

# Outdoor Adventure Education in Canada: Seeking the Country Way Back In

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## Abstract

How might one describe outdoor adventure education in Canada to other outdoor educators in the world? Not our own regional places and particular practices, but rather the general collective sense of the field that is significantly and distinctively a "Canadian way." We believe Canada's geography, Canada's influences and differences from the United States, and Canadian outdoor educators' tendency to integrate the curricular aspects of environment and adventure educations would be present for most. In this paper we will discuss the philosophical underpinnings of Canadian adventure education and offer a description of outdoor adventure education in Canada. The article is divided into three sections. The first deals with Canadian meanings of outdoor adventure education, the second explains what a Canadian outdoor adventure education is, followed by a description of where outdoor adventure education in Canada is taught.

## Résumé

Comment décrire l'enseignement de l'aventure de plein air au Canada à d'autres éducateurs de plein air dans le monde? Non pas nos propres petits coins régionaux et pratiques particulières, mais plutôt le sens collectif général du territoire qui représente la vie canadienne d'une façon notable et distinctive. D'après nous, la géographie canadienne, les influences et les différences du Canada par rapport aux États-Unis et la tendance des éducateurs de plein air au Canada à intégrer les aspects du programme d'études de l'enseignement de l'environnement et de l'aventure feraient partie de la description de la plupart des gens. Dans ce document, nous discutons de l'étayage philosophique de l'enseignement de l'aventure au Canada et offrons une description de cet enseignement. L'article comporte

trois sections. La première aborde les significations canadiennes de l'enseignement de l'aventure de plein air, la deuxième explique ce qu'est l'enseignement de plein air au Canada et la troisième consiste en une description des endroits où se pratique l'enseignement de l'aventure de plein air au pays.

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How might one describe outdoor adventure education in Canada to other outdoor educators in the world? Not our own regional places and particular practices, but rather the general collective sense of the field that Canadian outdoor educators might agree is one that is significantly and distinctively a "Canadian way" (admittedly we, the authors, debated whether this was possible). We believe Canada's geography, Canada's influences and differences from the United States, and Canadian outdoor educators' tendency to integrate the curricular aspects of environment and adventure education would be present for most. The group hand and foot propelled outdoor travel experience and the myths and realities of the north would provide a likely resonance as well. In this paper we will have a hand at traveling Canada's expansive watershed of geography, history, and outdoor adventure education practice; our focus will be outdoor adventure education. For a similar challenge with a focus on Canadian environmental education see, "Navigating the Waters of Canadian Environmental Education" (Russell, Bell, & Fawcett, 2000). We use the term "outdoor education" to denote the overarching curricular enriching education in the out-of-doors that includes practices of environmental and adventure education.

Our "navigating of the waters" is meant for both an international and national audience with two main points of departure:

- Canada's geographical breadth and differences means that outdoor educators may not know much about each other, but they might share certain common theories and practices, and
- their participation in various international associations, such as the Association for Experiential Education and the North American Association for Environmental Education, have suggested to us that they, as Canadian delegates, are better viewed as international delegates, not blended with American interests.

In short, we believe, there is a distinctive Canadian approach to adventure education, not universal, but common across Canadian geography, and, we should not be perceived as too closely linked to American ways of adventure education.

Environmental and adventure education are often linked in the literature that defines outdoor experiential education (Henderson, 1984; Priest, 1986). In Canada this relationship is reasonable given our tendency to blend these curricular ideas within outdoor residential and camp programs, school-based programs at all levels, and commercial travel operations. From our observations and readings, educators in the United Kingdom and the United States more readily separate these educations of “for” and “about” the outdoors (environmental) from education “in” the outdoors (adventure). With the prevalent medium of Canadian outdoor travel, and corresponding blending of attention to environment and adventure, we see an education “of” and “with” the outdoors that attempts to incorporate the educations “in,” “for,” and “about” outdoor settings—educations that so clearly delineate nature field centers and environmental education from outdoor pursuits and group initiative activities of adventure education (Gough, 1987).

