



Outdoor education in a variety of guises has a rich history in Aotearoa New Zealand, dating back more than 100 years.

Outdoor learning experiences have a strong and often much-loved place in our collective education memories. However, the world in which we currently live is vastly different from the one which shaped those memories. What does that mean for education, and more specifically, what does that mean for outdoor learning experiences? This book attends to these questions from a forward looking position by providing a practical, insightful, and innovative reappraisal of outdoor education theory and practice. Embracing a critical socio-ecological perspective, the contributors celebrate aspects of creative practice and chart a direction for outdoor education which aspires to educate for a sustainable and more equitable future.

This is essential reading for outdoor educators, teachers, guides, and students who want to expand the possibilities and practices of education, especially education which builds a deeper understanding of our relationship to the world we depend on.

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OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Edited by David Irwin,  
Jo Straker and Allen Hill



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A New Vision for the Twenty First Century

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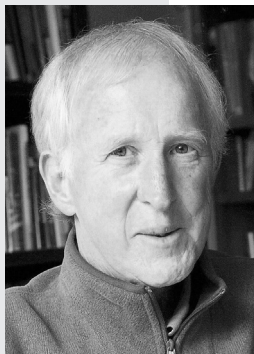


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## Biographies of editors and contributing authors



Dr Mike Boyes, PhD, is an Associate Professor in Outdoor Education at the School of Physical Education, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. He has published widely in outdoor education journals, made numerous conference presentations, regularly obtains research grants and supervises a large number of postgraduate students. He maintains engagement with outdoor education practice, holds a number of outdoor instructor awards and is Chairperson of the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council research committee.



Dr Mike Brown, PhD, is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. He is the co-author of *A pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world* and Editor of *The New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education*, Ko Tāne Mahuta Pupuke. He is interested in place-responsive outdoor education practices and the case study presented in this book is the result of a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) grant. michaelb@waikato.ac.nz



Margie Campbell-Price, MTour, is a senior lecturer in teacher education at the University of Otago. Her research interests focus on learning experiences outside the classroom, particularly the justifications, experiences and pedagogies associated with these experiences. Her most recent research focused on the attraction and meaning of adventure for school-age adventure racers and her doctoral research examines why secondary school students and their teachers travel overseas on school trips. She teaches a range of courses in initial teacher education and currently serves on the New Zealand Teachers Council as a panel member to review and approve initial teacher education programmes. margie.campbell-price@otago.ac.nz

Marg Cosgriff lives in Papamoa in the Bay of Plenty. She is a senior lecturer in the Sport and Leisure Studies department at the University of Waikato, and does most of her teaching at the Windermere campus in Tauranga. Marg teaches papers in health and physical education to students in primary and secondary teacher education programmes, and an outdoor leadership paper. Marg has a longstanding interest in outdoor education in schools, particularly approaches that explicitly foster sustainable connections between students and their local environments and communities. [cosgriff@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:cosgriff@waikato.ac.nz)



Brigid Graney has a BSc and Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Science. She is a qualified outdoor instructor and has worked for several years at OPC Tongariro. Her past includes time in the corporate environment with a stint in a merchant bank in London, environmental planning and policy development. Brigid now spends her time raising two children, growing vegetables, curriculum development and occasionally instructing. She is passionate about the world that surrounds us with a love of adventuring in, observing, sharing and protecting it. This care extends to living consciously and with a deep awareness of what truly sustains us. [brigid@goto.org.nz](mailto:brigid@goto.org.nz)



Simon Graney has been the Centre Manager of OPC Great Barrier for 3 years. Prior to that he has worked as a ski patroller, sea kayak guide, Sfrito Client Liaison and self-employed outdoor consultant. He has spent 5 years working at OPC Tongariro including 2 years as training manager. Outside of the outdoor industry he has worked in learning & development, and marketing. He has an MA in Languages and Business. He is NZOIA qualified in a range of disciplines and has recently become a NZOIA assessor. In the Graney household fish only comes to the table via Simon's speargun. [simon@goto.org.nz](mailto:simon@goto.org.nz)





Dr Allen Hill, PhD, is a lecturer in Outdoor and Environmental Education in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania, Australia. He has taught health, physical education, and outdoor education in New Zealand secondary schools and was actively involved in the New Zealand outdoor sector prior to his move to Tasmania in 2011. Allen's research interests include examining links between healthy people, communities, and environments; and exploring social justice and sustainability issues in education. [Allen.Hill@utas.edu.au](mailto:Allen.Hill@utas.edu.au)



Dr David Irwin, PhD, is a senior lecturer in the Sustainability and Outdoor Education Programmes at CPIT. His research and teaching interests lie in the exploration of culture, identity and human-nature relationships, education for sustainability, and social change in an organisational context. Dave is the editor of *Out and About*, published by Education Outdoors New Zealand. [David.Irwin@cpit.ac.nz](mailto:David.Irwin@cpit.ac.nz)



Dr Maureen Legge, PhD, lectures in physical education teacher education at the University of Auckland. She has special interests in pedagogy, adventure based learning, outdoor education, dance and te ao kori. Her research interests are practitioner-led with core themes about culture, identity and pedagogy. Maureen's work is represented through narrative inquiry and autoethnography. [m.legge@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:m.legge@auckland.ac.nz)

Howard Reti of Ngati Wai descent has worked in the outdoors with Māori for over 30 years. Based in Northland his work has centred on marae based learning utilising the outdoors as the medium to develop a wider understanding of self in relationship to being Māori and the outdoors. Howard has a range of work experiences as an outdoor leader including the Northland Wilderness Experience for youth at risk; founder of Ngati Wai Wananga Raorao a tribal outdoor education programme based in Whangaruru; London based outdoor programme for the unemployed; working in North America with First Nation people in cross-cultural programmes; and for the past 20 years with undergraduate physical education students from the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. [howardreti@hotmail.com](mailto:howardreti@hotmail.com)



Jo Straker, MEd, is a senior lecturer on the Bachelor of Sustainability and Outdoor Education at CPIT. She has a passion for using the outdoors as a medium for positive educational experiences. Her doctoral research and teaching interests explore the role of being outdoors for education. [Jo.Straker@cpit.ac.nz](mailto:Jo.Straker@cpit.ac.nz)



Liz Thevenard is a senior lecturer in health, physical education, and education outside the classroom at Victoria University, Wellington. Liz has a passion for teaching and learning and has spent her life teaching in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors both in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. She is currently the chair of Education Outdoors New Zealand and in 2009 was presented the SPARC Supreme Award for her outstanding contribution to outdoor recreation and education. [Liz.Thevenard@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Liz.Thevenard@vuw.ac.nz)





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Front cover image: Mike Brown

Back cover image: St Cuthberts staff

## Educating outdoors in times of global crisis

By David Irwin, Jo Straker & Allen Hill

### Introduction

Outdoor education in a variety of guises has a rich history in Aotearoa New Zealand, dating back more than 100 years. Learning experiences in the outdoors have a strong and often much-loved place in our collective education memories, from environmental field trips in the mountain valleys of Aoraki/Mount Cook to school camps at Port Waikato; from primary school stream study and restoration projects to multiday alpine journeys for tertiary students. However, as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the world we live in is vastly different from the one in which many of us developed those memories. What does that mean for education, and more specifically, what does that mean for educational experiences that take place in outdoor environments?

This book attends to these questions from a forward looking position. It shares a vision of outdoor education which moves beyond the proud histories of twentieth century school camps, field studies and outdoor pursuits to one which addresses the exigent and contemporary issues confronting educators and students alike. The twenty-first century seems to be characterised by great uncertainty and rapid change. Issues such as climate change, growing inequality between the haves and have-nots, and rising levels of consumption and waste are increasingly entering the fray of our everyday lived realities. So too are bigger (or indeed smaller), better, and faster technologies. Cultural norms are constantly being challenged, contested, and reshaped. How then does outdoor education wrestle with and speak to these and other issues?

Outdoor education is a contested concept with diverse views about learning outcomes and at times semantic confusion over terminology. For example Nicol (2002, p.32) suggests “outdoor education defies definition in terms of being a fixed entity of common consent, homogeneous over time and space”. However, dominant historical constructions of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand appear to have evolved to be focused around risk, outdoor pursuit activities, skill development, personal growth, interpersonal relationships, and

some environmental care (Lynch, 2006; Zink & Boyes, 2006). Whilst many of these outcomes are admirable they remain insufficient to address issues such as those highlighted above. With these issues in mind, it is the purpose of this book to provide a practical, insightful, and innovative reappraisal of outdoor education theory and practice. Drawing from a range of New Zealand academics, teachers, and practitioners this book is aimed at all those who educate in outdoor environments, including teachers, outdoor instructors, and those involved in voluntary youth organisations such as Scouts, Guides, and YMCA.

Embracing a critical socio-ecological perspective the contributing authors chart a direction for outdoor education which is committed to educating for a sustainable and more equitable future. This perspective draws from the strength of outdoor education's experiential traditions whilst advocating an explicit politics of change. This politics calls into question the status quo, forcing us to ask the question; what are we educating for? A socio-ecological perspective sets the platform for how we might answer this question. It compels us to move beyond individual focused models of learning to consider the wider contexts of people's relationships with human and non-human nature.

Readers will encounter theory and practice blended into a mosaic of discussion that is informed by research and literature relating to contemporary trends and debates in outdoor education. Examples and stories of cutting-edge practice are sprinkled liberally throughout the chapters along with explanations of theoretical concepts in ways which are accessible and increase understanding. Embedded firmly in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, this book recognises the uniqueness and importance of the places we live in and the cultures we live with. In particular it acknowledges the central position of Māori as tangata whenua and attempts to address a perceived silence pertaining to Māori issues and culture within Pākehā dominated outdoor education.<sup>1</sup>

This book also sits within broader contexts. In particular, it is important to acknowledge social and historical influences on dominant outdoor education practices as we currently know them. In the early to middle of the 20th century, a number of

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary at end of the book for explanation of Māori terms.

prominent figures and programmes emerged which were to have a significant influence on the development of outdoor education on an international scale. Ideas and practices from people such as Baden Powell and the Scouting movement, and Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound, influenced a wide range of outdoor and adventure education programmes. Building on philosophical understandings of war, adventure, and learning that date back to Plato, and the legacy of experiential educators such as Thoreau and Dewey, these emerging discourses increasingly viewed the outdoors as an arena where the virtues of character, resilience, self-confidence, bravery, comradeship, and leadership could be built. Whilst most of us would agree that the virtues stated above are admirable goals, it is important that we understand the historical context through which they came to prominence. The early to middle of the 20th century was punctuated by two World Wars and the Great Depression, where millions of soldiers and civilians lost their lives and there were unprecedented levels of suffering and hardship. These were significant social events which shaped the pedagogical practices of outdoor education, just as they did whole nations. As a consequence, the desired goals and outcomes of outdoor education programmes became appropriate to the social and historical context in which they were developed. However, it must be acknowledged that as the world enters the second decade of the 21st century, the social, political, economic, and environmental contexts within which education, and more specifically outdoor education, now finds itself are vastly different from the mid-20th century. It is to these redefined cultural contexts that this book seeks to attend.

It must also be noted that many of the issues Aotearoa New Zealand faces are in fact global concerns as well as national and local concerns. Given this broad perspective, the potential international relevance and reach of this book are also key considerations for the editors. We believe that the ideas presented here maybe useful to teachers and educators in many different contexts across the world. The next section of this chapter examines global issues in more detail and explores the implications they have on alternative visions of outdoor education. The final section briefly summarises the content of each chapter in this book.

## A Global Environmental, Social, and Educational Context

Our planet is entering a phase of rapid change that scientists attribute to the accumulated impacts of human existence. Quite simply, there are too many of us, and in the developed world we use more of the earth's resources than we should. These driving forces are causing inequity in the distribution of wealth, the globalisation of consumer culture, widespread habitat destruction, the mass extinction of species, and climate change. These fundamental problems are tearing at the fabric of life, but as academic and cartoonist Takatsuki (n.d.) (under the pen name High Moon) cleverly depicts in Figure 1.1, we often fail to recognise the impacts of our daily existence on the world around us.



Note: Behind the scenes, what's actually happening?

Figure 1.1: We fail to perceive the impacts of our daily lives (Takatsuki, n.d.)

For many years, influential authors such as Carson (1962) who alerted the world to unrestricted pesticide use and habitat destruction; Schumacher (1974) who wrote of economics and limits to growth; Leopold (1987) who stressed the need for a land ethic; and Lovelock (2006) who identified our planet as Gaia, a living entity in crisis; have tried to draw our attention to the alternative reality behind the scenes that High Moon's cartoon depicts. Even internationally popular and

award winning fiction such as *Oryx and Crake* by Atwood (2003) or *Madigan's Fantasia* by Mahy (2005) forewarn of an apocalyptic future. Clover (2002) suggests that people lead double lives; they live as though nothing has changed while knowing that much has indeed changed, but carry on as they always have done anyway. It seems that not until this alternative reality depicted by Takatsuki encroaches into our daily lives will we notice it exists.

A common theme in sustainability<sup>1</sup> literature is that there has been a general and widespread failure to engage with social and environmental issues, and the problems that threaten the life-supporting ecology of the planet continue to become more threatening as time passes. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNESCO, 2004) involving over 1300 scientists across 96 different countries found that no part of the planet was free from human impact and around sixty per cent of it was degraded (with some parts so severely degraded those places may not recover in the foreseeable future). Of particular concern were:

- The rise in atmospheric concentration of CO<sup>2</sup> attributed to burning fossil fuels and clearing land resulting in a mean global increase in temperature of 0.6°C over the last 100 years and global average sea level rises of between 0.1 and 0.2 metres.
- Species extinction (found to be up to 1000 times higher than fossil records, and forecast to increase significantly in the coming decades);
- Habitat destruction (with cultivated land found to cover a quarter of the earth's surface and increasing rapidly);
- Nitrification of waterways (creating large areas of hypoxic ocean such as in the Gulf of Mexico);
- Loss of biological diversity (to a significant extent irreversibly);
- Loss of mangrove systems and coral reefs (with approximately 20% of the world's coral reefs lost and another 20% degraded in the last several decades of the twentieth century, and approximately 35% of mangrove areas lost and another 20% degraded during the same time);

<sup>1</sup> The concept of sustainability will be discussed in chapter 3, but can be generally considered as meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations.

- A significant increase in flooding and extreme weather events as a result of climate change (with those people most susceptible living in the developing world – particularly Asia);
- The rapidly decreasing availability of freshwater (water stored behind dams had quadrupled since 1960, and three to six times as much water was held in reservoirs as in natural rivers. Freshwater use, (of which 70% was for agriculture) was expanding 20% per decade and between 5-25% of water use exceeded sustainable supply. Water scarcity affected 1-2 billion people).

The report observed that half the urban populations of Africa, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean suffer from diseases associated with inadequate water and sanitation, and that worldwide, these diseases cause approximately 1.7 million deaths each year. With the human population now counted as 7 billion and continuing to grow exponentially, and the gross world product expected to increase between three and six times between 2000 and 2050, these conditions look likely to continue to rapidly deteriorate.<sup>2</sup>

The media has paid little attention to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and few people appear to have an appreciation of the sobering findings it contains. The summary statement of the board included the following observation:

- “We are spending Earth’s natural capital, putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet’s ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted.
- At the same time, the assessment shows that the future really is in our hands. We can reverse the degradation of many ecosystem services over the next 50 years, but the changes in policy and practice required are substantial and not currently underway.” (UNESCO, 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Details taken from presentation prepared by Walt Reid (borrowing several slides prepared by others involved in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). The slides focus on the findings of the MA synthesis report (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment) by W. Reid, H. Mooney, A. Cropper et. al.. (2005). *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press, Washington D.C.

An additional key global problem is often referred to as peak oil, the notion that since oil is a finite resource, it will increasingly become more difficult to procure now that easily accessed reserves of oil have been consumed. For example the price of crude oil saw its biggest-ever one-day price increase on Friday 6th June 2008 with an increase of more than 9% a barrel to an all-time high of over US\$139:00 (Cooke, 2008), with predictions of higher prices appearing with daily regularity at that time. Heinberg (2007) who has written extensively on the issue maintains that the reduction of energy availability that peak oil causes will have far reaching ramifications, and will see immense pressures placed upon social structures such as transport, all forms of production including food production, and electricity generation. Such pressure will eventually require a fundamental change in how the developed world economy functions, changes he suggests, that are already becoming evident.

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is easy to think we are distanced from over population, the wide-scale environmental degradation, and resource depletion described above. However, this country was identified by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment for the very significant loss of biological diversity that has occurred as a result of the introduction of pests such as the rat, stoat, and opossum, and the widespread clearing of indigenous forest for agriculture. The intensification of farming, and particularly dairy farming, has also lead to the over-consumption of water used for irrigation, and an increase in the application of artificial fertilisers that is, along with the urea deposited on the land by grazing animals, carried into waterways by runoff. This situation has significantly compromised the health of rivers, lakes, and lowland streams in many parts of the country (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2002). There are also numerous examples of political and regulatory failure to protect natural environments, especially coastal and lowland forest environments, from urban development and industrial uses such as farming, logging, and mining. The over exploitation of local fisheries remains a pressing problem, with the collapse of fish stocks such as Blue Cod and Orange Roughy in some areas, and at risk fisheries such as Hoki and Snapper a testament to how difficult it is to balance economic growth with the maintenance of sustainable fisheries – a situation the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment described as “deeply disturbing” (2002, p.141). At the time of writing this, the container ship *Rena* had run aground on the Astrolab reef

off the Bay of Plenty and was spewing heavy diesel oil into the ocean. The New Zealand Minister for the Environment, Nick Smith has suggested this is likely to be the country's largest ever environmental disaster.

Aotearoa New Zealand is also faced with a plethora of social problems that pose significant challenges. A key concern of the authors of this book is the continued underachievement of Māori and Pacifica students in the primary, secondary and tertiary education system, but this issue needs to be contextualized in the over representation of these same peoples in negative indicators of social wellbeing such as violent crime and incarceration in prisons, child abuse and family violence, teenage pregnancy, rates of vaccination and life expectancy, and obesity (McLennan, McMannus, & Spoonley, 2010). The distribution of wealth is also increasingly in focus, and the past three decades of market reform in Aotearoa New Zealand have resulted in poorer working conditions for many including a stagnation of wages, more casual employment, and less union influence on work places. Importantly, tax reforms over the last few decades have tended to favour higher income groups. Global trends to relocate industrial production to developing countries where less regulation of labour and the environment means lower costs of production has seen local companies such as Fisher and Paykel close factories in Aotearoa New Zealand, a move that exacerbates the problems encountered by those in unskilled and semi-skilled work. Such reforms contribute to an increasing underclass in Aotearoa New Zealand society which now sees one in five children living in poverty, the emergence of energy poverty (where people are unable to afford to heat their homes adequately), overcrowded housing and the associated re-emergence of developing world diseases such as typhoid and tuberculosis in some locations such as South Auckland.

The editors and contributing authors of this book take the position that the future of all life on this planet will be shaped by how people choose to react to these problems in the next decade or so. If people (particularly in the developed world) continue to live in the destructive manner that we have done, the evidence presented by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is unequivocal; those actions are prescribing future generations of humans to certain hardship in a world of increasing ecological impoverishment, climatic instability, and mass extinction. UNESCO has identified education as a key

mechanism to facilitate awareness of the issues that are faced, and strongly advocate a change in values and behaviours to address the problems currently faced by humanity. The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2005) places responsibility for education for sustainability broadly across all sectors of education and seeks the engagement and commitment of individuals, organisations and governments.

