their own opportunity for learning and growth. Participation can also depend on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a participant, and the available resources (Roberts & Smith, 1999). An individual who has rock climbed may eagerly anticipate a high ropes experience. If the program has no harness that fits him or her, the individual will be unable to climb or belay, regardless of choice.

Understanding how choice affects active involvement highlights the importance of designing adventure programs that invite meaningful participation through multiple layers of options. In the rest of the article, examples of activities will be used to illustrate how a single, small change can make a significant difference in expanding opportunities within an adventure activity.

### Transforming the Adventure Experience

All activities revolve around a *goal*, or central task, that provides challenge, risk, and uncertainty. The primary interactions that directly contribute to accomplishing the task are created by the *structure*, *rules*, and *scenario* surrounding the goal as well as the *equipment* and *environment*. It is critical that activities be designed to value multiple abilities because individuals who perceive a task to be too difficult will often expend little effort and may fail to participate (Cohen, 1993).

**Goal.** The goal of a high ropes experience is to overcome the perceived risk of walking or climbing on objects suspended 10 to 15 metres in the air. For many participants, this is not only psychologically but also physically challenging. Although there is no definition of success and no limit to the number of people who can be successful, group members may see completing the element in a particular way or in a certain time frame as the goal and develop a sense of competition. In addition, participants with limited strength, mobility, or physical fitness often find it difficult to access high ropes elements by climbing. Providing easier climbing routes or a pulley system may be necessary to enable participants to leave the ground and be engaged in the central task rather than being limited to holding the rope bag or cheering on other group members.

On the other hand, if the task is too simple for some individuals, they will be unchallenged, bored, and will not benefit from the adventure experience. Suggesting that group members climb, traverse, or descend blindfolded, clap hands in the middle of the element, or try to catch a ball thrown up to them may also be appropriate.

Social differences can be magnified in a high ropes setting. When different-sized people are given disparate harnesses, it may appear that certain people are being singled out. With some body types, a chest and seat harness combination is required to prevent inversion. The advantages of using this style of harnessing with all participants is that everyone looks the same and diverse individuals are able to access the high ropes course in safety and comfort.

Clothing is another social aspect that may be discounted by adventure leaders, but can have a major influence on participation. Just imagine trying to put on a harness wearing a skirt or worrying whether a helmet can be placed over a head covering worn for religious reasons. To facilitate inclusion, it is necessary to consider the range of participants with respect to all facets of the program.

**Structure.** How active, exciting, and engaging an activity is depends on how it is organized. Many high ropes elements are “all or none” propositions where every climber must perform similar tasks (Lisson, 2000) and interaction is highly individualistic since there is only one person on an element at a time. A high ropes experience can, however, be created so it provides multiple levels of engagement.

A high ropes mega-initiative combines climbing with the retrieval, relocation, or reorganization of objects suspended on the ropes course. The group’s goal may be to collect a certain number of items, or to use the collected items to build a structure. True choice is provided because group members can select from a number of elements, choose which item to retrieve, coordinate the group’s progress, build the structure, or even belay group members. The resulting decentralized action is more chaotic, but participation is encouraged since there are a variety of simultaneous options for involvement (Fluegelman, 1976). Because all roles serve a legitimate function and make a valuable, tangible contribution to achieving the goal (McAvoy & Lais, 1999), performance pressure and competition decreases.

**Scenario.** A scenario can create a compelling reason to participate and is often the participant’s first introduction to an activity. In wilderness-based adventure programs, the environment creates its own inherent compelling story. The deliberately designed ropes course activities and initiatives, however, often require the adventure leader to develop an engaging narrative. Effective scenarios can promote active involvement by increasing fun and allowing participants to act in uncommon ways (Rohnke & Butler, 1995).