In this way, the so called “hard” technical skills—often travel and camping skills—and the “soft”—group skills and personal growth qualities—are blended with, one might say, the “green” and “warm” skills of a complementary eco-adventure focus. This knowledge realm involves a “green” learning in environmental and heritage awareness: a land-fullness, to counter what Aldo Leopold feared in the 1940s, that “. . . education and culture have become synonymous with landlessness” (Leopold, 1966, p. 210), or to put it another way, what the Swedes call *hemmablind*, meaning “home blind/home ignorant,” an inability to see and value what is at home. Green knowledge and understandings, well suited to adventure travel, involve this active attention to the place of travel and how we dwell within it. “Warm” understandings (or ways of being) involve a necessary unlearning of an urban/schooled cultural context that is alienated from ways of meeting nature closer to the fundamentals of earthy living. The ecopsychologist might call this a need for re-learning the never forgotten, “already familiar” human impulse to connect to the earth as home (Pivnick, 1997). Warm skills engage the learner in an active “being,” being comfortable, being home in nature. What attracts Canadian educators to indigenous knowledge (knowledge native to the place) is similar to what the Norwegian call the *friluftsliv* tradition, meaning “a way home to the open air” (Faarlund, 1993, p. 157). The “nature as home” metaphor is a far cry from the “nature as machine” or “nature as challenge arena”—as sparring partners, that can dominate *an* adventure education, but not necessarily by definition. As green and warm ecologically based attentions are added to the practice of a Canadian outdoor adventure, we see an integrated capstone experience

to outdoor education most often framed as a travel experience. Such experiences, no matter the particular region, aspires to a “wild” nature.

Elliott Merrick (1989) reported, in 1933, that the Labrador trappers called the bush interior of their trap-lines, away from their coastal homes, “the country way back in” (p. 5). This is an evocative living idea for a Canadian outdoor adventure education. Such educators, (*as a not the* country-wide phenomena) seek for their students, the adventure of re-experience of the ways for camping and travel in the north. This north is an authentic and wilder place with a history of travel and lifestyle to be reclaimed, even if for fleeting moments.

We believe this is a central vision for a common Canadian practice of outdoor adventure education. We are also aware of our own ambiguity to resolve concretely whether we are first speaking “for” Canadian outdoor adventure educators and/or speaking “to” them? Do we try here to echo the field, to revise it, or to shape it? Perhaps these tendencies are not mutually exclusive, and we are inspired here to first try to describe outdoor adventure education in Canada, and to acknowledge our embedded aspiration to ascribe certain meanings to it. Generalizing is awkward at best; but, here we must generalize a little.

### **Canadian Meanings of Adventure Education: An Integrated Fabric of Geography and History**

First and foremost Canada is a big space, a big place. Roll out a map of Canada. It is so obvious that you cannot mistake it. There is a difference between space and place. Space is freedom and possibility, place is comfort and security. As geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has said, “we are attached to place and long for freedom. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it and endow it with value” (Tuan, 1977, p.6). Within Canada’s space and place is a rich heritage of indigenous peoples, as well as explorers, settlers and early resource industry-based pioneers. Most of the people from the “Old World” came seeking their fortunes or a simple home in the “New World.” Look again at this map and you will notice that, even though we are spread out as a people, 83% of our population is concentrated within 300 km (190 miles) from the southern border we share with the United States. For many, Canada is a big space within which its peoples know a small intimate sense of place, a localized place. For others, this big sense of space is an ever evolving “place” that they seek to know as a place to call home. The canoe is still a magnificent way to explore most of Canada, along with the sea kayak for coastal regions. In

winter the snowshoe, ski, and snow-machine are dominant modes of exploration beyond the conventions of air, rail, and road. A more mythical “north” for travel and freedom of spirit is central to Canadians’ understanding of geography.