The bleak situation described by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and critical initiative described in the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development provide the wider context for this book. The editors do not debate either the findings of the assessment or the agenda of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, but take the position that humanity has no choice but to act to bring about change and that education provides a powerful medium to do so. This position suggests a moral and ethical imperative for change towards more sustainable ways of living, clearly articulated in international agreements such as the Declaration of Thessaloniki (UNESCO, 1997) and is a driving force behind education for sustainability. The PCE describe education for sustainability as follows:

“Education for sustainability examines how people and groups in society can learn to live in sustainable ways. It is not simply education ‘about’ sustainability ... education for sustainability has a strong purpose. It aims to empower people of all ages and different backgrounds to contribute to a better future. It encourages people to ask lots of questions, challenge underlying assumptions, and to think for themselves. It looks at individual and systemic changes that are needed to resolve unsustainable practices. Education for sustainability will require people and organisations to see that changes for the better can be made, and that there will need to be a transformation (a redesign of many systems and established ways of doing things) to achieve a good quality of life for people far into the future.” (January 2004, p.15)

This section has described the key driving forces evident on a global scale and provided some insight into the nature of the social and ecological problems unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. This section has also argued that education is a key mechanism of social change to move towards more sustainable ways of living. Outdoor education

has a part to play in this shift of thinking, but the development of methodologies and pedagogies need to be derived from this place in response to the pressures and needs of the people and the land. This means that as educators we must be aware of what it is that makes us unique and what sets outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand apart from those forms that occur in other places. As Royal (2008) maintains, our society must look deeply into both our indigenous Māori and Pākehā cultures, take notice of our unique landscapes and recognise the obligation we have to them, and develop our own ways of knowing, doing, and celebrating that move us into the future in a more sustainable way. It is with these notions that the authors of this book explore a vision of the future for outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## About this Book

Using a variety of perspectives, and mixing theory with practical examples, this book opens new vistas on how outdoor education can be furthered through paying more rigorous attention to the social, cultural, educational and ecological contexts in which it is practiced. Drawing on research, key outdoor educators suggest ways of redefining the purpose and practice of outdoor education. As with any group of scholars each brings a different perspective to the changing role of outdoor education in the 21st Century. This diversity is the book's strength, for as a collection they offer a fascinating exploration into the potential for outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In order to plan a path for the future it is sometimes wise to address the past. The second chapter by Mike Boyes does this, succinctly summarising the strands and discourses which currently shape outdoor education. In bringing together aspects of political and social theory, Boyes tackles the problem of untangling discourses of outdoors-as-adventure and outdoors-as-learning. His view is that while both positions have value, the pendulum has swung too far toward the outdoors-as-adventure discourse at the expense of learning, especially learning about the outdoors as a place which can teach us more about living respectfully on the planet.

In presenting a case for socio-ecological theory to underpin outdoor education, Allen Hill critically examines current pedagogy by

asking the question – what is education for? This theoretical chapter forms a sound basis for the ideas developed in many other chapters, highlighting the diverse ways that socio-ecological approaches can be applied to outdoor education. It is not without controversy however, and Hill offers many challenges to outdoor educators if they aspire to educate for a sustainable future, a position which he perceives to be of critical importance. In outlining four general principles for taking sustainable action, he offers some guidance for practitioners who want to address these transformative goals.

Taking a different tack, Marg Cosgriff, Liz Thevenard, and Margie Campbell-Price examine aspects of contemporary curricula in the early childhood and school sectors to explore a vision of outdoor education with a strong sustainability focus. An in-depth look at the curriculum is peppered with engaging snapshots of current programmes which highlight the practice of developing human connectedness and responsiveness to outdoor environments and local communities. These examples celebrate some of the innovative practices that are happening, but also challenge outdoor educators to develop their own creative responses in order to further extend the potential of outdoor education within the curriculum.

A number of educators (e.g. Gruenewald, 2003; Wattchow, 2008) have referred to the need to focus attention on place. Mike Brown's chapter both helps define place-responsive education from a theoretical perspective and then elucidates the theory by reflecting on recent research of students' responses to a place-responsive outdoor education programme. In doing so he challenges the role of activity and risk in outdoor education programmes, suggesting they potentially restrict the way relationships with nature develop. By paying more attention to the places where we educate allows the place itself to influence what we teach and learn. A place-responsive pedagogy can raise awareness of how to develop understanding of, and a sense of connection with nature, which for Brown is a pre-requisite for caring about the world.

Outdoor education occurs in many guises, and Brigid and Simon Graney explore the practices and future place of residential centres. The changing social, political, and economic climate has demanded certain changes which some centres have responded to in creative ways. This chapter briefly reviews some of the current challenges,

but quickly moves on to providing case studies of the creative responses from a range of residential centres. This chapter firmly positions residential centres as having a critical role to play in outdoor education of the future.

Chapter seven raises awareness of our cultural identity and the challenges this brings to outdoor education, which has largely imported its pedagogy and practices from overseas. Maureen Legge draws on her own research to emotionally engage the reader in the challenges of developing a sympathetic understanding of a Māori worldview, from a Pākehā perspective. At times she found herself wanting to return to the more familiar and comfortable ways to understand, but stresses the need for outdoor educators to persevere and attempt to respectfully and humbly integrate tikanga Māori into the outdoor settings where they teach. Howard Reti balances this with commentary from a Māori perspective, emphasising the strong connection Māori have with ngahere, the bush, and moana, the sea. He writes of the role colonisation has played in disconnecting Māori from some of these traditional ways of learning from the land, but in looking forward suggests how outdoor education can play a role in developing resilient individuals who can stand in both worlds strong in their cultural identity.

Dave Irwin also addresses identity and the need for outdoor education to create spaces for students to reflect upon their identity. He discusses the reciprocal processes of developing a sense of community and obligation to the land by enhancing identity, and how this can help students create a more grounded and connected understanding of their place in Aotearoa New Zealand. His aim in addressing identity is in part to challenge students to take radical and urgent action to redress the social and environmental crises raised in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNESCO, 2004). Irwin shares journal entries from students to illustrate how change is demanding yet fulfilling, as they come to terms with responsibility, their ability to influence, and a deeper understanding of their connection to the world. Irwin notes that outdoor education with its strong heritage in environmental education provides opportunities to help students become active agents for change in this time of social and ecological crisis.

In a description of meandering across the Southern Alps, Jo Straker questions the role of bodily engagement with the environment in helping develop an awareness of the interconnectedness and complexity of life on this planet. She suggests that the open ended nature of outdoor education journeys provide opportunities for students to create their own narratives which help in building on-going relationships with the environment. While she is circumspect about outdoor education solving environmental issues, she notes that it is necessary to remain positive about being able to make a difference and continue to strive to enrich the future. To strengthen this point, Straker references research from the positive psychology movement which identifies positive emotions as a way to generate creative solutions — for when we are happy we more readily look outward and engage with others.

In Chapter 10, the editors reflect on the diverse contributions made in this book, in order to explore the possibilities and challenges for outdoor education. Their reflections signal how personal and collective outdoor education practices might be instrumental in challenging educational, political, and social agendas to take action toward attaining more sustainable ways of living. Importantly they stress the need to focus on creating positive visions and constructing learning experiences that work towards building a positive future.

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## 2

## Historical and Contemporary Trends in Outdoor Education

By Mike Boyes

Positioned strongly within outdoor educators' minds, the natural environment presents a context and a methodology that serves across a range of subject disciplines. Like all enduring educational paradigms, successful outdoor education practice has authority. But like a chameleon, the distinct forms of practice are constantly changing and the forms themselves are contestable. The levels of authority are influenced by a dialectic relationship between teachers as social agents and social structures like schools, communities and outdoor recreation bodies in which social understandings evolve. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of field, this chapter explores the dominant fields that are influential in determining legitimate forms of practice. Historically these have been the outdoor learning discourse and the outdoor adventure discourse, but new notions like education for sustainability have transformative power. The purpose of the chapter is to critically examine historical and contemporary fields in outdoor education and come to understand more of the social dynamics and power structures. Firstly I provide a theoretical framework with a brief discussion of Bourdieu's concepts of field, social capital and habitus. Then I define the field by looking at the social history of outdoor education followed by a discussion of the relationships between the dominant discourses. To conclude I look at the stakes, struggles and power relations that have the potential to transform the field.

Bourdieu explains how relations of power and dominance within specific social fields are developed to create positions of value. A field, like outdoor education, is defined as a social arena within which agents compete for the resources contained therein. Bourdieu recognised that fields could intersect and also that smaller and subordinate subfields (e.g. place-based learning) existed. Subfields had their own logic, rules and regularities and shared many of the properties of the main field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The key resources of a field are the symbolic capital constituted by what is recognised by the social groups as the objects of struggle, including knowledge, education, expressions, material resources, and the hearts and minds of the workforce. Those who hold preferential

rights of interpretation, respect and recognition (e.g. the dominant ideas) possess a form of capital to develop and maintain their social position. Hence educators struggle “...not only over particular forms of capital effective in the field but also over the very definition of which capital is most valued.” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.84)

For many years outdoor educators have recognised that ways of learning are contested social constructions (see Brookes, 1991; Martin, 1998). Educators as social agents compete to produce what they consider to be the legitimate form of outdoor education. But what constitutes legitimate knowledge in the field? Is a river a playground of extreme sports or a place for slow pedagogy and sense of place? In effect, it is not the activity itself that is contested but the underlying logic of the outcomes. Hence people may be paddling for different reasons. The key stake is the definition of the field itself which is defined and transformed by the power struggles. Social fields are put into practice through the agency of the individual by schema of perceptions, thought and action. Our outdoor education beliefs, values and practices reflect the social fields to which we subscribe. This subjective and embodied experience Bourdieu coined *habitus*. Bourdieu believed that social fields are not spontaneously produced but have identifiable histories and it is to these that I now turn.

## Early social history

An influential ideology has a social history where the past is informative. Often there is disagreement about what the past was and uncertainty as to whether the past is over or still working, albeit in different forms. The roots of outdoor adventure and outdoor learning in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) can be traced back to the early days of settlement. The first human settlers were Polynesian, arriving from 1300 A.D. These early adventurers came by deliberate exploration in small ocean-going canoes (*waka*) across the stormy Southern Ocean, navigating by solar and celestial markers. Their feats parallel those of the white migrants (*Pākehā*) who arrived from the 1800s. The new country had considerable natural resources including mountains, lakes, rivers, substantial plains and a long coastline, eminently suitable for settlement, pastoralism and outdoor recreation. Aotearoa New Zealand's adventure ethos has its genesis in these migration stories (Kane & Tucker, 2007).

The white settlers were predominantly British, coming from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales with smaller numbers of Chinese, Dalmatian, Dutch and Scandinavian migrants (King, 2007). By 1900, the overwhelming flood resulted in Pākehā being over 90% of the population with Western values, criteria, practices and priorities being dominant. Māori communities adhered to traditional values and tikanga (tradition) incorporating facets of Pākehā culture where useful. Māori from pre-European times engaged in outdoor pastimes such as whakaheke ngaru (surfing riding), waka hoehoe (canoeing) and horua (tobogganing) (Best, 1925). Pākehā culture was also subtly influenced by things Māori, an influence that waned and waxed with the passing of time. In an attempt to create a better Britain, British settlers introduced Shakespeare's birds, trees and flowers and game animals such as deer, rabbits, ducks and trout. This was the raw material for the hunting, shooting and fishing fraternities. Life for the early Pākehā settlers involved manual outdoor work in a rugged physical environment where a risky workplace, isolation and rural communities were realities. King (2007, p.433) links the stereotypical New Zealand identity to those early days: mateship, ability to improvise, practical do it yourself traditions, the hunting, fishing and shooting ethic, informal and egalitarian social attitudes and access to recreation opportunities not linked to social class. These are the foundations of "a modern populist engagement with the New Zealand landscape" (Belich, 2003, p.527).

Education was highly valued by the early settlers who quickly established schools with the conservative traditionalism of the home country. Following international trends, curricula later became more humanistic with child-centred, experience centred pedagogy. Historical evidence documents outdoor learning including curriculum related field trips, educational visits and school time outdoor excursions since 1849 (Lynch, 2006; Stothart, 1993). Further developments followed with some notable events being: (1) in 1904 the primary school syllabus included nature study and gardening and nature study specialists were appointed; (2) the open air schools of the 1920's promoted the links between sunshine, fresh air and health; (3) in 1937 the Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools advocated outdoor learning through geography, science and nature study/science; (4) school camping grew from 1942 onwards, in 1968 it was reported that 7000 students had participated in school camps that year; (5) in the 1950's specialist teachers in nature study

and physical education were appointed (Stothart, 1993). In teacher education, Philip Smithells introduced camping with a broad based curriculum into physical education at the University of Otago in 1949 (see Smithells, 1978). Consequentially, thousands of teachers have graduated, infused with the values of being educated outdoors. Collectively, these developments are the historical origins and social capital of the field of outdoor education as adventure and as a curriculum methodology, focusing on learning in any subject area by first-hand experiences in the natural environment. The importance of direct experience to learning can be traced back to Kant in the 1700's who philosophised that rationality and experience were essential to learning (Vadeboncoeur, 2011). John Dewey was also influential in establishing the links between theory and practice and is a father figure of the experiential education field (Beard & Wilson, 2006). Clearly, these educational philosophies were also working in the NZ context.

The adventure discourse is one of the strongest and oldest outdoor education discourses in the UK. It includes outdoor pursuits like tramping, mountaineering, canoeing and cycling, containing elements of risk and necessitating movement through wild country or water. Recreational activities such as these were popular in the home country in the 1800's and were transplanted to Aotearoa New Zealand (Kane & Tucker, 2007). Hunting, shooting and fishing also linked to food gathering were popular colonial pastimes (Belich, 2003). This was fertile ground for the embrace of the Scouting and Guiding movement at the turn of the century with its focus on outdoor skills and camping. From the 1930's the UK was profoundly influenced by the adventure philosophies of Kurt Hahn. Hahn believed that responsible citizenship lay in the value of community service, physical skill and durability, self discipline, craftsmanship and outdoor expeditions (Veevers & Allison, 2011). Hahn's beliefs spawned Outward Bound schools, adventure education, adventure tourism, ropes courses, Project Adventure and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. All of these are influential in Aotearoa New Zealand and will be discussed in a later section. Pivotal for the adventure ethos in Aotearoa New Zealand was Hillary and Norgay's first ascent of Everest as members of a British expedition. This feat cemented the link between adventure and national identity into the public imagination.

## Conceptualisations of outdoor education as symbolic capital

To further understand the historical influences on outdoor education I now want to turn to how the field of outdoor education has been historically contested and conceptualised in NZ. The key struggle has been between outdoor education as adventure and outdoor education as outdoor learning with environmental education also being a factor. Considering the influence of the UK on NZ's development it is not surprising that British perspectives have been influential. Post World War Two, developments in the USA also came to bear on the NZ and UK contexts. In addition, NZ has matured as an independent country. Unique cultural and social understandings have developed so our flavour of outdoor education is different to the British, American or Australian forms.

One of the earliest statements about outdoor learning to resonate in NZ was the statement from American Lloyd B Sharpe: "That which can best be learned inside the classroom should be learned there. That which can best be learned in the out of doors through direct experience, dealing with native materials and life situations, should there be learned" (cited in Smith, Carlson, Masters, & Donaldson, 1972, p.20). Conceptualisation of the term took place later, influenced in 1955 by the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation who initiated a binary approach that incorporated both adventure and learning. Hence education in the outdoors was seen as "the use of the natural environment in the educative process, and education for the outdoors: "the learning of outdoor skills and interests, attitudes and appreciations necessary for satisfying outdoor pursuits" (Smith, 1970, pp. 5-6).

The links between school camping and outdoor education in NZ have been summarised by Lynch (2006). Similarly, Van der Smissen (1980) noted this relationship in the USA. Early graphical conceptualisations of outdoor education in the USA depict the components of education in and for the outdoors on a base of residential education (Smith, 1970). In NZ in the 60's school camping and the development of school camps continued to gather steam and Stothart (1993) notes that by 1972, 186 camps were in place and 26,000 children were involved. The NZ national course on outdoor education held at Wallis house in 1974 adopted Smith's work and this appears to be

the first NZ exposition of the field of outdoor education including the discourses of learning outdoors, outdoor pursuits and residential camping (Dowling & MacPherson, 1974).

In NZ by 1977 an even stronger outdoor adventure focus had appeared where outdoor pursuits, environmental studies and personal and social development were documented along the lines of the UK purpose model that included the same components (MacPherson, 1977). It appears that the outdoor pursuits lobby was gaining greater social capital. This prompted a response from the NZ Department of Education in 1980 who introduced Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) to refocus the domain back to its wider roots (Abbott, 1990; Boyes, 2000). Thus EOTC was “to ensure that the diversity of opportunities beyond classroom walls are all given credibility in the development of a curriculum” (Abbott, 1990, p.307). The effect was to position the outdoor pursuits approach within a broader curriculum and emphasise the diversity of teaching opportunities the outdoors provides. This position was enhanced with the publication of a policy statement (New Zealand Department of Education, 1986), a principals guide (New Zealand Department of Education, 1987) and a curriculum guidelines statement on EOTC (New Zealand Department of Education, 1992). In a sense EOTC became over inclusive of any endeavour outside the classroom with the inclusion of areas such as museum visits and school sports and this is a reflection of neoliberal times where safety has become a preoccupation. The disadvantage is the dilution of the pervasiveness of the context of the natural environment. The strong experiential education movement in the USA also underpinned outdoor learning albeit with a narrow theoretical approach espoused by Kolb’s cyclical learning models (Beard & Wilson, 2006). Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is commonly employed in custom and practice by educators.

The outdoor-education-as-adventure discourse has been dominant in the UK and totally embraced in NZ. In the UK, Gair (1997, p.2) noted: “Traditionally the term outdoor education has been applied solely to activities out of doors which involve some degree of physical challenge and risk.” In the 1950’s there was a notable expansion of UK outdoor centres offering outdoor and adventurous activities for schools based on Hahn’s philosophies (Harris, 1999). The practice of outdoor education was first documented in 1975 by the Department of Education and Science with an agreed position

statement: “Outdoor education heightens awareness and respect for: (1) self – through the meeting of challenge; (2) others – through group experience and the sharing of decisions; and (3) the natural environment – through direct experience.” (Department of Education & Science (DES), 1975). This led to conceptualisations such as the purpose model of outdoor education (attributed to Higgins) where the three components of outdoor activities, environmental education and personal and social education, take place at the same time (Stirling, 2007, pp. 5-7). In Gair’s opinion this represents the adventure focus today: “Outdoor education is now often regarded as an approach or a methodology by which challenging activities and the natural environment provide an arena for the personal, social and educational development of young people” (Gair, 1997, p.2).

A discussion of the adventure approach would be incomplete without consideration of the embrace of Hahn’s work in the USA and the adventure ideology and largely pedagogical and safety material that emanated. Outward Bound and Project Adventure have been particularly influential in NZ. One of the keys to the success of the latter has been the widespread dissemination of practical teaching resources that met fertile ground.