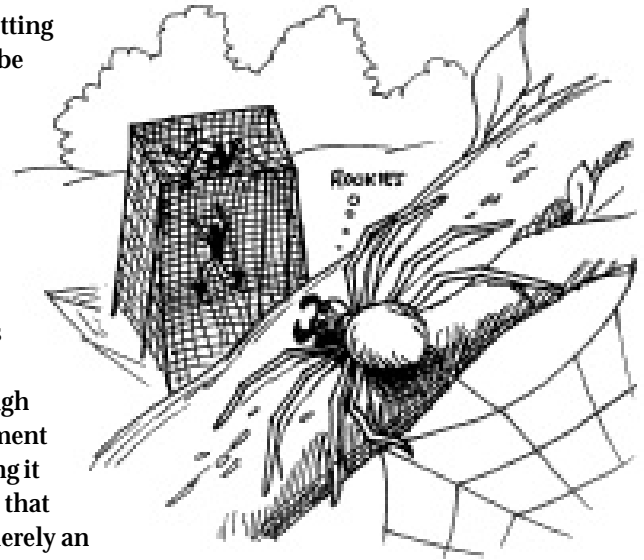
Using a metaphor can help participants make connections between the activity and topics they are exploring at school. In a mega-initiative, different coloured bandannas may represent dollar amounts, and the group may be required to collect a certain value in order to start a business. The group may need to decide if it wants to purchase additional resources, go into debt, or exceed its stockholders' expectations. Other scenarios can deal with delivering services to clients, collecting scarce resources, or building a power unit that allows the group to return to earth after crashing on a distant planet. When an activity's structure or narrative mirrors what occurs in the everyday lives of group members (also known as an isomorphic approach) (Priest & Gass, 1997), learning may occur more readily because parallels between the activity and other group tasks and skills are more apparent.

**Equipment.** Equipment may invite play and playfulness (Rohnke & Butler, 1995) and expand action opportunities, or it can limit and even prevent participation. A pulley system can increase the available action opportunities on a high ropes course. Individuals who cannot climb can pull themselves up or be pulled up by group members on the ground to the top of the course (Havens, 1992; Rogers, 2000). The addition of a traditional rope ladder or a firecracker ladder (where the rungs are suspended on one central upright) provides even more options for accessing the high ropes course. Because all of these alternative routes are novel and challenging, participants are not singled out based on how they access the course. As a result, in programs where a pulley system is available, it is almost in constant use — regardless of the physical abilities of group members.

When there are not only a number of alternatives from which to choose, but also these alternatives are different, then individuals can truly make a choice about their participation. Adventure leaders should also keep variety in mind when selecting specific high ropes elements for a program.

Despite a variety of choices, some individuals may not be able to participate without special equipment. A kite harness is designed to support

participants in a sitting position and may be required for individuals who cannot keep themselves upright. Participants with allergies to latex may need helmets that are not lined with foam. Although specialized equipment is expensive, having it sends the message that inclusion is not merely an afterthought, but absolutely central to the educational design.



**Rules.** Rules reduce ambiguity by clarifying roles, pointing out problem-solving approaches, and allowing group members to monitor their own behaviour (Ellmo & Graser, 1995). Rock climbers, mountaineers, and other adventurers frequently alter the “rules” that define success so that the challenges of the activity match their capabilities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Similarly, facilitators can alter rules to modify the degree of challenge for participants, making a task more difficult or more forgiving.

**Environment.** Placing individuals in novel and unfamiliar locations provides them with a new perspective (West & Crompton, 2001). An unusual environment can, however, limit participation if individuals feel overwhelmed or are unable to deal with the challenges presented. Adventure leaders are aware that ropes courses pose deliberate challenges but may forget that getting to the ropes course can be a challenge in itself since barriers, terrain, and surface features affect accessibility (Dattilo, 2002). Many wheelchairs have small front coasters that make moving over uneven surfaces difficult. Rather than altering the environment, it may be more effective to alter how people move about the environment. On some trails, golf carts may provide an ideal solution — group members who use wheelchairs, walkers, or tire easily can get to the ropes course with more energy for climbing.

Similarly, many camps and outdoor education centres believe that when it comes to ropes courses, bigger is better. Participants, however, may be overwhelmed by the thought of a 450-ft. zipline or 60-ft.-high burma bridge. This is especially true when participants have no prior experience from which to judge the degree of challenge. Working up to a more awe-inspiring environment may be one way of encouraging participation.

Finally, participants may simply be unwilling to come to an unfamiliar setting like a high ropes course. Although some of the cooperative games, trust exercises, and problem-solving initiatives presented in books like *Silver bullets* and *Quick silver* require a specialized, permanent set-up, many of them are portable. A wider variety of people may participate when the adventure experience is offered in a more familiar setting.