The Atlantic Provinces have many rocky coastal shorelines and short speedy rivers. From any location east of the country’s center, in Quebec and Ontario, there are blue lakes and rocky shores, characteristic of the Canadian Shield. Canada also has remoteness, a sense of “wildness” that amplifies as we travel from our personal “Near North” to “North,” to “Far North.” The “North” is a personal arbitrary quality. The “Near North” of a person from the northern city of Edmonton is a “Far North” for someone from Toronto or Lethbridge to the south. From “Near North” to “North” tends to denote an increased remoteness and wildness (less disturbed by human intervention). This quality of “North” oscillates depending on where one lives and one’s breadth of experience. The Prairie, as we look westward across the big space of grasslands and wheat fields, also has a daunting, magical “Near to far North,” as well as broad rambling rivers and a distinctive big sky horizon. The west is foothills, mountains, impressive river valleys such as the Peace, Athabasca and Fraser, and a mountainous coastline. The geographical Arctic North is a vastness of tundra and ice, a mainland above tree-line of complex waterways with a plethora of wild flowers on an undulating plateau and an icy island archipelago with significant ice caps and mountainous terrain. The north (and all Canadians, dare we say, have some sense of this country way back in) is for southern outdoor adventure educators, “not just a factual geographical region, but also an imaginary zone . . . a counter-balance to the civilized world of the southern cities, yet the core of their own, personal, Canadian identity” (Shields, 1991, p. 163). This mystical hinterland for travel is a rich setting for a Canadian quest and Canadian identity; a geography we visit and ponder, but where we must learn to dwell. Historian Hayden White has called the Canadian way of generating meaning of the north, “a technique of ostensive self-definition by negation” (Shields, 1991, p. 163). We create a duality of northern wild and southern “civilized.” We seek identity from this wild as a counter-balance to our urban convention. These urban qualities, it is important to note, might be found in the relatively isolated communities of Thunder Bay, Whitehorse or Sept Illes. In Canada, there is always “a country way back in” to which we may seek to belong but is essentially not a part of our urban day to day reality.

Canadians share an overwhelming sense of geography with a heritage of peoples having lived, explored, and settled within the present-day

borders. Their stories, as we come to know them, inspire an ever-widening “wide eye” view as we gaze at the vast, overwhelming space of Canada. We strive to make this space a place of our personal and collective cultural memory. Travel heritage, pioneer lifestyle, and indigenous peoples’ material culture and spiritual view are all part of storytelling, craft, and skill understanding in Canadian outdoor adventure education. Many ways of being on the land have come to us through the material culture of Canadian indigenous peoples; for example, the canoe, the snowshoe, certain shelter styles, and manners of clothing, not to mention stories, legends, and place-names connected to places and events. Heritage interpretation is an active part of Canadian outdoor adventure education. And while certain exploration and pioneering stories are more easily assimilated and understood, native peoples’ stories and traditions represent an engaging curiosity. Much from such traditions are not to be assimilated, appropriated, or even understood by other cultures. However, much can be “explored” and respected imaginatively. And, collectively, a gaze back towards the past can serve to move our cultures forward together as we dwell on this well-storied Canadian soil, for there are many Canadian traditions that must stand side by side.

Historically, and presently, we aspire to coastal travel: east and west and far north. We know of dog sledding and horse packing travels of exploration, early recreation, and mostly, the work of the day-to-day reality of living in the interior part of the country. First and foremost we know the travel by waterways of canoe men: the *coureurs de bois* (the French semi-outlaw runners of the woods and the hired hands of the fur trade) and the *voyageurs* (canoe men who crossed the country via a network of waterways in an epic era of fur trade). One Canadian culture critic said, “Their story captivates us . . . a saga of common men set against a vast and indifferent landscape. The voyageur is as Canadian as a gunslinger is American or a samurai is Japanese” (Ferguson, 1997, p. 55).

Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, said in 1936, “If some countries have too much history, we have too much geography.” For the outdoor educator, there is an excitement of too much geography and history to know. It is geography that will forever prove challenging to our imagination. It is a space that outdoor adventure educators yearn to make our “place,” a setting in which we seek identity. The “country way back in” instills personal meaning, and a place where we are challenged to behave and to belong.

The above bespeaks aspirations of the educator for students, and indeed with students. We are “seeking” all the while as well. It is a mythical north,

in part because “Canadians like to think that they have a special affinity with nature, but statistics show otherwise. Canada has become a hopelessly urban society whose average citizen couldn’t pick a moose out of a police line-up. Yet we wax poetic about majestic forests and open tundra” (Ferguson, 1997, p. 180). The aspiration that dominates a particularly unique Canadian outdoor adventure education is one that seeks to give experiential teeth to this otherwise abstract poetic waxing. In short, people are taken beyond the urban society with a spirit of adventure to belong, to find this land, as a friend (Martin, 1999), as a home out of the city.