In the education arena Priest (1986) conceptualised outdoor education as having two main components that led to personal growth: (1) adventure education- the use of adventurous activities to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (intrapersonal being how one relates to self), and (2) environmental education. Priest saw the components were based on the experiential process of learning by doing. Through the 90’s and beyond – books, academic and professional articles, and conference presentations strengthened the adventure approach; especially the components of personal development, skill learning, risk management and facilitation skills. Some NZ writers promoted adventure based learning as an exciting curriculum innovation of unique promise (Cosgriff, 2000; Salter, 1999).

The adventure discourse in NZ is reflective of these international developments. Outdoor education first appeared as a key learning area in the Health and Physical Education (HPE) syllabus in 1998 where the focus on adventure activities and outdoor pursuits was stated. The UK understandings are echoed in the opening statement:

“Outdoor education provides students with opportunities to develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the natural environment.” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998, pp. 46-47).

One other influential field with a long history is environmental education. From colonial times, the natural environment through the medium of nature study has always been a key aspect of outdoor education in NZ. Smith's conceptualisations in the 70's and the British understandings of outdoor education also incorporated the environment as an essential element. As stated prior, Priest (1986) specifically considered environmental education as part of outdoor education. He saw two environmental components: (1) ecosystemic relationships involving the interdependence of living organisms in an ecological system and (2) ekistic relationships as the key interactions between human society and the natural resources of the environment. The British Council of Outdoor Education concurred, defining “education about the outdoors” as: “the interrelationship of the human being and the natural resources upon which societies depend, with the goal of stewardship in mind” (British Council on Outdoor Education, 1989).

Sadly, practice has not lived up to the rhetoric with the environment being less successful in the contest for power, definition and resources. Adventure dominates environment with largely anthropocentric understandings being applied. Two influential meta-analyses found weak relationships between adventure activities and environmental understandings (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; Rickinson et al., 2004). Hattie et al (1997, p.76) concluded “Clearly adventure programmes have not capitalised on the uniqueness of their environment.” There is even evidence to suggest that adventure education does more harm than good to the natural environment or at best has a neutral effect (Haluza-Delay, 1999; Priest, 1999). With the combative nature of the activities and the focus on personal development, outdoor adventurers can be more part of the environmental problem than the solution. In the adventure activities of the physical education curriculum the syllabus goal of protecting and caring for the natural environment, can lead to a minimalist approach based on environmental care or leave no trace codes. Specific environmental goals are not set or are nebulous, with the outcomes incidental and serendipitous. As

Cooper (1997, p.23) noted: “outdoor education has more to offer education for sustainability than an appreciation and understanding of the environment.” In Bourdieu’s terms the marginalisation of the environment is a good example of the subjugation of a field by another.

It is no surprise that environmental education sought its own place in the sun. The Belgrade Charter and the Tbilisi Declaration were founding documents from UNESCO with global impact (UNESCO United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), 1975, 1977). In NZ this came in the form of informal implementation across subjects and the curriculum guidelines for environmental education in NZ schools (New Zealand Department of Education, 1999). Environmental education was not seen as a subject in its own right but rather to be implemented in all curriculum areas. This curriculum was later superceded by the Education for Sustainability curriculum that has a stated intent for students to: “explore the relationship between people and the environment ... and learning to think and act in ways that safeguard the well-being of people and the planet. [Students] learn to show leadership by example and to contribute to collective decisions that lead to actions for a sustainable future.” (Ministry of Education, 2007a)

## Contemporary Contestations

Outdoor education has a long history and culture, characterised by contestation for social and symbolic capital. The field faces constant challenge and transformation from external social fields and philosophies, and by contestation between internal sub-fields. At stake are its definition and direction that also expose its social dynamic and power structure. While numerous fields, ideologies, practices and discourses are identifiable, I focus on three key areas: (1) the influence of neoliberalism; (2) the struggle between the outdoors-as-adventure and the outdoors-as-learning; and (3) the challenge posed by environmental philosophies.

### Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a facet of postmodern society and presents a pervasive ideology adopted by Western nations. It is based on the principles of the free market and consumerism; ideas that are

dominant and seemingly unstoppable (Apple, 2009). Olssen and Peters (2005, pp. 314-315) identify four central pre-suppositions: (1) the self-interested individual; (2) free-market economics; (3) a commitment to laissez-faire as the free-market is self regulating; and (4) a commitment to free trade. The principles are cultural assumptions that are encoded in language allowing the embrace of certain assumptions while suppressing others (Bowers, 2002). People are seen as autonomous choosers, constantly consuming, with an emphasis on individualism through personal choice, advantage and responsibility.

In education, institutions including schools are run as businesses with a proliferation of competing providers. Managerialism is dominant, low trust environments prevalent and workers are disposable and mobile. The curriculum emphasises technical knowledge and the skills and competencies valued on the vocational market. Subsequently, a broad education, critical thinking, creativity and problem solving are marginalised with narrowing of content to focus on product rather than the process of learning and thinking (O'Neill, 2005). The impoverishment of knowledge, the disappearance of critique and a focus on accountability and assessment are noticeable.

The drive for vocational learning and the commodification of education has seen changes in assessment structures and the imposition of an outcomes and assessment driven curriculum structure (Hall, 2005). In the outdoors, this is manifest in the technically focussed competencies of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and the unit standards of the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The unit standards are vocationally focussed by industry training organisations (ITO's) who are mandated by statute. Generally, the emphasis is on the economic rather than the social purposes of education with learning no longer seen in relation to wider human values (Giddens, 2009). The behaviour of the individual is shaped on behalf of the state and the dominant fields. Neoliberalism and its manifestations profoundly influence the competing fields of outdoor education.

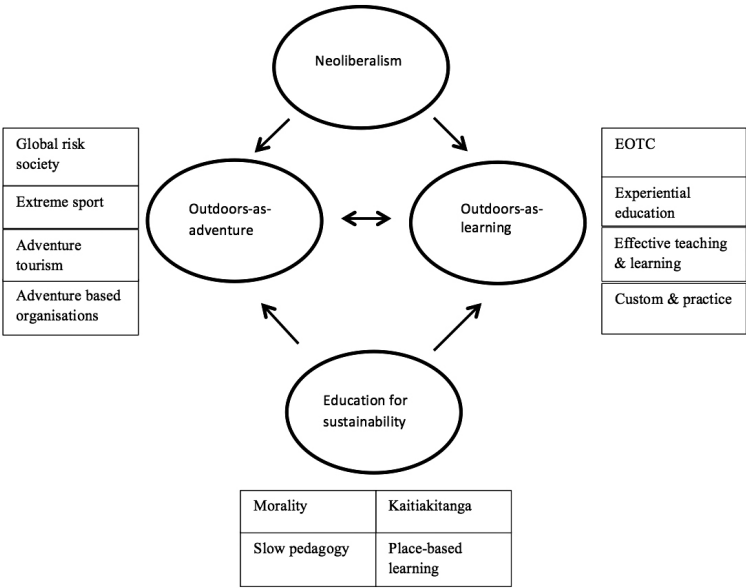


Figure 2.1. Influential social fields and influences on legitimate forms of outdoor education

Outdoors-as- adventure

Adventure as a subfield of outdoor education is in a dominant position. Adventure philosophies and practices have potent symbolic capital in the sense that their orthodoxy, processes and beliefs have legitimacy and exert power as measured by their acceptance. Tacit knowledge defines what is most valued. Legitimation can be seen in the many school programmes throughout the country that focus on an outdoor pursuits activity base and feature challenge, embodiment and personal development (Hill, 2010; Payne & Wattchow, 2008). These approaches embrace the neoliberal aspects of the curriculum and the competency-based assessment systems. For instance a kayaking session that focusses on paddling skills and risk management fits the objectives of the curriculum and is amenable to checklist assessment. Furthermore the vocationally driven qualification structures of NZQA, NCEA and the outdoor instructor awards embrace the genre.

Adventure relies on risk taking behaviour where humans engage in challenges provided by the environment. In a broader sense our postmodern world is a globalised risk society where the pursuit of risk is a key structural principle extending through the social system in patterns of political, cultural and leisure activity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 2009). Risk taking is also valued as a radical form of escape from social conditions that deaden the human spirit (Lyng, 2005). Therefore there are good societal reasons for the embrace of adventure. NZ national identity has a strong adventure ethos and outdoor lifestyle that reinforces the importance of adventure in outdoor education (King, 2007).

The valuing of adventure in society, provision of adventure opportunities by educational institutions, a conducive landscape and the growth of adventure tourism have reinforced the dominant position of adventure. In addition, adventure based groups such as Project Adventure provide localised impetus. Organisations like Skills Active and the NZ Outdoor Instructors Association (NZOIA) have successfully strategised to maximise the adventure position to perpetuate the mechanisms of cultural replication. The language of adventure advertises its legitimacy. For instance the metaphor of hard and soft skills to represent a leader's technical and interpersonal competencies is narrow and restricting; it reduces to a dichotomy what should be a repertoire of practice (Seaman & Coppins, 2006).

In leisure time, youth are engaging in adventure activities owned by youth subcultures e.g. snowboarding. The activities are epitomised in the activities of extreme sport and valorised by the global media. Risk engagement and dramatic action are fundamental with individuals competing against environmental obstacles and challenges, with the main goal being the completion of exceptional tasks (Booth & Thorpe, 2007). Extreme sports draw on existing outdoor pursuits sometimes with innovative variations. The media plays a pivotal role with images of participation being displayed on YouTube by individuals at a local level and on the global medial with large spectator numbers at a macro level. There is a high degree of dependency on technology, paraphernalia and consumption feeding the neoliberal thirst for consumerism. The pressure is to turn outdoor education into an entertainment (Loynes, 1995). The outdoors is in fashion; look at the prevalence of outdoor clothing, images and equipment in popular culture. The outdoor environment

is mis-used as our distinctive places such as mountains, beaches and cultural icons are seen as places viewed and promoted from a mechanistic, economic perspective. Extreme sports are projections of individualism with personal choice, autonomy and self responsibility being valued by neoliberalism. The focus on skill learning and personal development in outdoor programmes is consistent with this approach.

## Outdoors-as-learning

The main competitor for the definition of the field is outdoor learning. One fundamentally important feature of outdoor learning is that it is an excellent learning mechanism (see Rickinson, et al., 2004). The theory and practice of experiential education provides a supportive learning paradigm. A survey of NZ schools found that about half of outdoor learning is based on the curriculum areas other than HPE. At primary school level; science, environmental education and social studies were prevalent and at secondary school geography and science were strong (Boyes & Zink, 2005).

With all curriculum areas included in EOTC it has been noted in a Ministry of Education report that outdoor education has come to refer to adventure education and outdoor pursuits (Haddock, 2007, p.4). This the first official recognition that adventure has gained the symbolic capital to gain state recognition and appropriate the term. Regardless, the Ministry still see outdoor education as being the HPE part of EOTC. In terms of the contestation for the legitimate form, once outdoor education was defined in the Health and Physical Education syllabus as adventure, the term was increasingly left to the HPE area. Other areas of the curriculum either describe what they do as EOTC or in many cases like geography and science, describe their practice as field trips.

It is interesting to see how the struggle has panned out in other countries. Scotland has appropriated the words outdoor learning to describe their outdoor curriculum where: “the outdoor classroom is the setting, outdoor education is a process in which educators, students and others take part and outdoor learning is the learning that accrues as a result.” (Outdoor Connections Advisory Group, 2007, p.5). They comment that outdoor learning is not an end in itself but embedded in the curriculum. They also downplay adventure: “to

stress the considerable benefits of outdoor learning as opposed to the disproportionate emphasis on risk.” (ibid p.1)

## **The challenge of environmental sustainability**

So what can provide challenges to the two main fields? What has the potential to change practice and the definition of what we do? I examine these questions by exploring the transformative potential of environmental sustainability. I look at the underlying reasons why change should occur and how these calls are being integrated into policy documents. Then I examine how outdoor educators have responded to the call by re-envisioning outdoor education. These notions are further developed by concepts of slow pedagogy and place based learning. I explore the concept that environmental decisions are moral decisions and expand on the possibilities of Māori philosophies providing the basis for a uniquely NZ environmental ethic.

David Orr notes that many things upon which our future and prosperity depend are in dire jeopardy: “climate stability, the resilience and productivity of natural systems, the beauty of the natural world and biological diversity” (Orr, 2004, p.7). We could add into that mix social responsibility and meaningful learning (Higgins, 2009). These key questions underpin the education for sustainability curriculum discussed earlier. Ecological sustainability now appears consistently in the latest curriculum documents of NZ, Australia, UK and Scotland. In NZ it is a core value to be strived for in all curriculum areas (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p.10) and in the Scottish document is a key facet of developing responsible citizens (Outdoor Connections Advisory Group, 2007, p.9).

Many questions are being asked of the role outdoor education can play. After all, this is the very subject/methodology that has people learning in natural environments. But what they are learning may well be the perpetuation of unsustainability (Bluhdorn, 2009). Outdoor education academics for a long time have been calling for a strengthening of environmental sustainability or the adoption of it as a primary purpose ( see examples in Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. xix). At the same time the adventure juggernaut and its anthropocentric environmental perspectives, unsustainable practices and championing of individualism and consumption has been gathering steam. While the murmurings of academics has now risen

to a clamour I believe we are observing a lag effect and not seeing the calls echoing on the rocks and in the river. But practitioners are amenable to change (see Hill, 2010). Some extreme sports athletes now acknowledge the relationships they form with their natural environments (Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009). The outdoors-as-learning field has the potential and infrastructure to embrace a multidisciplinary, many faceted pedagogy. Outdoors-as-adventure will be a harder nut to crack but a gradual greening of practice is already observable. Whether field transformation occurs is another question.

There is increasing interest in place-based learning where “people develop and experience a sense of attachment to particular locations” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. xxi). Place immersion enables opportunities to build quality connections and deep engagement with local environments. Wattchow and Brown argue that these connections enable personal socio-ecological relationships that are much more likely to make meaning of sustainability and eco-justice. In support, Preston (2004) outlines the benefits of moving to local, specific and contextual forms of education. Baker similarly argues: “students must discover an engagement with the land that extends... to include a personal approach of relating to the land.” (Baker, 2007, p.249). An engagement in local places overcomes the anthropocentric separateness of wilderness as a place we visit but don’t dwell in and take responsibility for. Slow pedagogy supports place approaches with immersion, slow time and different notions of experience and learning (Payne & Wattchow, 2008). If these notions are embraced, some educators may radically restructure programmes while others fine-tune them. Hence fields are redefined or transformed.

There are good grounds to argue there are relevant eco-centric messages in the Māori worldview. Concepts such as: (1) mauri where all things are considered to have a life force or essence; (2) the consideration that all living things are interrelated and therefore our cousins and our ancestors; and (3) tūrangawaewae, a place to stand where a person feels especially empowered and connected, leading to status in a place (mana-whenua). Blundell (2006) documents how mana-whenua promotes kaitiakitanga (guardianship), the mantle of responsibility to promote the care and protection of waters, coasts, flora and fauna, forests, mountains, the earth and the sky. Māori perspectives are gaining credence and are increasingly influential.

Some understandings are enshrined in statute. In a broader sense, Māori philosophy, local knowledge and ecological practices could provide a basis for environmental ideals that challenge consumerism and empower eco-justice. Thinking about nature and living things as members of our families promotes a particular way of embracing the outdoors and links well to place-based approaches.

Hakim (2011) argues that environmental relationships are moral decisions and we have a commitment to nature that demands our respect, love and care. If a field has a moral code and expectation as part of its symbolic capital, it is not only a reflection of the field but also forms a powerful expectation of habitus, behaviour and collective action. Pedagogical practice is likewise influenced.

The symbolic capital of outdoor education provides a window into its soul. There has been a long history of contestation with adherents of the various positions vying for the legitimation of their perspectives. Mostly this has become a struggle between outdoors-as-adventure and outdoors-as-learning where once close bedfellows became uneasy in their relationship. Policy makers saw fit to legitimate both areas through the auspices of EOTC across the curriculum and outdoor education in the HPE syllabus. But both are competing for the same stakes. In addition, environmental philosophies have found their place in the sun and represent a powerful force of gathering momentum that the others cannot disregard. Just how they embrace or otherwise these imperatives will be fascinating. Bourdieu's theory of practice has been useful to elucidate the histories, stakes, struggles and players in outdoor education. In so doing we glimpse the power relationships and social dynamics of the field.

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## 3

## Introducing a critical socio-ecological approach for educating outdoors

By Allen Hill

### Introduction

Outdoor education has a rich history in Aotearoa New Zealand which has been influenced by multiple discourses and sets of ideas, as detailed in the previous chapter. However, in the last decade dominant traditions which have underpinned outdoor education pedagogy, both locally and internationally, have undergone increased critical scrutiny. In many ways this scrutiny has placed outdoor education theory and practice in a contested space, where there is no longer a single way of engaging students in outdoor environments or a specific package of content, knowledge and skills. This contestation and scrutiny leaves outdoor education pedagogy in need of a new re-envisioned theoretical foundation; a framework which recognises and embraces diverse approaches to education and meets the changing needs of individuals, communities, societies, ecosystems, and environments in the twenty-first century. A critical socio-ecological approach provides a theoretical framework which can meet those needs through articulating a broader, richer, and transformative vision for outdoor education.

This chapter outlines the basis for a critical socio-ecological approach and makes some brief generalised suggestions as to how such a framework might apply to outdoor education thinking and practice. It does not provide a recipe or 'how to' manual for a new or alternative approach to outdoor education. How a socio-ecological approach is applied to diverse educational settings is both a contextual and personalised process. Essentially it will look different in different places, but may share similar values, principles, or pedagogies. Some of the diverse ways that socio-ecological approaches have been applied in outdoor learning contexts are discussed in the following chapters of this book. This chapter will be structured in the following way: First, it will outline what theoretical frameworks are and how they can be of use to educators. Second, it will detail the various aspects of a critical socio-ecological approach with emphasis on its sociological, ecological roots. Third, it summarises the variety of theories that are both essential and relevant to a socio-ecological

framework. Fourth, it draws links between outdoor education and a socio-ecological approach.

## **The Scope and Potential of Theoretical Frameworks**

Derived from the Greek word *theoria*, meaning ‘looking at, viewing, beholding’, theories provide ways for us to understand and explain particular phenomena, events, processes, issues, or actions. Creswell (2003) suggests that theories offer broad explanations which help to guide study and provide a lens by which researchers and practitioners can examine phenomena. There are numerous theories across all fields of study, from the physical sciences to social science, from the arts to education, from engineering to health care. In education alone there exists a plethora of theories which often waft in and out of fashion; we all remember Piaget, Vygotsky, constructivist theory, critical pedagogy, and multiple intelligence theory, just to name a few. This chapter attempts to avoid the temporary nature of theoretical fads and present an approach or perspective which is enduring and relevant, yet flexible enough to not fall into the trap of being a one-size-fits-all solution to education’s or indeed the world’s ills.