**Applying the Adventure Design Framework**  
We will conclude with two sample activities that have multiple variations within each of the design variables of *goal, structure, scenario, equipment, rules, and environment*. See Tables 1

and 2 for each sample activity. In each case, the minor changes made have transformed each activity so that it better meets the varied needs of multiple participants.

## Conclusion

Exciting and inclusive adventure experiences require deliberate and thoughtful principle-based program design. Remembering the importance of uncertainty and risk, challenge and efficacy, active engagement, and self-selection enables adventure leaders to preserve the essence of adventure while honouring the importance of choice. The potential for learning and growth is enhanced when the experience invites the meaningful participation of all individuals with a single design.

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**Table 1. Many variations can be applied to a debris field scenario.**

Goal	The goal is to verbally guide a blindfolded partner to the other side of the debris field without having him or her contact any prohibited objects lying on the ground. Requiring individuals to retrieve and/or sort additional objects adds another level of complexity and engagement and involves the cooperation of the entire group.
Structure	Participants, working in pairs, have a choice whether they guide or are blindfolded. People who are uncomfortable being blindfolded need not select this role. Individuals who may not touch others can fully participate as there is no physical contact.
Scenario	Minefield (Rohnke, 1984) is the original name of this activity, but it was changed to Pitfall (Rohnke & Butler, 1995) because the Gulf War made this scenario too realistic. The isomorphic qualities of this activity (not knowing where danger lies, trusting someone to ensure your safety) may make it inappropriate for individuals who have experienced trauma or conflict. Other names and metaphors may be more appropriate.
Equipment	Set mousetraps in the debris field can be used to increase the perception of risk. Items can be suspended to create a 3D environment.
Rules	Requiring guides to remain outside the boundary creates a challenge because only verbal direction is possible. The severity of penalties for touching “debris” and imposing time limits can both vary the challenge.
Environment	A larger area makes it more difficult for guides to communicate with their partners. Leaving space between objects increases manoeuvrability—something to consider when there are participants who use wheelchairs or walkers.

**Table 2. Many variations can be applied to a swing rope activity.**

Goal	In "Nitro Crossing" (Rohnke, 1984), the goal is to transport the group and an open container of water to the other side. The goal in "Prouty's Landing" (Rohnke, 1984) is to transport the group onto a 3 x 3 platform. Participants in "Do I go?" (Rohnke & Butler, 1995) must rearrange themselves in the four Hula Hoops surrounding the swing rope.
Structure	Swinging is an individual task. Developing strategy, balancing on a platform, helping others embark and disembark from the swing rope, and guiding people to the correct location are cooperative tasks.
Equipment	A swing rope with a loop in the bottom allows for easier crossing and less rope burn, especially for participants who cannot support their weight. Allowing contact only with the platform becomes more difficult as the number of participants increases. A handle on the water container makes it easier to transport, while a fuller container is more difficult to transport. Knots do not necessarily make it easier to grip the rope and may shorten the rope to the extent that it is difficult to safely reach a location.
Rules	Requiring that participants who touch the ground try again is often undesirable. Those who are truly having difficulty may become fatigued, while those who want to swing more will purposely experience difficulties. Asking rearrangement to occur in the least number of swings keeps "Do I go?" focused and creates a cognitive challenge. Prohibiting talking during execution increases challenge and may improve planning.
Environment	"Do I go?" provides choice on how far to swing. Locating the start line and landing zone further from the swing rope increases difficulty.

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## Park Identities

by *Connie Russell*

This is an activity I've used with great success with secondary students as well as university students. It could also be easily modified for use with younger grades and can be conducted in the schoolyard if no parks are easily accessible. I am indebted to Anne Bell, who provided me with the initial inspiration for this activity.

### Purpose:

- To provide an opportunity to imagine life as another creature/person.
- To understand the “social construction” of a park or natural area; that is, how one’s identity influences perceptions and perspectives of a place.
- To increase awareness of other creatures’ or people’s needs.

### Time Needed:

At least 30 minutes, depending upon access to a park.