The two of us have compared our thoughts towards discovering a singular Canadian perspective of outdoor adventure education. We have, separately and together, reviewed Canadian educational adventure programs. We have sought the input from others in the field. Here, we provide what we believe are commonly shared views, thereby constructing a dominant view of outdoor adventure programming in Canada. However, a singular Canadian outdoor adventure education view is not possible, rather we outline more of a particularly Canadian way stemming from our collective geography and history. Our central premise is that the Canadian integrated travel experience, tied into past stories of place, is *a*, not *the*, curriculum pinnacle across the country.

### **What is a Canadian Outdoor Adventure Education?**

For Canadians, adventure is a great churning in the heart and soul. Adventure is at its best when felt through the hands, within the head, and of the heart. Challenge and risk have a lot to do with it. Outdoor adventure education in Canada follows the dominant perspective of concern for intra-personal and inter-personal skills development (Priest, 1986). Hence, personal and group skill development is central to our teaching as part of a holistic process. It is common, in a country with such a rich outdoor travel recreation heritage, for our practice to be perceived as recreation first and foremost. That is, our activities are enjoyable, provide a sense of well-being and likely teach some physical and technical skills along the way. All this is true. However, if our activities represent a planned curriculum towards a set of learning objectives, then our activities are a means to an end (an educational end) and are thus primarily educational, much more so than recreational (Horwood & Raffan, 1988). Our technical skill development allows participants to explore not only the wilderness beyond, but, most critically, their personal wildernesses within (Smith, 1990). Well-being and camping/travel skills, as well as learning initiatives, team skills,

and personal savvy are all tied in with generic (all inclusive) character and skill maturation or life skills. Such skills include assessing personal and group limits and potentials, communication skills, stress utilization, and leadership/ following skills, to name a few. Given this attention to wilderness travel, we are collectively, (to the extent that one can talk this way), less singularly enamored with low level initiatives, such as balance beam walks, and high ropes courses. These tend to be used in conjunction with other program qualities. This being said, there are many highly regarded Canadian specialists in this area of practice.

While outdoor adventure education takes place “in” the outdoors, be it city parks, schoolyards, area woodlots, with the pinnacle to the program often being the “wilderness trip,” we regularly tend towards interpreting the “adventure in” the outdoors with teaching that also experiences “for” and “about” the outdoors. This integration or curriculum enrichment quality adds interdisciplinary teaching strategies to the physical and intra-personal and inter-personal skills of conventional outdoor adventure education. Integration of environmental education/ field interpretation subject matter (biology, geography, astronomy) as well as the special opportunities for Canadian heritage skill development (history, geography, literature, anthropology, native studies) is common in the Canadian context. This is due to the emphasis of the group travel experience *on* the land in a setting that may be coastline, mountain, rivers, lakes, and forests based, and within a context that is certainly heavily influenced by the dramatic nature of our four distinctive seasons, where annual temperatures can easily fluctuate between plus 35 to minus 35 degrees centigrade. The seasons provide for a changing ambience within the landscape and offer outdoor enthusiasts a wealth of activities, perspectives, and modes of travel, and camping from which to explore the land: skiing, dog sledding, quinzhee (snow shelter) building, ice climbing, sailing, hiking, white water and sea kayaking to name a few. In summer one may paddle a northern lake in an intense headwind; months later one may return to snowshoe the same lake, this time immersed in a winter tranquility. The extremes of seasons provide a diverse richness to our experience with the land.