The use of theory is often placed in a binary relationship with practice, resulting in common sayings such as, “that’s all very well in theory”. Disjunctures between theory and practice are hardly surprising given the socio-cultural and historical contexts that often separate academic institutions and their more practitioner focused counterparts. Payne (2002) comments that a rhetoric – reality (theory – practice) gap had developed in outdoor and environmental education through theory progressing more quickly than practice. A decade ago Payne suggested that many of the activities used in outdoor education had not received critical scrutiny as to their social and ecological appropriateness. This may still be the case in Aotearoa New Zealand where the ideas and writing of critical and innovative outdoor education thinkers and practitioners are taking some time to filter into practice. Furthermore, it can be argued that outdoor education, both locally and internationally, is in need of reconceptualised learning theory (Brown, 2009) and requires a “sustained and defensible set of values and practices” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.28).

Notwithstanding the theory – practice gaps that already exist within outdoor education, I suggest that binary thinking, which separates theory and practice and places them in opposing positions, can be unhelpful and problematic. A more contemporary, and possibly more beneficial, way of viewing theory and practice places them in a dialectical relationship; that is, theory informs practice and practice informs theory. This two-way vision for theory and practice is what underpins the intent of this chapter. Drawing on a number of different theoretical perspectives this chapter presents a framework which both informs thinking and practice and helps us to critically examine our current outdoor education pedagogy. This socio-ecological approach is connected to the central features of current outdoor education discourse; namely the relationships people have with themselves, others, and their environments.

## The Foundations of a Socio-Ecological Approach

A socio-ecological framework is primarily concerned with relationships between people, communities, wider society, and the environments in which they live. It is rooted in the disciplines and principles of sociology; that is, the study of human relationships, communities, institutions, and power structures that exist within these; and ecology, the study of relationships that living organisms

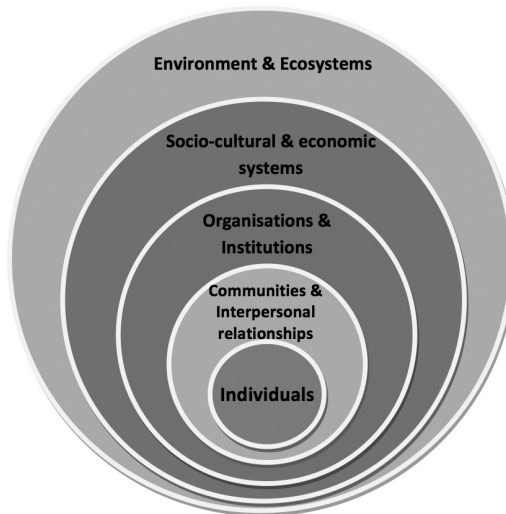


Figure 3.1: A socio-ecological model

have with respect to each other and the environments that they inhabit. These sociological and ecological foundations reinforce the notion that all species on the planet are intricately and intimately connected as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

The above model draws one's attention beyond that which is immediately obvious. It demands a broader view of the world in which we live and the educational contexts in which we work. The connections between ourselves, our students, the communities, societies, places, and environments in which we reside become far more important and prominent. The consequences of all action and inaction, both constructive and destructive, are illuminated beyond the immediate sphere of those actions. Often those consequences move beyond our taken-for-granted or everyday ways of viewing the world. For example,

When considering purchasing a new pair of running shoes most people will consider price, fit and comfort, appropriateness for the task, and maybe even brand. Most of these factors sit with an individual's immediate sphere. A critical socio-ecological perspective when buying running shoes might consider the communities and environments in which those shoes were produced. Were the workers paid a fair wage? Were the manufacturing waste products disposed of appropriately? Was the shoe company making exorbitant profit through exploiting the local communities?

A socio-ecological perspective also draws together the traditional concerns of social movements such as gender, race and class, with ecological and environmental concerns. This weaving together is summarised eloquently by Bowers (2001a),

Any definition of social justice that does not take account of how human demands on the natural environment are affecting the lives of future generations is fundamentally flawed. Indeed it seems incomprehensible to write about social justice for women, minorities and the economic underclass without considering ways in which the Earth's ecosystems are being rapidly degraded. (p.3)

The above statement captures the different aspects that make up a critical socio-ecological perspective. These spheres of both social justice and ecological concerns can be viewed through a variety of specific theories. The following section discusses in more detail how three central theories contribute to the foundation of a critical socio-ecological perspective in education; those of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and strong sustainability.

### **Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy**

Critical theory had its origins in the Weimar republic of Germany in the 1920s and 30s, led by Frankfurt School academics, of whom the most well-known were Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno (see Rush, 2004). Influenced by Marxist perspective, critical theory was originally conceived as an interdisciplinary and diverse approach with a focus on the critique of political economy and capitalism. This resulted in an agenda to emancipate individuals from the “fetters of consumer capitalism to help make possible a free, more democratic and human, culture and society” (Kellner, 2003, p.53). Inherent in this agenda was the interrogation of domination, exploitation, and power within social systems and institutions, with a particular emphasis on inequalities and injustice related to gender, class, and ethnicity. Moreover, critical theory is concerned with addressing these social conditions through advocating for action and transformative change. It is important to acknowledge that there now exists no one singular critical theory, rather there are multiple critical theories which approach issues of injustice, inequality, and power in different ways. It is also important to acknowledge that the ability of critical theories to bring about social change is constantly under threat from political power structures which perpetuate inequality. Thus, it is often the case that critical theories become strong on critique yet weak at effecting change, thus contributing to a rhetoric-reality gap (Payne, 2002).

Critical pedagogy can be considered the educational application of critical theory. As with critical theory, there are multiple critical pedagogies rather than one recipe for adopting critical approaches to education. There are however, some central characteristics which help us to understand critical pedagogy. Kincheloe (2008) suggests critical pedagogies are built on the understanding that education is inherently political and focused on the alleviation of human suffering

through taking action towards social and educational justice and equality. This vision for education is supported by Biesta (1998), who states, “critical pedagogies are in one way or another committed to the imperative of transforming the larger social order in the interests of justice, equality, democracy and human freedom” (p.499). One of the most widely acknowledged and influential thinkers and writers in the critical pedagogy field was Paulo Freire. The central feature of Freire’s work was his commitment to a just society and concern for the relationship between education, oppression (particularly class-based oppression), and liberation (Roberts, 2003; Rozas, 2007). The concept of liberation took form in the actions of people, engaged and working together in socially dynamic ways, to overcome oppression in their particular context (Kincheloe, 2008). Underpinning the struggle for liberation and the fight against oppression, Freire (1972, p.21) always maintained a critical hope in that humans could succeed in becoming more fully human and restoring the humanity of both the oppressed and oppressors. Central to this pedagogy of liberation was the concept of “conscientização” (conscientization), or the development of a critical consciousness. For Freire, conscientization involved two key aspects: first, recognising the social, cultural, political, and economic forces that contribute to oppression and; second, to take action against them. This concept is discussed further in Chapter 7 by Maureen Legge.

Critical theories and pedagogies apply directly to socio-ecological approaches to education in a way which prompts teachers and educators to critically evaluate their educational endeavours through criteria of justice and equality. Within many outdoor education programmes and practices, environmental care principles such as Leave No Trace, are often promoted and practiced due to the nature and location of the learning experiences and personal empathy with the environment from outdoor educators themselves. Whilst these actions are admirable and desirable, there can be a resulting silence on social justice issues within outdoor education discourses and a reluctance to deeply wrestle with issues of sustainability (Hill, 2011). Furthermore, Māori have often been a silent voice within dominant outdoor education discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand, as will be further addressed and discussed by Maureen Legge and Howard Reti in Chapter 7 and Dave Irwin in Chapter 8. Consequently, the recognition of critical theories and pedagogies within a socio-ecological framework reminds us of the importance of striving

towards equality and justice in all aspects of social and educational relationships.

## Sustainability Theory

There are many theoretical perspectives which expand critical outlooks into ecological and/or environmental spheres, including: deep ecology, eco-justice, eco-feminism, eco-psychology, eco-socialism, and place-based approaches, just to name a few. For the purposes of this book, I believe the theory of strong sustainability is most appropriate to provide an ecological, environmental, and economic understanding alongside socio-cultural concerns. Concepts of sustainability are neither new nor universally agreed upon. Perhaps the most commonly understood definition for sustainable development was published in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which defined sustainability as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p.8). Despite sustainable development gaining widespread support across a range of governments<sup>1</sup>, it remains a concept which is undermined by multiple interpretations, subject to political power struggles, and often characterised by ineffective or inadequate action. Rathzel and Uzzell (2009) suggest that over the last decade there have been more than 300 definitions used for sustainability and sustainable development resulting in these terms becoming “highly contested concepts which have come to mean whatever we want them to mean” (p.263). Aotearoa New Zealand sustainability educator and academic David Chapman (2003) concurs with this view, proposing that sustainable development now has so many interpretations it is unable to address the reality of unsustainable societal thinking and behaviour. He critiques the language of sustainable development and sustainable growth suggesting terms such as growth and development are at the root cause of environmental degradation. It is issues such as those identified by Chapman which sees Western nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand firmly locked into a *politics of unsustainability* (Blühdorn, 2007, 2011).

<sup>1</sup> A majority of countries signed the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Agenda 21 at the Rio summit in 1992.

According to Blühdorn (2011) the *politics of unsustainability* can be defined by the “effort to secure and defend social practices and socioeconomic structures that are well known to be unsustainable” (p.36), and by *ecological paradox*; that is, “the curious simultaneity of an unprecedented recognition of the urgency of radical ecological policy change, on the one hand, and an equally unprecedented unwillingness and inability to perform such change, on the other” (p.36). A good example of *ecological paradox* was evident at the 2009 COP 15 climate change conference in Copenhagen. Despite overwhelming and unequivocal scientific consensus that urgent and radical action was needed to combat and address global climate change, the world’s nations could not agree on any meaningful action. As a result of the politics of *unsustainability* the most common interpretation of sustainability in modern Western nations has been that of sustained competitiveness and economic growth, leading to sustainability being institutionalised in its weakest possible form. This form, akin to the *Mickey Mouse* model of sustainability (SANZ, 2009), shown below, is impotent in its ability to oppose and break down the traditional models of economic development and consumerist society which are at the root of ecological and social issues.

#### Alternative Models of Sustainability (SANZ, 2009)

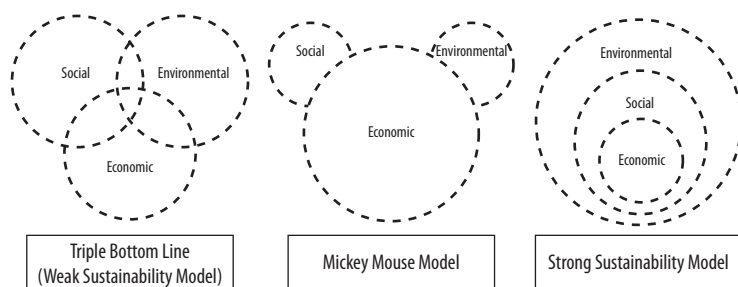


Figure 3.2: Alternative models of sustainability

Three models of sustainability are shown above. The strong sustainability model influences and parallels the socio-ecological model detailed earlier in this chapter. It is fundamentally based in an understanding that all spheres of human life are firmly nested within a broader ecological biosphere. Through this model, Sustainability Aotearoa New Zealand (SANZ, 2009) build the argument that strong sustainability is the only viable paradigm for Aotearoa New Zealand

and its citizens to move towards a sustainable future. They suggest that in the long term, doing some good or doing less bad, through paradigms such as weak sustainability is insufficient to bring about the degree of social and economic change required. As a consequence SANZ (2009, p.12) propose a very different set of societal ethics and values which are worth quoting at length. Strong sustainability involves:

1. Placing great importance on non-material sources of happiness.
2. Removing the perceived linkage between economic growth, material possessions, and success.
3. Affirming the deep interdependence of all people. The associated community values include robust sense of mutual respect, fairness, cooperation, gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, humility, courage, mutual aid, charity, confidence, trust, courtesy, integrity, loyalty, and respectful use of resources.
4. Affirming the values of local community, with associated benefits of reduced environmental footprints and increased cooperation between people.
5. Valuing nature intrinsically through knowing that human society and its political economy are integral components of nature and the biosphere. Humans have reverence for nature and know they are responsible for their impact on the integrity of all ecosystems in the biosphere.

These five principles represent a radical and transformative politics of social change with significant implications for socio-ecological approaches to outdoor education. They intersect at a nexus of theory and practice to guide both our understanding of a critical socio-ecological perspective and our quest for a pedagogy which aspires to educate for a sustainable future. It would be naive not to recognise how these principles are constrained within a broader politics of unsustainability which influences multiple levels of the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand, from the ideology of Central Government and Ministerial policy through to vision, values, and pedagogies of individual schools. In light of this broader political terrain it may be tempting to dismiss our attempts to employ pedagogies which seek to be both critical and sustainable. Whilst there can be no denying the imperative for change at policy

and institutional level, tangible examples of ‘grass roots’ social, pedagogical, and curriculum change, such as those provided in this book, are critically important.

Critical theory, critical pedagogy, and strong sustainability as outlined in this section provide a sound theoretical foundation for the socio-ecological perspectives in this book. As identified earlier, they are by no means, the exclusive theoretical influences that can be drawn on within a socio-ecological framework. In Chapter 6 of this book, Mike Brown draws on place-based theories to provide both practical and theoretical guidance to a place-responsive pedagogy. His ideas and examples of practice fit neatly within a broader socio-ecological framework. Furthermore, Brown’s work encompasses two of the key aspects of socio-ecological approaches detailed in this section; first, socio-ecological perspectives are inherently critical, and second, socio-ecological approaches are action oriented. It is to these two key notions that this chapter now turns.

## **Criticality of a Socio-Ecological Approach**

A socio-ecological framework or perspective is inherently critical. It provides an impetus and lens through which we are able to critically examine existing patterns of relationship between humans, communities, societies and their places or environments. In this context, criticality refers to the ability to think or reflect in ways that analyse and critique the taken-for-granted assumptions that are associated with every aspect of our lives. Criticality is different from criticism. It is not about being negative or being a ‘naysayer’. When applied into a particular context, for instance education, criticality can help us to transform existing ways of thinking and practicing to help produce better outcomes for students, communities, and the places in which they live. Criticality should also be at work at a micro or personal level, influencing the everyday decisions and actions of ourselves and our students. As discussed in the previous section, the profound work of Paulo Freire personalises the struggle for justice, equality, and sustainability in education, through promoting the development of a critical consciousness. It is through a critical consciousness that we are able to uncover and expose aspects of our relationships with people, communities, and places which are inherently unjust and unsustainable. Furthermore a critical consciousness spurs us towards action to put right the wrongs we might encounter.

As educators, criticality also impacts at a philosophical level. It calls into question the very foundations of our pedagogy and our beliefs about the purpose and value of education and the criteria by which we judge education's success. In his book *Earth in Mind*, David Orr (2004) challenges the assumption that all education is inherently good, stating.

The conventional wisdom holds that all education is good and the more of it one has, the better. . . . The truth is that without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth. (p.5)

Orr (2004) further suggests that many of the things upon which human survival rests, such as stable climate, productivity of natural systems, and biodiversity, have been degraded largely as a result of work by educated people. These observations place education within a broader socio-ecological context and compel an engagement with wider social, ecological, and sustainability issues. Furthermore, Orr subjects education to philosophical scrutiny by asking the pertinent question; what is education for? This impels educators to critically reflect on the purpose of their endeavours. Given the socio-ecological context outlined in the introduction to this book, Orr (2004, p.8) suggests that the success of education can no longer be measured against capitalist market values but “must now be measured against the standards of decency and human survival”. It is important to acknowledge that education has many important roles in our society, and outdoor education may only be one small field or pedagogical approach within that. Nevertheless, I believe a re-evaluation of the success and purpose of outdoor education against the standards suggested by Orr, has now become too important to overlook.

Stephen Sterling (2001) in his book *Sustainable Education: Re-visioning Learning and Change*, suggests that current Western education systems are fulfilling socialisation, vocational, and liberal functions. These functions serve to replicate society and culture, train people for employment, and develop individuals' potential. Moreover, these functions of education have been manipulated by neoliberal influences in the past two decades to better serve the global market place (Apple, 2009; Codd, 2005; McLaren, 1998). As a result, transformative functions which encourage change towards a more equal society and more sustainable world have largely been

marginalised. If the answer to the question, ‘what is education for?’ is answered only by socialisation, vocational and liberal functions, then our education system may fail both our current students and future generations. It is preparing them only for the world which we know, one of social disparity and ecological degradation. Consequently, Sterling advocates for a transformative basis to education which equips students for a sustainable future. Shifting outdoor education towards a transformative philosophy which is underpinned by a socio-ecological perspective lies at the heart of this book.

The development of a criticality within outdoor education becomes marginalised if it is left at level of critique only. As discussed earlier in this chapter, socio-ecological approaches are both critical and action focused. It is therefore appropriate to turn our attention to what taking action may mean for outdoor education practice and theory.

## **A Politics of Action in a Socio-Ecological Approach**

In order for transformative change to occur people need to take action in addition to critically examining the social and ecological conditions they live in. Throughout history there are examples of individual and groups at all levels of society taking action to bring about change. From Mahatma Gandhi, whose peaceful action led to the end of colonial rule in India, through to the people of East Berlin who effectively tore down the Berlin wall through a ‘peaceful revolution’ in 1989/90; these stories inspire hope of what can be achieved through taking action. As educators who are seeking to adopt a socio-ecological approach we too need to take action, alongside our colleagues and students, to contribute to a better, more just and sustainable world. How we might go about taking action and how this action is influenced by power and politics within our local social and educational communities is this focus of this section.

A socio-ecological perspective helps us to understand how actions are situated within and influenced by political forces. When referring to ‘politics’ in this way, our understanding needs to move beyond what might happen in local or central governments or political parties. Politics in a broader sense is concerned with the way that power and influence operate through all aspects of social life. Relations of power (politics) exist at multiple levels (Apple, 1995); from *macro* (central and local government), to *meso* (institutional and organisational),

to *micro* (individuals and social groups). It is therefore important to acknowledge that education is an inherently political process (Kincheloe, 1993). Questions of power arise in all aspects of schooling and to claim that teaching is a politically neutral endeavour is both naive and misplaced. As Kincheloe points out “on a daily basis teachers choose to include some forms of knowledge while excluding others from the curriculum, they legitimate particular beliefs while delegitimizing others” (p.39). These processes are not always defined by the conscious decisions of teachers. It is perhaps in a more subtle and pervasive way that the power of dominant ways of thinking and acting infiltrate the educational process.

Lukes (1974) provides a useful way of looking at how power might operate in social and educational contexts. He proposes three dimensions through which power can be viewed. The first dimension is focuses on power in decision making and how this influences people’s behaviour. The second dimension focuses on institutional and informal agendas which affect decision making. This dimension recognises how people can be influenced, persuaded, coerced, or induced into particular actions or decisions. The third dimension focuses on the broader socio-political values, norms, and ideologies which underpin the very fabric of our social relations. These three dimensions of power have implications for how we might take action towards a more sustainable and just world. At a personal level we need to recognise how our decisions to act or not to act are both constrained and enabled by power structures within our own social spheres and educational institutions. At a broader level we need to be aware of the way that dominant patterns of thinking and cultural assumptions influence our decisions and actions (Bowers, 2001b). An example of this would be the way that a focus on economic growth dominates our current political landscape to the extent that it pushes ideas of sustainability to the margins. Here links can be drawn to the *politics of unsustainability* (Blühdorn, 2011) discussed in the previous section.