### Resources:

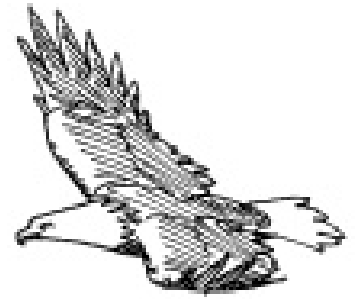
Identities are written on separate pieces of paper. (See list below for examples.) For younger grades, you may also want to include the five questions on each piece of paper (see the Procedure section below). Make sure you have enough identities for each member of the class, and that examples fit your local context. In Toronto, for example, these could include: Parks and Recreation groundskeeper, business person, homeless person, human child, sugar maple tree, kentucky blue grass, dandelion, pigeon (rock dove), robin, monarch butterfly, squirrel, dog, raccoon, earthworm, garter snake, etc.

### Procedure:

Students are given an identity prior to leaving the classroom. They are asked to keep this identity secret. As a group, the class travels to a nearby park where students are asked to spread out and explore the park alone, imagining what the park is like for the person/creature listed on their

piece of paper. They are asked to answer the following questions:

- What does this space mean to you?
- Do you live here? If not, how do you get here?
- Why do you live or come here?
- What problems do you face here?
- What do others think of you?



After 10 minutes or so, students are asked to form a circle and, one by one, identify themselves and answer the questions. A fun variation of this activity incorporates drama by asking students to provide clues (as in charades) about their identity so that other students can guess who they are.

Discussion can ensue after each identity is revealed or at the end of the activity. Issues that arise may include the following: conflicting values of different park users; demonization of certain species as pests; native versus non-native species; pesticide use; cars; and human impacts on the environment and other creatures.

### Extensions:

As a follow-up to this activity, you might want to consider a creative writing exercise where students are asked to write from the perspective of their assigned person/creature, focusing on a story that person/creature would like to tell others about that place.

Another potential follow-up is a “woolly web” activity which helps students identify the relationships (e.g., predator-prey, shared habitat, etc.) between the various creatures in that particular ecosystem.

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## Environmental Activism — Where Do You Stand?

by *Connie Russell*

This is an introductory activity I borrowed from David Selby (1995). I've adapted it for use with elementary, secondary, and university students, and I generally tailor it to focus on a local issue or curriculum theme. For example, in Thunder Bay, I've often highlighted activism around forestry practices and, once, when conducting a workshop with Anne Bell and Rachel Plotkin for elementary students who were studying whales, we used whale-focused examples. This activity is an example of what William Hammond (1996) would call educating "about" action; he also suggests using case studies, simulations, role-playing, and presentations by activists to help students learn skills and strategies for activism. Hammond recommends that a good next step is learning "through" action by participating in a real project where students "select, plan, implement, and evaluate an effective project" (1996, p. 68). Learning "from" action entails that students have the opportunity to critically reflect on why such action was necessary, whether it addressed root problems, and what changes are required to delve deeper. Hammond suggests keeping a creative journal to assist with this process.

### Purpose:

- To identify a variety of forms of environmental and/or community activism.
- To reflect on forms of activism most suited to one's own interests, personality, and code of ethics.
- To understand the rationale behind others' choices.
- To explore the role of activism in citizenship.

### Time Needed:

30 minutes

### Resources:

You will need a list of examples of activism that can either be read aloud or that can be photocopied and placed in envelopes for small groups of students. You will need to tailor these

examples to fit your context and curriculum and ensure that they are age-appropriate. In the sample list below, I've used a number of examples of illegal forms of activism which generate good discussion at the secondary and university level, but which may not be appropriate for younger grades.

### Procedure:

**Variation 1:** This can be done outside or in an area where the entire class can spread themselves out in a single line. The teacher reads aloud examples of activism and students are asked to place themselves in a line along an imaginary continuum between acceptable and unacceptable and/or effective and ineffective. When a statement evokes a wide range of responses, you can split the line in two, asking one half of the group to step forward and then move sideways until the two halves are facing one another (or you can ask the line to fold over on itself, by asking the two people on the end-points to meet). Students are then asked to share with the person standing opposite them their rationale for their location on the continuum. (Note: This variation works less well with elementary students who may want to stand near their friends or who are wary of taking a stand publicly, and it does not work well in situations where the group dynamics are poor. A tone of emotional safety and open-mindedness is essential in this variation.)