Our outdoor adventure education is experientially tied to travel in the Canadian landscape. We tend to employ the largely American “adventure programming” use of metaphor for transferring adventure to day to day realities and the use of group simulation initiative tasks less in our travel experiences here, because the land is such a visceral reality-based arena for our students. There is a deep knowing here; the concrete apprehension for a discovery of Canada as a storied landscape, and this story is one that we



can re-experience. The more stories of dwelling, discovery, exploration, and settlement we know and learn “on trip,” the more we tap our imaginative spirit of adventure “on,” and indeed “with” the land. We come to understand the transcontinental voyageur canoe men’s travels in the early 1800s with our own toil and sweat. We come to know the lyrical descriptions of travel and adventure through many peoples’ stories: Mary Schaffer’s horseback explorations of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, the poetry of Archibald Lampman, the writings of Grey Owl, the exploration literature of fur traders David Thompson and Alexander Mackenzie, or the way of a Native Cree trapping family in a winter wall tent heated by a wood stove. As we travel with one eye to the past and one in the present we learn the stories that complement our own. This adventure is not so much adventure “in” the outdoors, as it is adventure “with” a place in time where we hope to sever the bondage of linear time.

The rich potential of coming to know Canadian heritage experientially through visceral re-experiencing is more than matched by our exposure to the genuinely awesome power of nature, the “more-than-human world” (Abram, 1996). The adventure travel experience “with” the outdoors attempts to remove participants from human cultural constructs and invites the learners to be open to an integrity of the wild in their lives. Canadian educators, Nicky Duenkel and Harvey Scott (1994) write: “In a wilderness environment, outdoor educators are in ideal positions to encourage participants to renegotiate meanings and understandings of everyday life realities, thereby assisting in the transition to a wilderness realm of reality. The outdoor educator’s role is therefore, much greater than it may first appear” (p. 42). They suggest educators can work towards:

- Dispelling the myth of dualism and encouraging the feeling that humans are a part of, and not apart from, the natural world.
- Provide insight into the fact that everyday life realities and wilderness realities are not separate, but co-exist.
- Develop a sense of humility in the greater scheme of things (p. 43).

This too, we believe is a rich aspiration for Canadian outdoor adventure educators. It is also a daunting quest for one’s spirit of adventure. It involves unleashing the mind bound by the urban-schooled context and encourages a surfacing of a disorienting and fleeting, wild-experiential connectedness. Canadian novelist, Wayland Drew (1989) has put this state into clean expression throughout his novel *Halfway Man*. “It’s because I can’t tell the difference between me and this lake, those sounds, that moon. It’s because I don’t know where I end and the wildness begins” (p. 164). In wild

places, people can examine, given contrasts, the way they live and experience transferable ways they would like to live.

### **Where is Outdoor Adventure in Canada?**

In Canada, outdoor adventure education is happening on many fronts and in many ways. Yet, generalizations can easily be made. Summer youth camps, schools (secondary school, colleges, and universities), community, and commercial programs are the main settings for adventure education. Each setting offers a variety of leadership development, team building initiatives, technical skills development, environmental awareness, and travel experience. Some programs have a strong community service component. Outward Bound, for which Canada has both a western and eastern school, is an example. Some programs offer quality high rope challenge courses; this is very popular in the United States. But the highlight of many Canadian programs is, typically, the extended field-trip, the camping trip.

#### *Youth camps*

The summer camp tradition has solid roots throughout Canada, particularly on the blue lake and rocky shore lakes of the Canadian Shield. Many of Canada's estimated 1500 summer camps (Marsh, 1988) maintain the "traditional" adventure offerings of canoeing, sailing and swimming, and, of course the travel experience, be it canoe, hike, or horse back. Many camps preserve their roots of travel experiences far from their home base. Camps Wanapeti and Kilcoo in Ontario run their senior trip as a 40-plus day outing on Arctic waterways. Camp Decka in British Columbia travels from the interior of the province to Northern Saskatchewan and the British Columbia coast.

Another camp tripping tradition is to run travel programs closer to home base. Camp Chief Hector in Alberta, Camp Stevens in Northwestern Ontario (administered in Winnipeg, Manitoba) and Camp Nominique in Quebec have long used their immediate mountain, lake and/or river country. Camp Ahmek and Wapomeo in Algonquin Park and John Island Camp on Lake Huron, in Ontario, run extended trips in the cross-country style. They bus to a distant departure point and return to home base by canoe over a twenty to fifty day period connecting provincial parks and reserves via main artery travel ways. Camp Glenburn in Hamilton, New Brunswick offers a two-month leadership program similar to Camp Wabikon in Ontario, where campers travel to area lake, river and coastal settings. All

of these camps run ropes programs, ecology and skills sessions as preludes to the “long distance tripping.” Additionally, drawing on the wisdom and traditions of Canadian indigenous peoples, First Nations’ camps, such as the Re-Discovery camping model, offer both native and non-native participants an opportunity to connect with indigenous traditions and culture.