What then does this mean for an action oriented socio-ecological approach? At this juncture I would like to highlight four key points.

- First, taking action is a key part of bringing about change. No amount of critique or critical reflection, on its own can result in tangible progress towards a more sustainable future.

- Second, in order to take action we must be aware of the issues, structures, and patterns of thinking and doing, which we ought to take action for or against. In order to do this, we must have some kind of measuring stick or guidance by which we can make those decisions. A critical socio-ecological perspective provides direction about our relationships with both human and non-human nature based on principles of equity, justice, sustainability, and systems thinking. Furthermore, a socio-ecological perspective provides a normative framework by which judgements can be made as to what is more or less just, equitable, sustainable, or desirable.
- Third, teachers and students need to learn how to take effective action and have the opportunity to develop action competence. Environmental educators, Jensen and Schnack (1997), suggest that developing action competence in students to address environmental and social issues is a key part educating for a sustainable future. I would argue that the development of action competence in outdoor education needs to include teachers, instructors, and outdoor centres in addition to students. Action competence refers to “the capacity to be able to act, now and in the future, and to be responsible for ones actions” (Jensen & Schnack, 1997, p.176). Eames, Barker, Wilson-Hill, & Law (2010, p. appendix f) have conceptualised action competence in an Aotearoa New Zealand context as a “broad range of competencies to guide appropriate action, and the ability, attitudes and values, willingness and opportunity to act . . . to achieve better outcomes for the environment and sustainability”. In their Action Competence Framework, Eames, et al. identify six key components of action competence. These include: experience, reflection, knowledge, vision for a sustainable future, action taking, and connectedness. Outdoor learning experiences have the potential to provide appropriate and significant opportunities to develop these six key components of action competence. Practical examples of developing action competence will be explored in later chapters, particularly Chapter 8 by Dave Irwin.
- Finally, all action takes place within broader political contexts and is subject to multiple layers of power relationships. As educators we must recognise how power can both constrain

and enable action towards a sustainable future. With this in mind we must operate in politically savvy ways, identifying which battles are worth fighting and which to leave for another day. We must also recognise that most change takes place gradually and incrementally. Whilst we may feel like we are permanently locked into a politics of unsustainability, it is important to remember that every action that makes a small difference may well be contributing to a larger, more radical, revolution. Examples of these types of initiatives are discussed in following chapters, particularly Chapter 4 by Marg Cosgriff, Liz Thevenard, and Margie Campbell-Price.

## Concluding Comments

This chapter has covered a range of theoretical ground in its attempt to map out a socio-ecological approach which might help us to meet the changing and diverse needs of 21st century outdoor education. It is important to recognise here that we have only dipped our little toe into the ocean of philosophical and theoretical material which relates to socio-ecological approaches. What is important to consider, however, is how this socio-ecological approach might inform our practice. I believe that in the current ecological, social, and economic times we now face, the educational goal posts which define the success of our teaching and learning have well and truly shifted. It is no longer acceptable or desirable to focus on educational outcomes which reinforce and replicate the status quo when that status quo leads to increasing levels of ecological degradation, environmental issues, and social inequality and injustice. This has implications for outdoor education theory and practice.

As Mike Boyes discussed in the previous chapter, traditional adventure pursuit focused notions of outdoor education are currently being subjected to critical scrutiny. Consequently, there have been increasing calls for incorporation of sustainability, socio-ecological, and place-responsive approaches into outdoor education thinking and practice (see Brown, 2006; Gough, 2007; Hill, 2010; Irwin, 2008, 2010; Loynes, 2002; Lugg, 2007; Martin, 1999; Maxted, 2006; Nicol, 2003; Thomas, 2005; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). This shift, according to Payne & Wattchow (2008, p.36) does not mean that “we dismiss the pedagogic potential of outdoor journeys that rely upon particular outdoor activities and technologies”. However, I believe the

adoption of a criticality in outdoor education compels us to question the educational value of our outdoor learning experiences through asking, what is outdoor education for? Informed by a socio-ecological perspective the answer to this question must rest, at least in part, in transformative educational objectives which contribute towards a sustainable future. Whilst I recognise that liberal functions in outdoor education, such as personal and social development have merit, these outcomes “must now be measured against the standards of decency and human survival<sup>2</sup>” (Orr, 2004, p.8).

As you work your way through the remaining chapters of this book, you will see various aspects of socio-ecological approaches being employed in a variety of ways. It is important to note that there is no recipe or magic answer to the application of socio-ecological perspectives in outdoor education. It will inevitably look different in different educational contexts. The following chapters provide tangible examples of the interwoven nature of theory and practice, and how these threads might apply to a new vision for outdoor education in 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand.

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<sup>2</sup> When Orr (2004) talks about standards of human decency and human survival he is referring to these in the context of sustainable and just ways of living which don't put at jeopardy the ecosystems by which human survival depends.

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## School curriculum and outdoor education

### Part 1: Early childhood and primary school

By Marg Cosgriff & Liz Thevenard

#### Introduction for full chapter

This chapter explores broad possibilities for learning outdoors in formal education contexts.

In part one we set the scene for the chapter by examining contemporary curricula in the early childhood and school sectors. National curriculum documents are introduced to look at the vision and ‘big picture’ direction they suggest for outdoor education practice. Attention then turns to consider outdoor education initiatives in early childhood settings, with examples drawn from programmes to illustrate the unique and practical ways in which they ‘walk the talk’ of student-centred, bicultural, holistic, and sustainable approaches. The discussion moves to consider the opportunities the primary school context affords for outdoor education that deliberately focuses on students’ relationships with the outdoor places they inhabit. Examples such as the well established Enviro-Schools programme and integrated units of learning are outlined to illustrate what we consider to be the heart of this forward looking outdoor education.

In part two, the focus moves to outdoor education in the secondary school. While the distinctiveness of the secondary setting with its associated compartmentalised, subject-focused curriculum is initially acknowledged, the focus broadens to consider a range of factors or enablers of innovative outdoor education practice. As with part one, examples of ‘real’ curricula, co-curricula, and extra-curricula programmes are featured. These examples provide powerful guides for outdoor educators seeking to rethink, refine and reshape their students’ outdoor learning experiences in ways that enable them to enjoy, understand, and act for the environments in which they live and move. In sum, this chapter explores a vision of a more sustainable outdoor education future.

## Setting the scene: Outdoor education in school settings

### *Snapshot one*

Kaitiakitanga is looking after places, things and people. We have observed our children gain a sense of pride and respect for our kindergarten environment. We believe that when children have the opportunity to engage and care for the natural environment they will gain the skills, knowledge and desire to care for it in the future. The environment is the third teacher. There is a learning opportunity in every space. We have gardens that are sensory, edible, native and flowering. We have composting and recycling systems, including water conservation and eco-systems. Children are having a shared responsibility to look after our place and this is valued as real work, so everything that we do in the kindergarten here is included with the children.

(Carolyn O'Connor, teacher at Papamoa kindergarten in Ritchie, 2010b, p.13)

Outdoor education in early childhood settings and schools in Aotearoa New Zealand has a long and rich tradition (see Lynch, 2006 for the history in schools). It remains a key component of school life (Haddock, 2007; Zink & Boyes, 2005/06, 2007), with a wide variety of outdoor education experiences currently offered in centres and schools nationwide. These school-based experiences are the focus of this chapter.

Many authors in this book suggest that conceptualisations of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand have been, and continue to be contested. Given this, it is timely to note that in this chapter we embrace a broad definition of outdoor education. This means that we view outdoor education in a multidisciplinary and holistic way as any curriculum-based learning in, for, and about the outdoors. Such a conceptualisation includes, but is not limited to, outdoor education experiences as described in health and physical education curricula (Ministry of Education (MoE), 1999, 2007). Adopting this multidisciplinary definition of outdoor education gives a clear signal about the prominence we give to approaches that connect rather than compartmentalise school subjects, and that respond to contemporary societal and global concerns about the environmental issues and pressures identified in the opening chapter. We also aim

to demonstrate that there is much to celebrate about present practice and to build from as we look to the future. To this end, snapshots of contemporary outdoor education initiatives and approaches that explicitly educate for a more sustainable future are scattered throughout. We hope that these glimpses of programmes in-situ inspire you and prompt you to ponder the questions: What are the common threads in the stories shared? And in turn, what possibilities or insights are opened up for my outdoor education practice?

## **What framework do curricula provide for contemporary outdoor education?**

### *Snapshot two*

A makeover at Omata School in Taranaki now sees a self-sustaining bush trail that is managed and well used by students....Each class looked at what was needed to make a long-term difference. Along the way they found out that real scientists often change their minds. Bridgit Barleyman's Year 2 and 3 class discovered they could build ponga seedling beds alongside the tracks to gather leaf litter and help tiny plants grow. They mapped out their beds and pairs of children made each one. 'I thought we could put the beds on the hilly bits,' said Katie, 'but I wouldn't do that now. They would get washed away.'

'My class established that trees were actually alive' said Year 1 and 2 teacher Julie Herbert. 'A lot of children hadn't realised that because they couldn't see them moving'... 'The five year olds will see their trees grow,' said Karen, 'so they'll want to take care of them while they're here. Some parents have shown the children the trees they planted in the 1980's. They're still pretty proud of their trees.' (Tapp, 2008, pp. 8-9)

Official national curriculum for early childhood centres and schools (MoE, 1996, 2007, 2008) arguably provide a strong conceptual platform for outdoor education that explicitly educates for a more sustainable and equitable future. This part of the chapter briefly introduces these curriculum documents, and in doing so, provides a foundation for the discussions about school-based practice that follow.

*Te Whāriki He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa* (MoE, 1996) is the official early childhood curriculum for Aotearoa New Zealand and its first bicultural curriculum. *Te Whāriki*<sup>1</sup> is based on the concept of a whāriki (mat), weaving together four principles (Empowerment -Whakamana, Holistic Development-Kotahitanga, Family and Community-Whānau Tangata, and Relationships-Ngā Hononga) and five strands (Well-being-Mana Atua, Belonging- Mana Whenua, Contribution- Mana Tangata, Communication-Mana Reo, and Exploration-Mana Aotūroa ). Embracing a definition of curriculum as “the sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (p.10), *Te Whāriki* also emphasises how learning is socially and culturally mediated. As a result, “reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things” (MoE, 1996, p.9) are highlighted. Professional commentary has consistently noted that *Te Whāriki* integrates rather than separates traditional subjects (e.g. Mutch, 2003), is non prescriptive, clearly communicates a “profound acknowledgment of the importance of culture” (Te One, 2003, p.42)<sup>2</sup>, and positions children as active participants in their own learning (e.g. MacArthur, Purdue & Ballard, 2003; Nuttall, 2003).

Despite being published fifteen years ago, we consider that *Te Whāriki* identifies a range of relevant prompts for a future-focused outdoor education. Looking more closely at the principles, strands, and goals for example reveals a view of learning as being relational, integrated, and holistic. The pedagogical potential of this for outdoor education is alluded to by Ritchie (2010b) when she noted that the principle of Family and Community-Whānau Tangata and the strand of Belonging-Mana Whenua supported early childhood centres endeavouring to work with their local communities to encourage ecological sustainability. Furthermore, the focus on children learning through active exploration of their environment in the strand of Exploration- Mana Aotūroa, gives rise to curriculum goals identifying the value of play as “meaningful learning”, the importance of children gaining “confidence in and control of their bodies”, and the need for children to develop “working theories for making sense of the natural,

<sup>1</sup> *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) is designed for children from birth to the time they enter school.

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of the Māori concepts underpinning *Te Whāriki*, see Reedy (2003).

social, physical, and material worlds” (MoE, 1996, p.16). Implicit in children’s active exploration of the environment is the importance of “respect for the environment” as well as “Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment” (p.82).

Turning to the primary school curricula *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (MoE, 2007) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (MoE, 2008)<sup>3</sup>, we similarly see philosophical precepts that are relevant to outdoor education aiming to contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future. In the NZC for example, a vision of young New Zealanders being confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners (MoE, 2007, p.8), specifies connectedness to the land, environment, and communities as well as contribution to the environmental well-being of Aotearoa New Zealand as integral aspects of this. Stepping through to the eight principles<sup>4</sup>, there is explicit attention given to sustainability (within the principle of future focus), cultural diversity, and community engagement. Furthermore, diversity, equity, community and participation, and ecological sustainability are directly targeted as values or “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable” (MoE, 2007, p 10). The five key competencies or “capabilities for living and lifelong learning” (MoE, 2007, p. 12-13), are considered to be “shaped by interactions with people, places, ideas, and things” (ibid). More particularly, the key competency of ‘Participating and contributing’ highlights the importance of students being “actively involved” in their communities and of “contributing to the quality and sustainability of social, cultural, physical, and economic environments” (MoE, 2007, p.13). As has been suggested before (Cosgriff, 2011), human relationships and interactions with communities as well as non-human nature, are arguably also woven through almost all of the eight learning area (subject) statements that enact this philosophical framework of the NZC.

<sup>3</sup> The NZC is the curriculum for all English-medium state and integrated schools, while *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is the curriculum for Māori-medium schools.

<sup>4</sup> The 8 Principles of the NZC which “embody beliefs about what is important and desirable in school curriculum” (MoE, 2007, p.9), are high expectations, Treaty of Waitangi, cultural diversity, inclusion, learning to learn, community engagement, coherence, and future focus.

The English translation of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (MoE, 2008) reveals that the Treaty of Waitangi is both central to the curriculum and gives rise to the five overarching principles: Ngā Mātāpono Whānau. As with the NZC, we consider that these principles further illustrate that national curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand provide useful policy platforms for outdoor education that is attentive to environmental sustainability. For example, not only should the school-based curricula aid learners to be “confident in the Māori world” (p.6) but it should also include “experiences outside of the school which are relevant to the whānau and community” (p.7). More specifically the fifth overarching principle ‘Environmental health is personal health’ draws attention to the “place of the student in their own world” (p.7) and thus calls for school-based curriculum to support “a sustainable environment; learning pathways which enable the learner to engage purposefully with the environment; holistic teaching programmes; and learner engagement with their environment” (p.7). The values and attitudes identified in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* as well as the commentary in sections such as that on teaching and learning, continually reinforce the importance of the world of the learner, Māori knowledges, and learning environments including the marae and those in local areas and beyond. In a similar fashion to the NZC, the strands and achievement objectives in a range of learning areas address sustainable human relationships with the natural environment.

Finally, while not a curriculum document per se, the *EOTC Guidelines* (MoE, 2009) clearly reinforces the relationships between national curricula (MoE, 2007, 2008) and outdoor education. This is evident in statements such as “The NZC supports the aspirations for broad deep learning in real life contexts within and across the learning areas” (MoE, 2009, p.6), and the point that “The vision of New Zealand’s national curriculum cannot be achieved inside classroom alone” (MoE, 2009, p.7). In summary and like others (e.g. Hammonds, 2008, 2009; Hislop, 2008; Ritchie, 2010b), this section thus has argued that contemporary early childhood and school curricula (MoE, 1996, 2007, 2008) provide fertile philosophical frameworks for the practice of outdoor education that explicitly prompts learning about sustainable relationships between students and their local communities and environments. We now turn to explore some of the ways that these curricula directions play out currently in practice in early childhood education and primary school settings.

## Outdoor education in early childhood education settings

### *Snapshot three*

When we decided on using the creation story of Ranginui and Papatuanuku as the basis of our mahi-and in particular the idea that if you look after Papatuanuku, she will look after you- we were surprised at how readily the tamariki took this concept on board, and to heart. We heard them in the playground telling each other that Papatuanuku would not be happy about a piece of rubbish they could see on her. Parent and grandparents came to kindergarten with tales of being scolded at home by their four year olds for alleged crimes against Papa! In fact, it was a surprise when the children began talking about Rangi and Papa as if they were someone's Mum and Dad. We couldn't believe the genuine care, concern and understanding that the children displayed-and these people are our future! The children articulated the ancient story of Rangi and Papa very well, and were able to use the story in their own lives in a practical way, such as working towards a litterless lunchbox, keeping the kindergarten playground and a local park litter free, sorting their rubbish into reusable, recyclable and compostable categories. (Ellwood, 2010, p.20)

Our research for part one of this chapter necessitated moving beyond outdoor education practice in primary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, which we both have some first-hand familiarity with, into the domain of early childhood education. As we work and teach outside of early childhood education settings, we were curious to identify the ways in which early childhood educators interpreted the curriculum vision of *Te Whāriki* in regards to outdoor education. We were also keen to see how contemporary attention to place responsive approaches and sustainability in professional commentaries and a growing number of outdoor education programmes in the compulsory school sector, played out in early childhood settings. Conversations with early childhood colleagues and further delving into academic journals, professional publications, and sector newsletters revealed much that we thought was of relevance to answering this question.

Learning through play has been recognised to be an essential feature or the “fundamental vehicle for learning” (Elliott, 2010, p.63) in

early childhood education and care settings here and internationally for decades. Outdoor play in particular contributes to the holistic development of children by affording them significant and memorable opportunities to develop physical skills, explore the material and natural world, develop a sense of agency and place (Elliott, 2010), and demonstrate a variety of skills and competencies (Garrick, 2009; Greenfield, 2007). Furthermore, sustained play experiences in outdoor settings in particular are recognised as integral to fulfilling many learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki*. After reviewing New Zealand research on outdoor play in early childhood education, Greenfield's (2007) conclusion is pertinent to note:

Young children want to play outside. However it is not just about letting children go outside but providing outdoor settings that awaken their senses to the beauty, complexity and ever-changing dynamics of the natural world; that honour children as curious and motivated to explore and problem solve, be physically challenged, to practice and repeat experiences, and then move onto new challenges. (pp. 28-29)

Elliott's (2010) plea for the provision of opportunities for children to play in nature spaces extends this argument, and is particularly relevant to our discussion of early childhood outdoor education that promotes curiosity about, enthusiasm for, and connectedness to the natural world. Like others (e.g. Schepers & van Liempd, 2010), Elliott suggests that children's innate connectedness to nature has been eroded by a number of factors including reduced time and access, increasing technology and safety concerns, and changing perceptions of what is an appropriate playspace. Early childhood education provides an ideal setting to redress these factors. Specifically, play in and with nature potentially promotes creativity, cultural inclusion, and engages "the risk appetites of children (as) natural shapes, textures and scales are not so predictable, require concentration and challenge both senses and physical skills" (Elliott, 2010, p.64). New discoveries about the ever-changing world of nature also may occur. Furthermore in nature as Elliott suggests, children can take on "real work" projects such as farming, gardening, and building, developing even more agency about how they can contribute to caring for nature spaces. The value of productive gardens, natural materials for indoor and outdoor play, the use of community members with knowledge, natural playspaces rather than manufactured equipment, and trips

outside the centre into the local community and beyond in early childhood education for sustainability are advocated for.