**Variation 2:** Students are asked to form groups of two or three, and each group is given an envelope of statements of examples of activism. They are asked to place each statement somewhere along either the acceptable/unacceptable or effective/ineffective continuum and to identify the point at which they would draw a line between the two. Students may ask for clarification of the meaning of acceptable/effective — by what standard? to/for whom? when? where? — but they are asked to set their own parameters. It may be difficult for a group to reach a consensus,

and students should be encouraged to accept that potential outcome. After each group has drawn its line, two groups are asked to join to compare and contrast their results. Try to pair one group that has used acceptable/unacceptable as their criteria with one that has used effective/ineffective, as this can lead to an interesting conversation.

In both variations, plenary discussion can focus on the similarities and differences in choices, as well as rationales for those choices. Further, discussion on the difficulty of placing examples on a continuum and drawing hard and fast lines appropriate to all situations may also follow.

### Sample Examples of Activism (for secondary students)

**Sit-down Protest**—Opponents of clear-cut logging mount a peaceful sit-down protest at the entrance to a logging road.

**Lobby**—A representative of organizations concerned about logging practices visits Parliament to meet the Minister of the Environment and key people in the Ministry of Natural Resources to press for new legislation.

**Letters**—A network of people opposed to logging in a provincial park write letters of protest to provincial Members of Parliament.

**Break-in**—A group of individuals break into the office of a logging company to find proof that the company has been violating environmental standards.

**Ecotage**—A group of environmentalists puts sugar in the gas tanks of trucks of a company using unsustainable logging practices.

**Personal Change**—An individual makes lifestyle and consumer changes; for example, he or she uses only recycled paper and uses both sides of each sheet.

**Slogans**—Opponents of unsustainable logging practices spray-paint a company building with the words “ANIMAL KILLERS” in bright red.

**Education**—Local environmentalists write articles for the local paper, appear on local radio and television stations, and visit schools to talk about their concerns.

**Petition**—Members of local environmental organizations obtain signatures for a petition demanding more sustainable logging practices.

**Restoration**—A group volunteers to plant indigenous trees in a previously logged area.

**Bomb Hoax**—A group opposed to the practices of a local pulp and paper plant phones a radio station to report that they have planted a bomb in the plant, causing it to close for two hours.

**Picketing**—A group of environmentalists stops motorists as they enter a local provincial park and hands out information about logging within the park. The group asks people to complain to park officials if they share concern about the matter.

**Demonstration**—People opposed to the recent opening of a site to logging join an organized demonstration at Parliament to demand new, tougher legislation.

**Community Organizing**—Students help create an environmental club that will address school environmental issues, such as paper waste.

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## Reflections and Resources for Teaching Critically

by Liz Newbery

dian marino (1998) once said, “Always be passionately aware that you could be completely wrong,” and that has been a strange guidepost in my thinking about the messiness of teaching, learning, and social justice. There are no easy or “right” roads for this work, and an educator cannot magically arrive at being “a socially just outdoor leader.” Justice is a relation, and teaching towards justice is an ongoing and incomplete process. Although it would be infinitely easier, there is simply no recipe for critical pedagogy! I am convinced that instead of recipes and checklists, the most useful tools for educators may be a constant reflection on our practice coupled with the willingness to be wrong while continuing to put one foot in front of the other, despite the inevitable imperfections of our teaching practices. Thinking deeply about ourselves and our teaching, I believe, will lead to more wide-reaching change than the biggest armful of the most perfect activities.

That said, I also think it’s important to continue sharing our favourite resources for the thinking and doing of education. The following list is contribution towards the ongoing sharing about this topic within the COEO community.

**Global Teacher, Global Learner.** By Graham Pike and David Selby. 1988. London: Hodder and Stoughton. A classic and very user-friendly. Contains dozens of curriculum ideas, simulation games, and discussion activities on social justice and environmental issues, trust, and community building. Also explores global education theory. See also **In the Global Classroom Vol. 1 & 2** by the same authors, and **Earthkind** by Selby.

**Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook.** Edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin. 1997. New York: Routledge. Begins strongly with a variety of theoretical frameworks followed by over 200 pages of curriculum design around specific issues like racism, ableism, classism, anti-semitism, and heterosexism. More suitable for high school age and older.