### *Schools*

Schools are significant providers of outdoor adventure education with many exciting new programs starting up yearly and others folding due to budget cuts and changing priorities. Outdoor adventure education has never been at the top of the priority list for most school boards. However, the most exciting initiative at the secondary level is the recent creation of integrated curriculum programs, which usually involve one or two teachers coordinating one class for one semester of four credited-courses. For example, Earth Quest in British Columbia receives much attention for their quality mountain-based travel and serves as a model for other Western Canadian programs (i.e., in Cranbrook, B.C., Saskatoon, Sask., and Whitehorse, Yukon). In Ontario, a proliferation of such programs began in the early 1990s. Certainly in 2001 there are well over 40 integrated curriculum programs in Ontario. Listing a few program names goes a long way toward explaining course objectives: TERRA=Teaching Ecological Responsibility Recreation and Adventure; C.E.L.P.=Community Environmental Leadership Programs; R.O.C.=Roots of Courage; Earth Odyssey; Experience Canada; Environmental Awareness Program; Trek; Experimental Science; Beyond the Walls; Ventures North. Courses that are most commonly connected to the integrated curriculum program model include Outdoor Physical Education, Environmental Science, Geography and Leadership. Often its fourth credit reflects a teacher’s area of special interest. For example, students in Roots of Courage and the TAMARACK programs create a community magazine concerning local histories for a cultural journalism credit. The adventure-based field trip within a school’s local area can act as an intentional bioregional exploration (for example, students in one C.E.L.P. program in Guelph, Ontario portage out from the school property to the local river and paddle and pole upstream to a provincial day-use park, returning again by local waterway two days later). Students with Experience Canada have traveled to Labrador to study environmental and political land issues. Earth Odyssey students have traveled to Costa Rica and the Grand Canyon, U.S.A. for geographical, geological, and political studies.

Another important component in schools that offer integrated curriculum programs is the winter living and travel experience. Winter is a vital part of the Canadian landscape and tightly woven into our culture, traditions, and stories. Winter living skills can offer a window of rich experiential education opportunities for students to experience various traditional and modern modes of winter travel and living (e.g., snowshoeing, skiing, traveling on frozen rivers, night travel, and snow shelter and wall tent construction). Learning to live comfortably and safely in a cold and seemingly hostile environment can be an extremely rewarding and motivating experience for students. Winter skills are a valuable offering, in part, because if students do not get this experience in school, most will not likely ever be exposed to many educational winter opportunities, skills, and values. Winter programs tend to have less room for error and, subsequently, often have a greater degree of risk than summer programs. Also, because fewer people venture out in winter, valuable educational objectives can be realized without venturing too far afield.

Many high schools have Outers Clubs (which offer out of class recreational experiences) and some run privately funded expeditions. Some of the schools most dedicated to adventure education, such as Lakefield College in Ontario, have their entire school attend a fall canoe trip. They also run regular expeditions to northern destinations. Bishop Strachan School in Ontario and St. Georges in B.C. offer credited outdoor education classes. Other schools such as Appleby and Upper Canada Colleges own and operate their own outdoor education residential/outdoor travel centers. Still others, often private schools, utilize outside agencies for adventure programs. Outward Bound in Ontario offers a variety of long-term programs, including a three-year, three phase program that takes place during the school years and summers for returning students, and a summer two credit Personal Life Management course.

Few institutions in Canada utilize ropes courses as their exclusive adventure offering due to fairly accessible natural areas. The notable exception might be in southern Ontario where one quarter of the nation's population resides and where access to natural areas is more time consuming; therefore, the majority of ropes courses in Canada are to be found here. Ropes courses are increasingly important here, as is the proliferation of indoor climbing facilities. Group initiatives, low and high level ropes programs are usually part of a sequential group oriented program culminating in a travel experience.