Examples of these features in practice abound. At the Open Spaces Centre near Whangarei, a commitment to nature-based play means that each day staff and children head to the ‘Wild Wood’ for four hours with their lunchboxes and water bottles in hand. In this outdoor setting of a field and groves of native trees, the children engage in imaginative play, thus learning about nature and non-human nature from firsthand play in amongst it (Brownlee & Daly, 2009). In other early childhood centres, human-made play structures provide a similar stimulus and also reflect a commitment to sustainability in their design. Katikati kindergarten’s adobe playground, built collaboratively with the local community, includes a hobbit house with a “green” roof that allows for a garden, a



maimai for bird watching, an adobe crawl tunnel, and swing bridges (Katikati Kindergarten, 2010). Other teaching approaches supporting sustainability include maintaining gardens, composting, worm

farms, “community basket” for sharing excess fresh produce (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw 2010a, p.3), the use of children’s literature to target aspects of sustainable living like recycling (Barker, 2010), art experiences about and using nature to explore sustainable human –non human nature relationships, regular parental and community input, plus children’s active contribution to environmental projects in the wider community. All explicitly seek to promote connectedness and care between the children and the communities they inhabit.

The importance of developing an ethic of care and caring thus appears a central feature of a number of initiatives in early childhood education for sustainability (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010a; Ritchie, 2010b) and accordingly, a feature we consider potentially integral to outdoor education as well. Robinson & Vaealiki (2010) propose caring to be one of four ethical principles (listening, participating, and hopefulness are the other three) that are essential to any sustainability education in early childhood. Caring in this instance however moves beyond traditional notions of children needing to be cared for and not being able to provide care, to a perspective recognising children can care in significant ways (Robinson and Vaealiki, 2010). Accordingly, an ethic of care emphasises interdependence, relationships with family and the natural world, and cultural values such as *manaakitanga* and *kaitiakitanga*. Using a philosophical framework centred on Māori values such as *manaakitanga*, *aroha*, and *kaitiakitanga* interwoven with an ethic of care (Martin, 2007), Ritchie, Duhn, Rau and Craw (2010a) similarly identified the “significance of early childhood educators generating localised “pedagogies of place” for ecological sustainability, integrating kaupapa Māori notions of *kaitiakitanga* and *manaakitanga* along with an ethic of care within their specific communities” (p.3). A host of examples of practice in the ten early childhood centres involved in their research further illustrated this point (see for example, Barker, 2010; Ellwood, 2010, Ritchie, 2010b).

## Outdoor education in primary school settings

### *Snapshot four*

At the back of Hurupaki School is a wetland area. “This used to be a swampy horse paddock,” says Callum, “but now we’ve got all kinds of native plants growing here.” Tall trees like *kahikatea* and cabbage tress grow in the Hurupaki wetland,

as well as smaller plants like flax and matipou. In a sheltered corner, the kids are growing a medicinal garden. A medicinal garden has plants that have healing properties. “We did heaps of research,” says Lewis. “We looked in books and on the Internet. We found out that there are hundreds of native plants and trees with healing properties.”... Then they planned their garden... They planted during autumn so that the plants would get plenty of rain to help them grow... Each week, the kids check their plants and pull out any weeds... Next year, they hope their trees will be big enough to harvest the leaves for making ointment. (Gibbison, 2010, p.19)

Our brief examination of early childhood outdoor education highlighted the centrality of play in outdoor spaces, the importance of explicitly teaching children about sustainability and living sustainably, the relevance of a philosophy of care and caring (*manaakitanga*), and the support for teaching approaches integrating subject matter and actively including whanau and the wider community. We now turn to consider some of the distinctive hallmarks of outdoor education in primary schools as it is, or could be, practiced.

As previously noted, the NZC (MoE, 2007) offers a clear mandate to provide opportunities for students to become “connected to the land and environment” and “to be active seekers, users and creators of knowledge and informed decision makers” (p.8). Sobel (2005) describes such a connectedness to the land and local environment as a place-based approach, which is “the process of using the local community and environments as a starting point to teach concepts” (p.7) in a range of subject areas. Using hands-on learning approaches and “real-world” learning experiences, Sobel suggests such an approach facilitates student connectedness to their local communities, valuing of the natural world, as well as an increased commitment to being a contributing member of the community. Furthermore, it is proposed “Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations and environmental resources in the life of the school” (Sobel, 2005, p.7). Martin (2005) similarly highlights the importance of direct experiences to develop a relationship with nature and revisiting areas to get to know and discover them more fully. Hammonds (2008) also reinforces the point that developing “a real appreciation of the natural world needs to be part of children’s lives from the earliest age and integral to all school learning” (p.7).

Thorndon school in Wellington provides a rich illustration of a future-focused outdoor education programme which exemplifies the prompt to use “the river as the text book and the town becomes the classroom” (Sobel, 2005, p.2). Reflecting the school motto of ‘Developing independent creative thinkers and learners’, learning experiences at Thorndon School are based on integrated, authentic contexts in local environments. The potential of the immediate surroundings is embraced and students provided with regular opportunities to engage in environments within walking distance of the school. Thus downtown Wellington, the Botanical Gardens, Tinakori Hill, and the public library all become the ‘classroom’ for outdoor education, with teachers tapping into students’ interests and topical units. Thorndon school students are regularly seen exploring the waterfront and the history of the shore line, visiting the City Galley or Te Papa museum, or involved in projects about sustainability in and around the school. Teachers pride themselves for the integrated approach taken to units of work: science extends to sailing on the harbour with students learning to sail and to understand and ‘read’ the weather; the local farmers’ market becomes a focus of study with producers coming to school to show students how to make cheese, cook fish, and prepare vegetables and the students then journeying to the farms in the Wairarapa to study the source of the products. School playgrounds are also student-centred and emphasise the importance of play in the natural environment. Students can explore and create by digging holes, building huts, developing their own gardens, and the grounds are ever changing. In short, as the school principal Bill Sutton noted (personal communication, June 1, 2011), “playgrounds [in this school] don’t tell kids what to do” and “the more experiences students have, the more connections they can make”.

Extending to more traditional camp experiences does not mean however that the school’s commitment to integrated learning approaches, ‘real’ life relevance, and connectedness to local communities is compromised or forgotten. Thorndon School camps are sequenced through the school, beginning with an overnight noho marae in the school grounds, followed by camps within local environments, and finally a camp planned and implemented by students. Such an approach is ideal for integrated studies and investigations where planning, implementing, and reviewing sit naturally in the teaching and learning process. Planning menus and

a programme that allows time for skill development and building an understanding of the history and cultural significance of the place, necessitates the provision of opportunities for students to discuss and negotiate food choices, alternative transport options, impacts on the environment, environmental clean ups, and the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the surroundings. Cosgriff (2008) emphasises the value of this integrated approach when she suggests we should look more holistically at outdoor education and take advantage of the “unique histories, geographies, cultural understanding and traditions associated with any given rock, river, lake, or area of bush... (and see them as) integral to the teaching approaches employed or students’ learning” (p.21).

Martin (2005), Hammonds (2008), and Sobel (2005) amongst others, highlight the importance of learning occurring in natural, backdoor environments to engage and connect learners with their immediate world and encourage appreciation and care for the environment. School grounds, creeks, stands of bush, walkways, and parks just outside our classroom doors provide accessible, cost effective, and low risk environments in which students may build a greater depth of relationship, understanding, and engagement by observing and monitoring seasonal changes, the effects of weather, growth patterns, and the many small creatures that live close at hand. Like others (e.g. Owens, 2009), Thevenard (2010) has noted that such “authentic experiences where students research and experience ‘the real deal’ connects them to the environment and the issues of the planet” (p.6).

It appears therefore in a growing number of primary schools, sustainability education and students’ active engagement in ‘making a difference’ in their school and local communities is squarely on the outdoor education agenda. A number take a whole school approach to their projects and draw on community support and resources. For example, Birchville School in Upper Hutt, with the support of the Greater Wellington Regional Council (2004) *Taking Action for Water* programme, has each class developing their own project after an analysis of their immediate environment. Ideas such as replanting the creek at the back of the school, planting the Birchville dam, recycling, and developing worm farms, a walkway through the school bush, and weta homes have been generated (M. Howard, personal communication, 3 October, 2011). These projects encourage integration across subjects, student negotiation, and active

participation in and learning about local environs. Furthermore, traditional notions of adventure are arguably challenged by such an approach. As Beames and Ross (2010) propose, journeys in local neighbourhoods may not only “actually have a much higher degree of authentic adventure than highly regulated ropes course and rock climbing sessions” but also “move away from contrived outdoor challenges towards more authentic, real world, ‘broad adventure’ demanding student initiative and responsibility” (p.101).

In summary, this section has identified that integrated multidisciplinary approaches, the use of the local built and natural environment and community personnel, and teaching approaches that promote student input, decision-making, and action, appear to be conducive to outdoor education promoting sustainable human and non-human nature relationships. This is arguably even more so, when the work of Enviroschools is examined.

## **The Enviroschools programme in early childhood and primary settings**

### *Snapshot five*

Hukanui School is an Enviroschool, where everyone works together to create a healthy and sustainable environment-and the students are in charge! Over the past 10 years, students have worked on many different projects. Their school is an example of how kids can work together to shape a rich, living environment. (Tu’akoi, 2010, p.3)

### *Snapshot six*

Students and teachers from five Porirua Schools recently experienced the diversity of Kenepuru Stream on “Te Oranga o te awa o Porirua”- a guided walk to introduce students to stream life. The trip drew inspiration from Patricia Grace’s story “Watercress tuna and the Children of Champion Street”, set on the banks of the Kenepuru Stream. Greater Wellington Environmental Educator, Warren Field, brought his pet tuna (long fin eel) along, and as the students walked along Kenepuru Stream from Cannon’s Creek School to the Porirua Harbour mouth they learned about the eel’s life cycle and habitat. Local experts shared their knowledge, including fresh water ecologist Frances Forsyth, author and eel enthusiast

from Rangitaane o Wairarapa Joe Potangaroa, Tiff Stewart from Otari Wilton's Bush and Porirua City Council harbour coordinator Keith Calder (retrieved from EnviroSchools, 2010, [www.enviroschools.org.nz](http://www.enviroschools.org.nz))

The project in snapshot six was organised by Charles Barrie the Porirua EnviroSchools Facilitator, and was a collaborative effort between EnviroSchools, Porirua City Council and representatives from other organisations, including Greater Wellington Regional Council.

From humble beginnings in Hamilton, there are presently around 776 early childhood education centres, kura, and schools involved with EnviroSchools<sup>5</sup> all working towards enhancing the wellbeing of the school, community and ecosystem. In regions close to the origins of EnviroSchools like Waikato and Bay of Plenty, this translates to an uptake of over 40% of schools in the region. Five Guiding Principles: Ngā Mātāpono underpin EnviroSchools programmes and ideally are integrated throughout the approaches of participating schools. These principles: empowered students, learning for sustainability, Māori perspectives, diversity of people and cultures, and sustainable communities, clearly resonate with precepts that we have already targeted in our discussions about early childhood and primary outdoor education programmes. Furthermore, the whole school approach that is promoted identifies four underlying areas of school life that effect sustainability and student learning: physical surroundings, organisational management, operational practices, and living curriculum ([www.enviroschools.org.nz](http://www.enviroschools.org.nz), 2011). With the support of resource people, students and schools are encouraged to take small steps as they work towards the long-term goal of sustainability being a piece of every aspect of school life and something all students are involved with.

<sup>5</sup> A full description and discussion of EnviroSchools is beyond the scope of this chapter, however interested readers can read more about the programme on [www.enviroschools.org.nz](http://www.enviroschools.org.nz). Data in this section was retrieved from this website on 31 May 2011.

## Weaving it all together: Future-focused outdoor education

Manaaki whenua. Manaaki tangata. Haere whakamua.  
Care for the land. Care for the people. Go forward.

In part one of this chapter we have endeavoured to discuss and illustrate some of the hallmarks of a forward-focused outdoor education that promotes sustainability and connects students with the communities and outdoor environments they inhabit. Our intention is not to propose these as recipes for practice but to prompt readers to reflect on, and possibly re-vision, their own pedagogical practices.

The tone of this book, as guided by the editors and embraced by the other authors, suggests that environmental sustainability, Māori philosophies, and place responsive and slow pedagogies may have a transformative potential for outdoor education. These sentiments resonate with us also and accordingly, this chapter provides illustrations of outdoor education in early childhood centres and primary schools that in some way bring such ideas alive. Each example prioritises human connectedness and responsiveness to outdoor environments and local communities, draws on a range of curriculum and Māori perspectives, values kinesthetic experiences, and utilises community resources and skills. Using the backyard, bush, beach and rivers as the “text book”, students are provided with engaging opportunities to be active, reflective participants in their own learning and to contribute to the wellbeing of the world around them.

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## School curriculum and outdoor education

### Part 2: Secondary School

By Margie Campbell-Price

Cosgriff and Thevenard set the scene in part one of this chapter, by examining contemporary curricula applicable to the early childhood and school sectors. Specifically, they introduced the curricula vision and principles relevant to the contribution outdoor education can make to a sustainable and more equitable future. Moreover, the vision and principles gave a mandate for teachers to provide opportunities for students to connect to the land and environment and become active seekers, users and creators of knowledge and informed decision makers. They then illustrated these principles with innovative examples from the early childhood and primary sectors.

In part two of this chapter the focus shifts to the secondary school context. The discussion focuses on any curriculum-based learning in, for and about the outdoors. To begin, I introduce the secondary school context and some of the curriculum design characteristics that are in stark contrast to the more holistic and interdisciplinary approaches evident in many primary schools. Snapshot examples are again presented to illustrate a range of contemporary outdoor learning approaches and initiatives that explicitly address the vision, principles and values of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). As in part one, I hope that the snapshots encourage you to consider the possibilities or insights that may open up for your outdoor education practice.

*The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is, as stated in its title, a seamless document that applies to teaching, learning and achievement from (school) years 1 – 13. Despite this, typically school-based curriculum design in the secondary school contrasts to that practiced in primary schools. Anecdotally, it appears that the conceptual “front end” of the NZC (Vision, Principles, Values and Key Competencies) has received significant attention in professional learning, discussion and development in secondary schools since its release in 2007. However, the curriculum has continued to be

delivered most commonly through discrete subjects derived from the eight learning areas and offered in a way that provide pathways into senior courses that enable students to gain either the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) or alternative qualifications. This in turn provides pathways into higher (tertiary) education, skills-based qualifications or employment. According to Bolstad and Gilbert (2008), secondary schools have been challenged by the pedagogical shifts and requirements of the NCEA (which was first implemented in 2002), and have had to respond to these under the relentless scrutiny of sceptical politicians, media and the wider community. It is hardly surprising that significant adjustments to implement a new curriculum have been approached in a more measured and considered way, in contrast to primary schools.

Secondary school teachers are commonly referred to as ‘teachers of subjects’ and are usually ‘grouped’ into subject departments or faculties comprising clusters of related subjects within the secondary context. For students, subject choice becomes more evident as they move through secondary school, with the broad and balanced curriculum ‘giving way’ after Year 10 to “more advanced and specialised forms of learning designed to prepare – and sort – students for a range of different post-school options” (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008, p. 12-13). From Years 11 to 13, students choose the subjects they wish to study from an ever-increasing subject menu. However, the timetabled curricular programme represents only part of the broader curriculum in secondary schools – a ‘Google search’ of any secondary school website will reveal vast offerings of co and extra-curricular activities to encourage students to develop and pursue their own interests to complement, enrich and extend their curricular learning.

## **Where does outdoor education ‘fit’ in the secondary school?**

The question of where outdoor education ‘fits’ into the secondary school curriculum and who teaches or has responsibility for it, is not helped by the demarcation of the secondary curriculum into subjects and the identification of teachers as subject specialists. Within national curricula, outdoor education was officially positioned as one of seven key areas of learning in the *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999). With

the release of the *New Zealand Curriculum* in 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2007), each of the eight learning areas (of which Health and Physical Education is one) was significantly abbreviated in order to simply convey its 'essence'. Outdoor education has received no further elaboration about its nature and purpose in the *NZC* (2007), with the key area of learning description in the *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (HPE)* being the most likely reference point for teachers (Cosgriff, 2008). In this description, outdoor education was required to provide students "with opportunities to develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe, and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the environment" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p.46).

During the years since outdoor education was mandated within HPE, Cosgriff (2008, p.17) suggests that advocates of outdoor education have had a "previously unavailable philosophical 'space'". Rather than focusing on promoting its subject status and legitimacy, attention has instead turned to "equally pressing questions about the what, why, and how of our practice in schools". A scarcity of national data has contributed to the challenges in describing how outdoor education is defined and practiced in schools. Zink and Boyes (2006) note that this is somewhat surprising, given the long history of outdoor education in New Zealand. Furthermore, they also note that "the diversity and complexity of its history is reflected in the lack of semantic agreement", in defining what outdoor education is and how it should be practiced (p.12).

A range of commentators (Cosgriff, 2008; Hill, 2010; Zink, 2003) have noted that the personal and social development goals associated with outdoor pursuits and adventure activities have historically been the core of school programmes. Cosgriff (2008) suggests that in many cases, opportunities to learn about and for the environment have been of peripheral importance. Similarly, Lugg (2004) acknowledges that outdoor adventure activities or outdoor pursuits clearly allow people to access, and perhaps to appreciate outdoor environments. However, she asserts that the use of the outdoors as a 'playground', with expectations that understanding nature will happen incidentally actually contributes to a shallow environmentalism. The discourse that calls for a re-focusing of outdoor education practice to more fully and explicitly educate for and about the outdoors, as well as in the outdoors, is central to this book, and addressed throughout.

However, as Brookes (2002) acknowledges, the personal identification and passion outdoor education teachers bring to particular roles and activities is one of its strengths. This strength, he says, can also be a weakness if it creates a “blinkered view, rather than openness to critique, debate and possibly, change” (p.422). Interestingly, a strong identification with “their” subject and desire to inculcate the knowledge and ways of doing things are, according to Bolstad and Gilbert (2008) characteristic of most subject teachers, particularly in the senior secondary school.

This raises the question of who is best suited to teach outdoor education and lead outdoor learning. As Martin and McCullagh (2011) note, traditionally most outdoor education teachers have been trained as physical education teachers. Although there are common concepts and pedagogy in both subjects, the emerging environmental emphasis has broadened outdoor education into a more independent discipline. Through this frame, teachers not only need the skills and knowledge to travel and live outdoors; they also need to be ecologically literate, with knowledge about human-nature relationships and cultural relationships with nature over time (Martin and McCullagh, 2011). Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the expertise of teachers from ‘other’ subject areas (such as in the social sciences, arts and science) and the contribution they can make to teachers’ professional learning; as well as to student learning in, for and about the outdoors.

The rest of this chapter is thus devoted to snapshot examples that illustrate the way real world contexts and outdoor learning experiences make a contribution to meeting the vision, principles, values and key competencies of the NZC (2007). These snapshots reinforce the notion that authentic ‘real world’ contexts are rarely ‘single subject specific’. Instead, they open the possibilities for deep learning within and across the learning areas (Ministry of Education, 2009).

## Outdoor education in secondary schools: Community and school partnerships

### *Snapshot one: Community and school partnerships in action - University of Otago Science Wānanga*

Over three days at noho marae in Colac Bay, Māori students from rural secondary schools link the interrelatedness between human health and environmental health by exploring the theme of water through the fields of science, environmental science, physical education and physiotherapy. These were interwoven with mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge), and scientific and cultural resource management tools formed in partnership between iwi and scientists. Under the guidance of Māori and Pākehā scientists and health professionals, the students used scientific methods and a Cultural Health Index survey to study water quality in the local estuary. Māori post-



Oraka – Aparima Feb 2011. Image taken by University of Otago.

graduate students, a lecturer and an experienced waka-ama (outrigger canoe) leader guided the students through the tikanga (practice and protocol) of building a waka, paddling on the river and learning traditional games and sports. Six tertiary students from the School of Physical Education Māori Association provided valuable tuakana/teina (older sibling) role models for the school students and teaching experience for the tertiary students. The kaupapa (philosophy) of waka-ama is strongly based on working together, facing challenges with collaboration and respect, optimising personal physical health and being aware of environmental cues.