**The NESAs Activities Handbook for Native and Multicultural Classrooms.** Compiled by Don Sawyer and Howard Green. 1984. Vancouver: Tillacum Library. Consists of 25 simulation games and/or exercises for teachers to do, covering subjects from

cooperation, communication, inclusion, prejudice, and cross-cultural understanding to colonialism, cultural symbols, and reserve life.

**The Caring Classroom: Using Adventure to Create Community in the Classroom and Beyond.** By Laurie Frank. **Adventures in Peacemaking: A Conflict Resolution Activity Guide for School-Age Programs.** By William Kreidler and Lisa Furlay. **Bridges to Accessibility: A Primer for Including Persons with Disabilities in Adventure Curricula.** By Mark Havens. Three books put out by Project Adventure containing practical curriculum ideas and relevant adventure activities.

**World Studies 8–13: A Teacher’s Handbook.** By Simon Fisher & David Hicks. 1985. New York: Oliver & Boyd. Includes 80 innovative activities on themes such as global awareness, conflict, cultures, wealth and poverty, and acting for change.

**Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World.** By Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson. An inspiring, thoughtful book.

**Radical Teacher.** A feminist and anti-racist journal on the theory and practice of teaching. The magazine focuses on critical teaching practice and the politics of education.

**The Journal of Leisurability.** An online journal that often has theme issues on recreation and social difference. Available at [www.lin.ca/leisurability.htm](http://www.lin.ca/leisurability.htm).

“Why doesn’t this feel empowering?” by E. Ellsworth and “Interrupting calls for student voice in ‘Liberatory’ education” by M. Orner, chapters in **Feminisms and critical pedagogy**, 1992. New York: Routledge. Two highly recommended theoretical but readable articles on the complexities of dialogue, voice, and silence in the classroom.

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## Diversity in Action

Review by John Kudelka

Sharon Chappelle & Lisa Bigman, with Francesca Hillyer. *Diversity in Action: Using Adventure Activities to Explore Issues of Diversity with Middle School and High School Age Youth*. 1998. Project Adventure. ISBN 0-536-01175-3.

Over my years in this field, I have read a lot of books on activities, games, and leadership. Many were good. Some were quite good. A few were original, and the odd book was actually a bit scary (games with live animals anyone?). But almost none were, well, as *smart* as *Diversity in Action*.

This book, by Sharon Chappelle and Lisa Bigman, with Francesca Hillyer, aims to help those working with youth “create a safe and comfortable place for the participants in your program to explore and discuss issues of human diversity.” Among other topics, it discusses racism, sexism, and homophobia, treating each with intelligence and sincerity. Most importantly, *Diversity in Action* is not merely a list of activities and rules, it is a complete resource of proven tools for those seeking to discuss with youth the issues of discrimination, prejudice, and bias.

Each of the book’s 13 chapters begins with an articulate and effective introduction to the topic (e.g., Building Allies, Group Identities). These essays are where one first grasps how well Chappelle and Bigman, with Hillyer, understand diversity issues. Concise, thoughtful paragraphs and sections flow smoothly from one point to the next, and each topic is brought to a clear and succinct point in their “Concluding Thoughts.” The writing is natural, never clumsily academic or awkwardly touchy-feely. These essays are followed by worksheets, initiatives, closing

activities, journaling ideas, and suggested readings on each subject. Stories and vignettes are plentiful, as are experiential quotations (my particular favourite

being about the wisdom of behaving like geese). For those less familiar with the adventure learning process, there is a section on how to utilize experiential learning, and each activity is accompanied by suggested debriefing questions. The book closes with extensive appendices detailing fiction and non-fiction books, adventure processing tools, videos, Internet sites, and other resources.

In all, the book contains more than 100 activities. But the strength of this book as a resource is not just in the vastness of the material, it is also in its sharp layout. One does not wade through gimmicky margin doodles or graphics or endless pages of unremarkable text. Instead, clear headings and titles on uncluttered pages make this book very approachable and easy to read.