## *Colleges*

Colleges that traditionally have had an outdoor adventure education component have recently begun to promote ecotourism credits or specialized offerings. Sir Stanford Fleming College and Georgian College in Ontario have recently added an adventure travel tourism (risk-oriented travel) component to their offerings. University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops, British Columbia offers an outdoor guiding certificate and North Island College in Campbell River, British Columbia offers a specialized paddle guiding training program called Coastal Adventure Tourism. College of North Atlantic in Torbay, Newfoundland offers a community recreation leadership diploma. Seneca College and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology have long histories of adventure travel skills courses, as does Yukon College in Whitehorse, Yukon. John Abbott College in Montreal offers one of the longest standing outdoor adventure college programs in the country.

While most outdoor programs in Canada use relatively modern equipment, others strive to balance the modern approach with traditional methods, gear and camp crafts. Mors Kochanski, from Peers, Alberta helps to link elementary, high school, college, and university students with Canadian bush skills heritage by teaching basic survival and bush craft skills with an emphasis on natural materials, rather than high-tech innovation carry along kits. Andre-Francois Bourbeau at the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi also teaches primitive wilderness survival travel, as does Humber College in Ontario. Traditional Canadian bush craft skills, such as traditional forms of fire lighting, shelter building, tool making and foraging, liberate students to live in the bush for an indefinite period of time with a minimal dependence on modern materials and tools. Furthermore, such traditional skills foster a greater sense of connection and security to nature as “home,” nurture independence, and encourage students to appreciate and respect Canada’s rich cultural heritage. Ironically, these antiquated methods are far less expensive than current methodologies.

## *Universities*

University programs are also represented in Canadian outdoor adventure education. Queens University and the University of Regina are noted for their outdoor experiential education training programs in the teachers’ college arena. Lakehead University, in Thunder Bay, Ontario, offers outdoor experiential education within the environmental education program in the undergraduate Bachelor of Education Degree. Other outdoor adventure

undergraduate programs are often a component of a Health/Physical Education/Kinesiology program. Acadia University in Wolfville and Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia; McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario; the University of Calgary in Calgary, the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and Augustana University College in Camrose, Alberta; Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario and the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi, Quebec are all examples of this. Each has its own specialty, such as primitive arts/survival at the University of Quebec, heritage travel at McMaster and extended Arctic travel at Augustana. Outdoor recreation programs such as Ottawa University, Ontario and Memorial University in Newfoundland also offer outdoor adventure components. Memorial University has recently initiated an ambitious outdoor employment field placement component. Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario is unique in the country, offering a full honors degree program in the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism with double degree options in biology, history and natural science. A new offering, Certificate in Ecological Education, C.E.R.T.E.E, out of the Education Foundations Department of the University of Saskatchewan, offers credited courses and two extended field travel settings, a spring/summer river trip and a northern winter camping experience. Eco-literacy is its banner and the outdoor travel experience is its classroom. The University of Quebec in Chicoutimi also has a long history in outdoor education.

The Canadian contribution to adventure education has historically been more practical and less theoretical. Hence, university graduate programs are, unfortunately, not common in Canada. Graduate students typically pursue outdoor adventure research through Education, Kinesiology, Canadian Studies, and Environmental Studies programs. Queens, York, Trent, and Lakehead Universities and the Universities of Alberta and Calgary all have outdoor education graduate offerings in some form. For example, an outdoor education inroad would be via Canadian Studies at Trent University and via Environmental Studies at York University. Typically students creatively find professors with similar interests within a university program.

### *Community programs*

Community programs and club organizations have long traditions in many urban and rural settings. Strathcona Wilderness Centre, east of Edmonton, offers a youth Leadership program that is much respected. The Inner City Outtripping Center of Toronto's Parks and Recreation has begun a variety of outdoor leadership programs including travel experi-

ences and local camps on the Humber River. Three Cree (indigenous peoples) communities in Northern Quebec run a community teen project that teaches youth traditional travel skills where canoe brigades travel to other communities from the Cree community of Nemaska. Here, it is hoped that the community can create its own eco-tourism and adventure river travel business within a Cree cultural context. Clubs such as the Barrie Canoe Club, Edmonton's Seyana, Whitehorse Outdoors Club and Wilderness Canoe Association (W.C.A.) offer field trips to community members. The W.C.A. out of Toronto produces perhaps the finest publication on Canadian adventure travel, *Nastawgan*. Such groups sponsor symposia and a monthly speaker series to complement their outers program. While Canada's population is increasingly urban, it is also true that the family is another source, and arguably a most potent source, for outdoor adventure experiences. Family weekend trips to provincial parks for mountain hiking, river float trips, and lake circuit routes in provincial parks and local areas are all very common experiences.