Bringing together all they had experienced, the Chair of Oraka-Aparima Rūnaka later presented students with examples, in which they engaged with science and mātauranga when making resource management decisions. In particular, they focused on a 12-year project (Kia Mau Te Titi Mou Ake Tonu Atu) in collaboration with the University of Otago researching the sustainability of the traditional harvest of titi (aka muttonbird) chicks by local Māori and drawing on the oral and written histories of birders and birding from many generations. Students were encouraged to see the past, see connections and actions, and look to the future for where their responsibilities and roles may lie.

On the final day, all participants gave koha (donation) back to the community by taking action and planting in the local O Koura native wetland restoration project adjacent to the marae on the final day. This provided an opportunity for students to reflect on the history of the place, what had happened and why, and the complexity of restoring ecosystems while contributing to improved environmental health and their own health for a sustainable future.

The University of Otago Science Wānanga originated from a stated objective by the late Dr Paratene Ngata, a prominent figure in Māori health, to increase participation of rangitahi (young people) in his Ngati Porou iwi in the sciences and health science. Ngati Porou had already made huge gains in ICT among their young people, and Dr Ngata wanted to see a similar change in science uptake. “We want scientists in our schools” he said. The wider objective of the wānanga

programme is to raise the engagement and achievement of Māori in senior science in low to mid decile, rural/provincial New Zealand schools. A concern was disengagement from science at school by Māori students, due in part to literacy “too many hard words and writing”, relevance and context “it’s nothing to do with me”, and stereotypes “scientists are old men in white coats”.



Lauren Light from Te Wharekura o Arowhenua at Murihiku Marae June 2010. Image by University of Otago Staff.

At Science Wānanga, Māori students participate and contribute in two-three day experiential science activities or projects, based on marae and in their local communities. Science is facilitated by tertiary students and scientists and presented alongside mātauranga Māori provided by kaumātua (respected elders), which encourages students to understand connections and actions through science that are relevant to their lives. Māori and non-Māori scientists also participate and together create an inter-cultural space that breaks down assumptions by living, working and sleeping together on marae. The wānanga follows tikanga that show respect for Māori values and the students give their attention and focus to a scientific worldview.

An understanding of multiple worldviews is particularly beneficial for young Māori, who will be the future contributors to Iwi Management Plans. Māori perspectives, represented in Iwi Management Plans play an important role in achieving the purpose of the New Zealand Resource Management Act (RMA 1991), which intends to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Iwi Management Plans provide knowledge on matters of significance to tangata whenua (indigenous people of the land), allow Māori to influence these processes in a proactive way and generate greater community understanding of the views of iwi on the environment. A mutual understanding of multiple worldviews, alongside scientific evidence smoothes processes between iwi and local councils and improves resource management for all.

The relationships between schools, marae and the universities are a strength of Science Wānanga. To date, there have been over 60 university staff and postgraduate students, and more than a dozen community members involved in delivering science projects plus numerous kaumatua, kuia, whanau and ringawera providing manaakitanga on marae. Future focused topics are chosen by communities in consultation with iwi, school teachers and students from previous wānanga in the same regions to ensure the themes are kept relevant. As an example, the community of Ngāti Porou asked for the following themes to be included in the June 2011 Science Wānanga: oil chemistry (due to oil company exploration off the nearby coast), the geology of earthquakes and tsunamis (following the 2010/2011 Christchurch earthquakes), and space physics (because of the upcoming Transit of Venus in June 2012).

A collaborative plan between stakeholders within the university is being developed to ensure the ongoing viability of this programme, with a focus on meeting the needs of existing iwi partners and researching the experiences of participants at Science Wānanga. Currently the University of Otago has Science Wānanga partnerships Rūnanga and schools in Southland, Otago, Marlborough, and the North Island's East Coast, Hawkes Bay, and Northland (Hunt, D. 2011a, 2011b).

This Science Wānanga provides a rich illustration of community and school partnerships, together utilising culturally responsive pedagogies to fulfill the NZC (2007, p.8) vision of creating an

“Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring”. Furthermore, these experiences connect students with their wider lives, and engage the support of their whanau and communities, to bring real life meaning to their curriculum learning. The partnership with university-based scientists and post-graduate students open up pathways for further learning and encourages them to think about their future contribution as members within their communities.

## **LEOTC and outdoor education in secondary schools**

### *Snapshot two: Mad about fish*

“I remember taking the group down to the shore, and we found these little white eggs. I had no idea what they were so we collected a sample and took them back to the teaching lab and put them under the microscope, where they hatched in front of our eyes” recalls Sally Carson, educator at the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre in Portobello, Otago. “They looked like little octopus, so we brought in a scientist who got some reference material, and we identified them together. They were cuttlefish, and the kids were so excited to be part of this process of discovery that was happening before their eyes... What we are doing is creating situations that you can’t recreate in the classroom” (Tringham, 2006, p.4)

Since 1994, the Ministry of Education has purchased services, known as Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) from a range of organisations, including museums, zoos, art galleries and science centres to provide contextualised learning experiences. The snapshot above illustrates the hands-on experiences, supported by access to tools, objects, exhibits, artefacts and expertise that support learning and are accessible through the numerous LEOTC-contracted providers throughout New Zealand.

The New Zealand Marine Studies Centre, like all LEOTC providers offers a range of ‘learning packages’ to schools. However, teachers are urged to work closely with the LEOTC education officers to determine the learning goals, and to link the hands-on experience with pre and post visit experiences. Research conducted by Moreland

and others (Rivers, 2006) found that contextual learning is more effective when students interact with different tools, objects and exhibits. The Marine Studies Centre is popular with students studying Year 13 biology, as an opportunity to develop their scientific skills and work towards an achievement standard for the NCEA, related to carrying out an investigation into the ecological niche of an animal. Through a 3-day programme, students study a particular animal and its habitat in relation to others, pose questions and hypotheses, design an experiment, carry it out and verify the results. The authenticity of context is considered to be not just motivational for the students, but also enables them to effectively meet the requirements of the standard, due to their ability to control variables because of on-site marine tanks and environmental monitoring equipment (Tringham, 2006).

This section has identified that communities throughout New Zealand have diverse resources to enable students to participate in their curriculum learning as active seekers, users and creators of knowledge. These real world contexts and hands on approaches, according to Sobel (2005), facilitate students' understanding and valuing of the natural world.

## **Outdoor education in secondary schools: The power of authentic outdoor contexts**

### *Snapshot three: An enterprising future*

With a focus on the future, Year 10 students from Waimea College engaged community expertise from the local district council and an Enviroschools coordinator to develop a 50 year vision for the Waimea Inlet in Nelson. The students researched information, visited local areas, investigated issues and created action projects. They selected an area of interest across a range of subject areas to focus their project on and engaged in testing water quality, mapping out land uses, interviewed stakeholders, examined bio-diversity, and constructed strategies for the future. These included designing and creating models of bridges for the proposed cycleway, making models of the future inlet, producing information brochures and videos for the public, and designing and printing t-shirts with a related environmental theme. The project culminated with

the production of vision board, along with recommendations and other project creations. These were presented to an expert panel of local councilors and conservation leaders. Following this, they were displayed at a local shopping mall. (Ministry of Education, 2011).

The snapshot from Waimea College illustrates the powerfulness of interdisciplinary learning, especially when conducted in students' own backyard. Adopting a problem solving approach, students develop skills to investigate and respond to local environmental issues, work collaboratively, independently and imaginatively.

#### ***Snapshot four: Tracking the journey of the longfinned eel***

In large inner tubes, the students cruising down the river, the same path the longfinned eel takes on its incredible journey to the ocean. Along the way they took water samples and compared them as they made their way along. Using a hinaki (eel catching basket), they caught a few longfinned eels. "Now I know what they look like and where they live", said one student. They had a noho marae at Papawai for two nights where they took part in powhiri (welcome) and learned the protocols of being on a marae. A Māori elder entertained students with his stories of the river, its history and importance to his people. Since returning to school, the students are working with a local artist on a tapestry project to raise the profile of the longfinned eel and its survival, and writing stories about their experience for future generations (Ministry of Education, 28 March, 2011).

As snapshot four demonstrates, Wairarapa's Kuranui College effectively utilises inquiry-based skills to direct students' learning in their integrated studies. The learning journey experienced by Year 9 students, gives students a close look at one of the important taonga (treasure) of their local community, the Ruamahunga River. The river has been the economic and recreational lifeblood for many generations. Many marae are located close to the river, which Māori traditionally used for transportation and as a source of food. More recently however, the effects of farming has compromised the river's health. As a consequence, fish species and the longfinned eel have been threatened. In this real life setting, students acquire knowledge

of past history, values and traditions; and are encouraged to look to the future and consider the contribution they might make to sustaining the future of their local taonga. Classroom learning is 'brought alive' and given greater meaning for these students when it is effectively interwoven with the outdoor experiential learning components.

## **Outdoor education in secondary schools: The place of personal and social development**

Up until now, I have incorporated snapshot examples of a range of future focused contemporary outdoor learning approaches that draw on a variety of learning areas. There is a risk that the personal and social outcomes traditionally associated with outdoor education and other informal learning, be overlooked and marginalised as we focus on future scenarios; with 'future' relating to societal or environmental scenarios, as well as preparing students to become future adults. The informal contexts afforded by outdoor learning enable students the time and space to enjoy 'being', live in the moment, be playful and have fun. Zink (2004, 2010) noted that teachers should not assume that what they think students will gain and 'take away' from outdoor experiences will be the same as those teachers anticipate. Her own assumption that the scheduled activities were where the 'important stuff' happened was found to be flawed; it was the unstructured time and space between activities, such as sitting around the fire, free time and getting ready for activities that held meaning and value to the students. Although the students acknowledged the organised activities, the things they thought would remain with them the longest were the memories of the games at the beach, the chats in the tent, and the practical jokes they played on each other. As students suggested, "This is when you make friends and they will be your friends for life" (Zink, 2010, p.34). Larsen and Jenssen (2004) similarly noted that the social motive for going on a school trip was more important to students than the sophistication of the trip, attraction of the destination, or educational goals. They acknowledged that the teenage years are a time of experimentation and negotiating identities and therefore, the informal context of a school trip offered students valuable opportunities to develop their social connection with peers, and to test their own identities and construct and reconstruct social bonds.

The development of skills and confidence to journey through and live in outdoor environments continues to be heralded as the justification for the inclusion of adventure activities and outdoor pursuits in outdoor education programmes. The introduction of the NCEA and its myriad of possible standards have enabled teachers to develop dedicated outdoor education courses and weave outdoor learning into existing courses for students who seek to pursue this area of study (Campbell-Price, 2010). As a consequence, a greater regularity of outdoor learning within the senior school timetable has required teachers to consider the environments they are selecting for their students, with a much greater emphasis on the local environment. These regular experiences, sustained throughout the year, give students opportunities to become confident, active and skilled participants. Thus, the status of these 'legitimate' outdoor education courses enable teachers to reflect on the what, why and how of their practice. Through a combination of explicit teaching and utilising the teachable moment, students may consider the outdoors to be a playground; however, they also reflect on their own footprint, explore differing environmental value positions, and become informed decision-makers.

## **Outdoor education in secondary schools: Students' pursuing their own interests**

### *Snapshot five: Enviroschools – a student perspective*

"I began at Otago Girls' High School in 2005: then a Bronze award Enviroschool, with many environmental projects already underway. My involvement as a student was initially because I wanted to meet like-minded people who were as passionate about conservation and sustainability as I was. As a member of the Envirogroup I participated in beach cleanups, school-wide paper recycling and tree planting. Environment representatives from each class took part in workshops on the Action Learning Cycle and forming a school vision map. I found a niche within the school, but the Enviroschools programme helped me to realise that I was in no way alone: it felt empowering to know that there were cool young people doing similar projects at their schools and within their local communities.

I enjoyed Enviroschools because it helped me to apply my knowledge practically. Projects I took part in were challenging, creative, action-based, and had visible results. They included energy audits and energy saving schemes for the school; raising awareness about waste, recycling and composting; and scientific studies such as the Seaweed Study and CloudSat. A turning point for me was when I attended the Enviroschools Youth Jam 2008 in Rotorua, an event focussed on youth teaching youth and the theme of 'Designing Sustainability'. I returned to school inspired. I progressed to taking on leadership positions within a very exciting time where our school gained our Silver Award. With the help of the Enviroschools facilitators and students from other Enviroschool high schools in Dunedin, I co-organised DJ09, which aimed to connect each of our school's enviorgroups, plan projects and share our successes. I helped to run events at school such as the 350 Day of Action (which incorporated climate-change awareness raising), and contributed to re-working the school vision statement to include key statements including 'caring for our environment' and 'kaitiakitanga'.

Being a student, it was sometimes difficult to see what meaningful and lasting actions I could contribute to make the everyday running of the school more sustainably focussed. I have a lot of respect for the key teachers and Enviroschools facilitators who supported and mentored students like myself, helped to integrate environmental education into the curriculum, kept tabs on the action groups, and managed to juggle everything else while still staying sane!

Enviroschools has definitely influenced the paths I have taken in my studies. I am currently studying Geography and Māori at Otago University. I have continued to help out at Enviroschools workshops after leaving school. The skills I learnt, the people I met, and the opportunities I have had have shaped the way I interact with the world. My identity will always include the concepts of sustainability, community, learning, taking action and having fun". (Rosina Scott-Fyfe, 2011)

The voice of students conveying the meaning and value of their education outdoors experiences is under-represented in the literature. Rosina's snapshot is a powerful example of how student-led initiatives can provide meaningful and sustained opportunities to develop each of the key competencies to live, work and contribute as active members of their communities. In this example, Enviroschools (introduced by Cosgriff and Thevenard in part one of this chapter) has contributed to Rosina finding 'her place' in her school and the shaping of her identity. Her engagement in, and leadership of school and inter-school initiatives have enabled her to develop these competencies over time, in increasingly wide-ranging and complex contexts. The NZC (2007) outlines values to be encouraged, modeled and explored. This snapshot demonstrates ways in which the students, through Enviroschools, have been able to aim high and persevere; think and act critically, creatively and reflectively; participate in their community to care for the community now and in the future; and to act with integrity. In turn, Rosina and her student colleagues have contributed to those values being expressed in everyday actions and interactions within the school.

Alongside curriculum learning, students in the secondary school have numerous opportunities to pursue their own interests in co-curricular initiatives or activities, of which Enviroschools is one example.

## **Outdoor education in secondary schools: The place of the outdoor centre**

### *Snapshot six: A change of place, a slower pace and learning for life*

"Te Kahu soars overhead seeing life from a different perspective, relaxed, peaceful, planning and reflecting, sharp eyed for opportunity and making excellent choices. Ask any senior St Cuthbert's College student what the hawk means to them and they will say Kahunui. It is the place I spent 28 days with my form class living independently in a house, exploring the environment and leaving a legacy that makes Kahunui all the better for my passing through".  
(Furminger, 2011, p.18)

Chris and John Furminger explain the Kahunui experience:

A motive for establishing Kahunui was a desire to create opportunities for students to develop resilience. The principal, in discussions with other educational leaders knew that anecdotally some talented students from a range of schools had been ‘stars’, ‘sailed’ through university, but ‘collapsed’ when not recruited into prestigious firms. This was the first time they had encountered failure in their education. She also recognised the tendency of many parents intervening, rather than letting their daughter’s ‘fail’ at something, or mitigating the results of failure. Developing resilience, the philosophical roots of Kurt Hahn’s Outward Bound movement inspired the principal to approach Outward Bound for places for her students to have an experience that may develop that trait. As they could not take the numbers the school decided to establish their own centre.

In establishing the philosophies of Kahunui, which welcomed its first cohort of students in 2008, the senior leadership team and Director’s formed a compass with four pointers indicating the directions they wished the students to explore. To the North, *New Beginnings*, of place, self, a fresh start with others and learning new skills. At the South, *Adventure*, make connections with wild places, have fun, gain new skills, and take the time to appreciate the outdoors, self-reflect, make friends and find new strengths. The West, points to *Connection*, with self, others, this place and Kaitiakitanga, and the students’ guardianship of Kahunui which focuses on a footprint legacy. The fourth pointer, East, is *Learning for life*, focusing on developing skills, knowledge and attitudes for life; learning experientially, housekeeping and building relationships, being resilient and independent.

Each student in Year 10 spends four weeks with her class at Kahunui, during which time they live independently and sustainably in houses, and engage in experiential learning through an academic and outdoor programme. ‘Space’ in the programme encourages time for play, socialisation, solitude, quietness, reflection and creativity. Students participate in a Rich Task (Beane, 1993) “Footprint project”, where they are

challenged within a sustainability frame with the question *“How can we ensure Kahunui stays the same or better for your daughter when she comes here in 24 years time?”* Students are encouraged to think about their soft footprint, their place in Kaitiakitanga (guardianship), with a long-term view about their role in cultural, social and environmental sustainability. Through critical questioning, students are required to investigate, analyse and evaluate research, and then propose strategies and support it with action. Each cohort of students ‘makes their mark’. One group focused on the vision of improving the Kahunui biodiversity, this resulted in students researching the importance of wetlands. Answering why and how students developed proposals and projects to preserve the wetlands: they gathered seedlings, built a shade house, fenced off areas, created boardwalks, mapped the wetlands, created planting plans and planted, identified and removed pests. These student-led, future focused projects leave a legacy for the next group to build on and contribute to. Such has been the connection to and sense of ownership in these initiatives, a wiki kahupedia has been established and is updated by the students who each add their learning, research and actions. *“For some, Kahunui made them think for the first time, about their place in the world”* (Karen Leuschke, Dean of Year 10, 2008).

(Furminger, C, and Furminger, J. 2011. Personal communication).

The presence and accessibility of outdoor centres has supported outdoor learning in New Zealand for many decades (Lynch, 2006). As a recent initiative, Kahunui enables students to step away from their ‘home’ (Auckland) routines and create their own community for an extended period. Underpinned by a clearly articulated ‘compass’ philosophy, the Kahunui experience brings together academic and outdoor programmes along with independent living to enable students to become confident in their own identities, resourceful, and resilient young people who are connected to each other as members of a community. This sustained experience provides the space and environment for each student to learn about their own values and those of others, build relationships, and through rich task learning, become guardians of this special place for future generations to enjoy and connect with.

## Weaving it together

This part of the chapter has focused on outdoor education in the secondary school. Through snapshot examples of innovative contemporary practice, it seems there is much worth celebrating. They demonstrate that educating outdoors towards a sustainable future is not simply outdoor education, as positioned within the Health and Physical Education learning area. Instead, other learning areas are also expected to utilise real world contexts and hands on approaches, to engage students in learning in, for and about the outdoors. These examples illustrate a variety of innovative experiential approaches utilised to provide meaningful, holistic and authentic learning experiences that explicitly educate for a more sustainable future. It is evident that those who instigated these approaches or initiatives have ‘paused for some philosophical space’ to consider the what, where, why and how of their practice in order to adapt to and meet current curricula vision and principles. I share the intent of Cosgriff and Thevenard in part one, who hope that these glimpses of programmes inspire you to consider what the common threads are in the snapshots, and, thus what possibilities or insights might be opened up for your own outdoor education practice?