Experienced practitioners will notice that a good portion of the book’s activities do appear in other books under other names or with different intended outcomes. However, the value of *Diversity in Action* is not as an encyclopedia of new activities, but as a tool to create an entire program exploring issues of diversity. Chappelle and Bigman, with Hillyer, using their extensive experience, have effectively framed complex issues into a straightforward curriculum using adventure learning tools in ways I would never have thought of or felt secure to try.

Recent events within Canada and across the globe have highlighted the importance of building positive relationships that cross societal divides. *Diversity in Action* will be a valuable tool to those working to create understanding between different ethnic groups, religions, and cultures.

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## Wrestling with Development — Searching for the Balance Between Give and Take

by Simon Beames

British youth spending 10 weeks in a developing nation doing service projects should be a good thing, right? Three months before writing this, I thought it was that simple. Now, still a neophyte in the world of development, I struggle to reconcile my organization's presence in rural West Africa.

On one hand, it seems simple. Volunteers come to Africa, help those in far greater need than themselves, and “discover their full potential” — perhaps gaining some problem-solving skills and self-confidence while they get a glimpse into the daily toil of village life in Africa. That's the premise, anyway.

I feel certain that in some way, the volunteers are better people for having had this experience. (The questions of if, how, and why they have personally grown from their expedition is one aspect of my ongoing research). Besides the legacy that charities leave behind — ventilated pit latrines, schools, trails in national parks — is the influence that a group of 12 has on the host community all positive? What is going through the locals' heads when the volunteers appear with a van loaded with food and equipment and then wander around taking photos and listening to Walkmans. What do they think when we tell them we can't give them any food, or a pen, or a water bottle, because we need it all?

I suppose the ultimate question is: Is it a fair exchange for us to come to Africa and have a powerful educational experience on their turf, and then leave a repainted school by way of payment for our unique and memorable experience?

At some level, all of us have come here wanting to sneak a peek at how 90% of the world live, and we are doing this, ever mindful of being sensitive and inoffensive to our hosts. The irony lies in common scenes like the Raleigh group being surrounded by 50 villagers standing still and gaping at the *obrunis* as they perform the most

banal, day-to-day rituals of cooking, eating, bucket-washing, sleeping, and going to the toilet.

As the expedition draws to a close, I have resolved that our presence here is a good thing. No, we are not going to change the world. The latrines would still get built without us, though probably not as quickly. We are here to work alongside our African partners on worthwhile service projects, not feed them, clothe them, or give them electronic goods.

In terms of the secondary, less tangible influences of Westerners attaching themselves to a Ghanaian village, one cannot deny the multitude of positive examples of the human spirit evident in the interaction off the building site: soccer matches, trying local food, teaching school lessons, and going to church. It's all part of that cultural exchange. Exchange, I suppose, is the keyword, because it means both sides give and both sides take.

Would it be easier if we didn't come to a developing nation and instead took the young people hiking and climbing in Wales? Certainly, because one does not then have to wrestle with the social and cultural issues that are in your face everyday when camping in rural Africa. If we choose to take a group to the developing world, we must do it responsibly, sensitive to issues that surround imbalances of power, money, and opportunity. If we can do this to our best ability, then we must come. Because that is how we all — visitors and hosts — learn and grow. That is what I believe.

As one 20-year-old volunteer told me, “It's better to come — definitely — and feel those feelings inside about having too much, and cope with it, and learn from it, rather than not come at all.”

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*Simon Beames writes from West Africa, where he is trying to make sense of the overseas expedition experience. (For more information, see [www.raleighinternational.org](http://www.raleighinternational.org)).*

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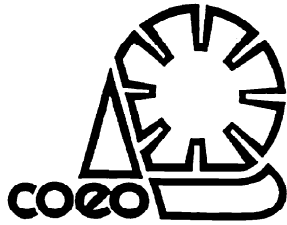
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*Thanks to Nicki Crawley who compiled this index. Nicki is a student in the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism, and a research assistant in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University.*



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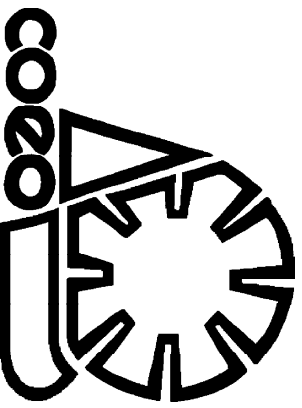
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