### *Commercial programs*

Commercial travel programs also extend across the country, from Coastal Adventurers for Eastern Canadian sea kayaking to Ecosummer for Queen Charlotte Island sea kayaking tours on Canada's West coast. These adult skill-based/recreationally minded outdoor adventure programs are very common to a Canadian context. Examples of these trips are horse packing, cross-country hut-to-hut skiing, northern tandem whitewater canoe trips and voyageur canoe re-enactment expeditions. Commercial adventure training programs can be found, though less common than travel-based program. "Adventureworks!", C.A.T.I. (Corporate Adventure Training Institute) in Ontario, The Pacific Adventure Learning Centre in British Columbia and The Acadia Adventure Programme in Nova Scotia are examples. Three outdoor adventure leadership programs, Yamnaska, C.O.L.T. (Canadian Outdoor Leadership Training) and Outward Bound, offer three month career training beyond college/university education. Since the mid-1970s Outward Bound has successfully operated in Canada; the majority of its programs take place in southern and northwestern Ontario as well as a western mountain setting in British Columbia. The Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School in Ontario rightly prides itself in offering inventive programs for special populations. Examples of these programs include a "Women of Courage" program designed for women who are survivors of abuse, a program to mesh Outward Bound with aboriginal communities named from the Ojibway language *Givaykiwin*, meaning Coming Home, and a Youth at Risk program.

## Conclusion

The Canadian quest for the educational setting of the “country way back in”—is the seeking, no matter how illusory, the “pristine.” Whether it really be there or not, we Canadian outdoor educators cling to notions of uncorrupted, unnamed, uncultivated—“so many uns!” as nature writer Sue Ellen Campbell (1996) has said of the pristine. This unspoiled earth—the pristine, in Canada has long been a peopled and storied place. It is not “wilderness” but it is a wild nature. We turn an eye to the white fading jet stream overhead and the knowledge of airborne toxins impacting the northern ecosystems. We seek this wild nature for our students and in so doing offer them “the North” and “ways of the North.” We offer them the adventures of camping and travel skills, intra- and inter-personal skills, nature and heritage interpretation, and survival and bushcraft skills. We hope to fill their hearts and imaginations with “the North,” the “country way back in,” the pristine—the landscape from which our exploration and settlement stories originated.

We can’t imagine and can’t accept our eroding of an “Original North”—perhaps our ancestral connection, but certainly a storied landscape that gives us so many of our Canadian icons: the beaver, the canoe, the loon, the snowshoe, the majestic white pine, the open sublime space, the winter stillness. And so, we take people to find a personal and collective adventure of the spirit that they can find there.

Most Canadians are now urban southern Canadians, who think of themselves as living in a country special for its “wilderness” or wild lands. Perhaps many of us think we live close to this wild space. Some of us travel to, have come to know, or live in Canada’s wild space as a “place,” rich in personal meanings. For all too many Canadians, the homegrown cultural products, icons, artifacts, listed above, have less and less to do with our day-to-day experiences. The loon call is fading for us, canoeing and winter living skills are distant and the “place” of the bush is too much “a space of wilderness” that is empty of stories. One solid role of Canadian outdoor adventure education is to reconnect people with our detached, yet enchanted view to “the North,” to help the land echo with personal experience. Following the sentiments of so much of Canadian fictional literature, the outdoor educator shares the visions of novelists Yves Theriault and Margaret Atwood. From Theriault we learn that “he [sic] who fails to respond to nature-as-teacher is doomed to emotional and spiritual sterility,” and from Atwood we learn, “to let the wilds in” (in Mitcham, 1983, p. 85 & 95).



## Notes on Contributors

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