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## A changing landscape: Place-responsive pedagogy

By Mike Brown

In the preface to *Nature First*, Andrew Brookes and Borge Dahle posed the following question;

How can and how should individuals, families, and communities experience nature in the modern world? Now, just beyond the twentieth century, with nature itself under threat from every quarter, these are perhaps the most important educational questions for this century. (2007, p. viii)

Perhaps it is rare for outdoor educators, instructors or facilitators to see themselves positioned at the centre of educational issues of such potential significance. Whilst there are many competing claims as to the most significant educational issues facing contemporary society, the resolution of which will largely depend on which faction gains the most political backing, it is the question of the types of experiences that we provide students that is of importance to those who teach outdoors. Of interest in this chapter is how those of us involved in education, and by this I am not restricting the term to formal school contexts, conduct our programmes. What type of experiences are we providing our participants? How do these experiences impact on the relationships that participants might form with the natural world and with other people?

### A changing landscape

I contend that “traditional” activity focussed outdoor education programmes<sup>1</sup>, with a strong focus on personal and social development, fall short, or do not maximise their potential in achieving their goals. It is rare for outdoor educators to recognise the importance of the situation in eliciting particular behaviours and attitudes. One of the consequences has been the mistaken belief that behavioural change exhibited during a course will be transferred to other situations. As has been argued, it is difficult to predict behaviour across situations (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b) and transfer is a highly problematic concept (Brown, 2010). These assumptions, coupled with an instrumentalist or utilitarian view of the natural world, as a site for proving oneself through arduous travel (e.g., conquering a mountain,

<sup>1</sup> See (Brown, 2008b, 2009) for a more detailed discussion.

or running a rapid), potentially restricts the relationship we might have with nature.

The sites where we educate are not merely backdrops to learning – they are an integral part of how we learn and what we learn. A focus on activities in outdoor education potentially inhibits opportunities to learn in other ways that offer an alternative to individualised and consumer oriented approaches that are a hallmark of much outdoor education provision (Brown, 2008a; Cosgriff, 2008; Payne & Wattchow, 2008). Brown and Fraser (2009) have argued that the emphasis on risk, in much outdoor education practice, is at odds with what is known about creating an effective learning environment. The use of risk requires management strategies that can sideline opportunities for students to take responsibility for their actions and learn from experience.



An example of a place responsive Outdoor education programme. Image taken by Mike Brown.

It is clear that we are living in changing times. The impact of industrialisation on ecological systems is well documented and the effects of global warming are increasingly being linked to changes in climate and more localised weather events. The effects of globalisation on technology, education, business, leisure activities and social media are changing the very fabric of society. For example, the organisation and meaning of the term family has altered, international air travel (both for individuals and goods) has meant that not only can we holiday on the other side of the world but also that diseases can spread globally equally quickly. It is not my intention to delve into these issues in any depth, as they have been covered earlier in the book, but to highlight that the world in which we live, both locally and globally, is different from that of twenty or fifty years ago.

So, what is the relevance of this for outdoor educators? Its importance lies in reminding us that the world is not static, that the world that we grew up in is different to the world that many of the young people on our programmes live in. The problems of yesterday and the solutions to those may be very different to the issues of today and thus might require different responses. I am often reminded of this when working with tertiary students; at the age many of them are now I observed one of the most historically significant (or so I thought) events; the end of communism in Europe and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. However mention of the Cold War or Mikhail Gorbachev is met with blank stares by my students. My students' "world view" is largely shaped by events post 9/11 where there has been a constant war against the largely invisible face of global terrorism.

"Enough of the history lesson or middle aged angst on the realisation that your musical tastes are out of touch", you may cry! But this is the very point I wish to make – the pedagogy and content of many outdoor programmes may equally be out of touch with both the lives of young people and the changing condition of planet earth. For example, Wattchow and Brown (2011) have highlighted how historical and cultural processes have underpinned and reinforced assumptions and foundational beliefs that shape contemporary practice. These include; the influence of European Romanticism, as a reaction to the Enlightenment, on the portrayal of nature in art and literature; the cultural meanings of adventure, the valorisation of risk-taking, and the need to push students outside their comfort zone as an aid to learning; the simplistic interpretation and implementation

of experiential learning; and the emphasis placed on individualism and cognitive processing, often aimed at facilitating the transfer of learning across contexts. Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue that beliefs about the individual learner's capacity to cognitively evaluate, articulate, transfer learning has become entrenched in outdoor education practice. They suggest that, "these beliefs now function at the level of taken-for-granted cornerstones of practice and as such are rarely questioned. But there are elements of this approach that are problematic and potentially impoverish opportunities for learning" (p.27). In addition the influence of British imperial and militaristic traditions on contemporary outdoor education practice has also been well articulated (Beedie, 1995/6; Brookes, 2002; Cook, 1999; Lugg, 2004; Lynch, 2006; Nicol, 2002a, 2002b).

## **Disquiet with aspects of contemporary outdoor education practice**

Evidence of a growing disquiet with outdoor education's self evident "truths" or assumed outcomes can be found in a number of sources (see Bell, 1993; Brookes, 2003a, 2003b; Brown, 2008a, 2009; Brown & Fraser, 2009; Seaman, 2008; Zink & Burrows, 2006, 2008).

Drawing on a variety of perspectives these writers are concerned with the claims made in regards to the outcomes of participation in outdoor education programmes and how these outcomes might be achieved. For example Lugg (2004) raises questions about the educational relevance of some commonly used adventure activities in the Australian educational context given they originated in other countries and different cultures. She asks: "Is it possible to avoid taking an instrumental approach to natural environments if we use outdoor adventure activity as the vehicle for interacting with those environments?" (p.9). In the Aotearoa New Zealand context Zink and Burrows (2006) have used a Foucauldian lens to question practices that have been "normalised" in outdoor education. They question why particular ideas have been picked up in the outdoor literature and the effects of these discourses on practice.

Given the growing number of critiques of some contemporary approaches and practices in outdoor education I suggest that it is timely to consider an alternative approach to both reframe and practice outdoor education. I take as my starting point a challenge proffered by an Australian colleague at a conference in Adelaide some years ago:

If outdoor education professes to teaching anything at all about the land and how we might relate to it, we must be prepared to work hard as a profession to understand what happens when people encounter places, experience them, and try to make sense of these experiences. (Wattchow, 2001, p.127)

In the sections that follow I discuss the concepts of place and place-responsiveness. A case is made for the importance of place-responsive pedagogy as a means to meet some of the challenges faced by both educators and learners in a changing world. I follow this with a brief case study of some students' perceptions of their experiences of a place-responsive programme. I contend that a place-responsive approach presents a forward-looking vision that acknowledges the cultural, historical, and geographical differences that exist with Aotearoa New Zealand. In the discussion section I introduce four signposts to assist educators who may wish to design a place-responsive programme.

I believe that outdoor education has the potential to make a significant contribution in addressing some aspects of the challenges that face us and future generations. But this is based on a proviso; in order to make a meaningful contribution we may be required to rethink commonly held assumptions and modify current practices.

## Place

On a practical, everyday level, there is little doubt that we know that different places are associated with different activities; for example, our workplace, our home, or the local recreation centre (Relph, 1976). Thus experience of place can be understood as the relationship between people and activity (Cameron, 2003b). We may have memories of places that resonate with a special event or time in our lives. Places such as the beach, the ski slope, or family farm, may all bring to light different emotions and sense of connection or belonging. Thus we can see that,

place has to do with how people develop and experience a sense of attachment to particular locations on the Earth's surface. It also has to do with how people are affected by and effect those places. Therefore, place is suggestive of both the

imaginative and physical reality of a location and its people, and how the two interact and change each other. (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. xxi)

Our experiences of places are fundamental and inseparable from our lived experiences of the world (Park, 1995; Wattchow, 2006). According to Relph (1976) the concept of place is not restricted to a location, rather it is the integration of elements of nature and culture that form a unique ensemble which distinguishes a particular place from all other places. Each place is unique but is also interconnected with other places through meanings invested in them by the beliefs of the people who inhabit them. As Relph (1976) states, “A place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (p.3).

Gruenewald (2003) makes a strong case for the pedagogical importance of place. He states that “places teach as about how the world works and how our lives fit into spaces that we occupy. Further, places make us: As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped” (p.621). Thus, in reference to the opening paragraph of this chapter, we can see that peoples’ experiences of places, and their connection to them (or failure to connect) is of significance in regard to the wellbeing of both people and places. It is at this intersection, of people and places, that outdoor education has the potential to play an important role (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

## Place-responsive pedagogy

I am advocating for a pedagogical approach that is responsive to place in outdoor education experiences. Place-responsiveness, as compared to place-based, signifies an acknowledgement that people in western societies are highly mobile and the term place-based carries with it a some “limiting connotations” - that education should occur within (an often undefined) radius from one’s place of residence. While many residential outdoor centres are based in a fixed location, and are arguably place-based, they may not necessarily be place-responsive. Outdoor centres that offer a suite of activities (e.g. abseiling or kayaking) regardless of geographical or seasonal variations exemplify this decontextualised approach to outdoor education. Perhaps most

importantly is a recognition that, “the word ‘responsive’ carries with it the impetus to act, to respond” (Cameron, 2003a, p.180). To respond is to enter into a relationship of mutual interdependence that requires sensitivity and empathy for place(s) and the people and broader ecological community who dwell there. It is forward looking and considers how human actions effect, not just the present, but also the future. To be place-responsive is to think and act in sustainable ways. In addition the notion of responsiveness contains sense of caution in ascribing a fixed site as the “true” place or source of identity and security. Rather as mobile citizens we “are destined to experience multiple places – multiple centres of significance” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.55).

How do we encourage and enable students to feel safe and comfortable in places rather to feel like a stranger with little or no attachment to places? How, in Relph’s (1976) terminology do we assist them to be an empathetic insider rather than an outsider, who is adrift and ‘placeless’? If places are sources of security and contribute to developing individual and community identity, then these questions are of importance to outdoor educators. How can we expect students to care for, and act on behalf of places if they have no attachment nor commitment to places? How can we foster a sense of place in a short programme that is fitted into a busy school curriculum?

Very few state schools have the time or financial resources to implement extensive outdoor education programmes that allow students to develop an intimate knowledge of place through repeated visits of a long duration. However, this has not stopped some schools looking for innovative ways to implement place-responsive outdoor experiences within their existing curricula. Efforts to move beyond activity focussed programmes offered by outside providers have been inspired by a desire to; encourage staff and students to utilise the skills and knowledge that they already have; become more familiar with local places of significance; reduce costs; provide students with opportunities to plan and display leadership skills, where responsibility and consequences can be connected, without the intervention of “the expert” to ensure safety; and a desire to connect outdoor experiences more closely with the New Zealand Curriculum. It is to such a programme that my attention now turns.

## An example of a place-responsive outdoor education programme

During 2010 and 2011 I directed a research project funded by a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI)<sup>2</sup>. This fund has been established to enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices to improve outcomes for learners. The TLRI encourages reciprocity between researchers and teachers and aims to build the capability of teachers to improve their teaching practice by learning from the findings of research. In addition it seeks to deepen researchers' understanding of teaching and learning by engaging with teachers.

The project's specific aims where to:

- a. Understand teachers' existing conceptions of teaching and learning in outdoor education<sup>3</sup>;
- b. Work with teachers to explore where they commonly conduct outdoor experiences and investigate how these places may be made "more visible" in the teaching and learning process.
- c. Jointly develop, implement and review a programme that is conscious of, and responds to, place and;
- d. Gain an understanding of students' experiences of a place-based approach.

The two partner schools in this project where Ngaruawahia High School (NHS) and Mount Maunganui College. In this section I wish to discuss some students' reactions to a place-responsive year 12/13 outdoor education programme that was introduced into NHS school. These comments come from interviews conducted several weeks after the outdoor education experience. The voice(s) of students often goes unheard in outdoor education research, and as has been argued elsewhere (Dyson, 2006), there is much to be gained from listening to the experiences of students in informing curriculum design and implementation.

NHS is a decile<sup>4</sup> two high school situated approximately 20 km from Hamilton on the Waikato River. It has a roll of approximately 290

<sup>2</sup> See [www.tlri.org.nz](http://www.tlri.org.nz)

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of two teachers' understanding of outdoor education see Wattchow & Brown (2011)

<sup>4</sup> Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.

students; 74% of whom identify as Māori and 80% of those with Tainui iwi<sup>5</sup>. The Perry Outdoor Education Trust, a local charitable organisation, supports the provision of outdoor education at NHS. Many of the students will have participated in school camps in years 9 or 10. As a consequence of changes in staffing there had not been a senior year outdoor education programme in place for sometime. Through participation in the TLRI project one of the teachers took it upon herself to re-institute a senior outdoor education experience. Because there had not been a year 12 programme for some time it was



An example of a place responsive Outdoor education programme. Image taken by Mike Brown.

decided that this experience would be open to the year 13 students as well. Following discussions around the possibilities of place-responsive approaches, Tarena (the teacher) decided that rather than outsourcing or attending a residential camp, this experience would consist of:

<sup>5</sup> Education Review Office report (2009)

- Day 1** A bus journey to Pukeatua for a walk over Maungatautari and short shuttle ride to Lake Karapiro Domain. Students spent some time inside the southern enclosure of the reserve and were treated to close encounters with Kaka and Takahe.
- Day 2** A run/walk from Lake Karapiro to Cambridge, a paddle by waka to Hamilton, and a walk to the marae on the university campus.
- Day 3** Walk from the marae back to the waka, via Hamilton Gardens with a stop to view Te Parapara, a traditional Māori garden, and the sustainable organic backyard garden. The group then paddled back to Turangawaewae Marae in Ngaruawahia and walked the final kilometre back to school.

Apart from the initial 75 kilometre bus trip from the school to the starting point (and a 4 km shuttle off the mountain to the campsite) the students conveyed themselves back to school on foot and by waka (a distance of over 90 km). This three day journey took into account the significance of Maungatautari and Te Awa (the Waikato) for these students who are predominantly affiliated to Tainui. The concept for the journey was proposed by Tarena but the students were allocated organisational and leadership roles. For example, two students did a pre-tramp familiarisation walk and then led their peers on the trip; students were responsible for organising the food and cooking the meals; they booked the bus, and other students the accommodation, whilst others organised the waka. Thus the students had an opportunity to make meaningful decisions and contribute their knowledge and expertise. The journey was staffed by teachers, including the school sports co-ordinator, whose speciality is organising waka events. As an observer and participant on the journey I was highly impressed by the skills and knowledge displayed by the students in regards to waka - not only in terms of physical skill but cultural understandings of protocol (e.g., karakia). Staying on the university's marae involved a powhiri and it was interesting to see how those students familiar with protocol guided and assisted those who were not familiar. The students who ran the kitchen on the marae had obviously received tutelage from experienced elders and they commanded respect and tolerated no nonsense.

The journey contained no activities designed to heighten a sense of perceived risk nor place students in positions that required them to consciously confront fear and “conquer” their fear. Undoubtedly

some students found it physically difficult and some may have found it challenging to stay in a tent or sleep “marae style” in the wharenuui, but these were part of the overall experience and were not “manufactured” or contrived. This journey was chosen for a number of reasons; these are places of significance to Tainui and thus the families of these students, the activities did not require specialist skills/equipment beyond that already existing in the school or the local community (e.g., the waka belong to Turangawaewae Waka Sports Club which is on the school’s doorstep), it was local and didn’t require expensive transport and a long period of time travelling, the nature of the activities built on existing knowledge (both physical and cultural) and allowed the students to be actively involved in planning. Importantly the students could make their way back home – they could travel on their awa to their homes.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with six students, in pairs (three male, three female), and several themes emerged in the conversations that we had. These are discussed briefly below.

### **A physical challenge: Scope for self-regulation**

All students enjoyed the physical challenge particularly the hike. For many of them it was a new experience and it allowed them to experience an environment that differed from what they were used to. The hike was a combination of a formed gravel path and a narrow relatively poorly defined track along the ridge. At one point the track rose steeply and the students had to climb up tree roots, this “jungle” experience clearly stood out. On the second morning students either walked or ran into Cambridge, a distance of about 8 kilometres. Some turned it into a race whilst others formed small groups and walked. Several students made comments about how this allowed them to set their own level of challenge without being forced into something against their will. Even fit students saw this journey as a challenge, more so “than like the usual camps you do. Like you have to do certain types of activities like little games and team building, but this was like straight in there, hard work and stuff”.

### **Being self-propelled: A sense of achievement**

Students considered the self-propelled nature of the journey as a highlight and completion brought a sense of pride. As mentioned the

hike was valued for its novelty value but paddling was also valued for a number of reasons. Those who were experienced paddlers enjoyed being able to share their knowledge and see others develop skills and confidence in the boat. Students who knew the river well, from training on it regularly mentioned the satisfaction of seeing familiar places and knowing what was around the next corner as they got closer to home. These same students also expressed pleasure at seeing new parts of the river that they had not experienced before. Several students mentioned developing a new appreciation from travelling in a self-propelled manner, in particular the discovery of new places or a new perspective through travelling more slowly. For example, seeing places “that you didn’t think were there”. Some students expressed disappointment at being shuttled 4 km at the end of day one. This, in a small way, “broke” the purity of self-propelled travel for them. Several stated that they would have been happy to have walked this section. Two students indicated that they could easily drive the total distance in a short period of time but really valued the fact that they had got home through their own effort.

### **Planning: The opportunity to make decisions and contribute**

Students appreciated the opportunity to have a high level of input into planning and running the programme. They reported enjoyment of being able, within bounds, to set their own pace and not be “bossed around like you are on camp where you have to be busy all the time”. Students of this age appeared to understand the contrived nature of earlier camps that focussed on “confidence building and cooperation within the team”; they clearly expressed a preference for a more journey style programme where activities weren’t so overtly facilitated. One student expressed it as “awesome, it was not a setup programme”, she realised that planning was involved but the nature of this programme meant that students were involved in making important decisions. Another student observed that when you are not with an instructor “you teach yourself almost” - a realisation on the part of the student perhaps that teaching doesn’t equal learning? In the same interview the other student interjected and said “we took control... we are going to be adults soon, we need to organise stuff ourselves and just take responsibility”. These two young men admitted that they would “sit back” if they thought they didn’t need to do something. They appreciated the fact that responsibility was placed on them and the other students. But they also appreciated

that the teachers were there to support them “just in case they were needed”. The students realised that it was their journey and for it to be a success they had to support one another. Several students realised that they needed to “step up” and take on leadership roles at various stages. They appreciated the opportunity emerge as a leader, as and when required, rather than having a leadership role imposed on them. They saw more scope for this in this type of programme than a more ‘adventurous activity’ style of camp.

## **A journey home**

The notion of the journey and satisfaction of moving towards a known destination was mentioned frequently. For several students the realisation that the journey was “for real” struck home when the bus that dropped them at Pukeatua drove away. For all students there appeared to be a sense of achievement in arriving home or “coming back” and reflecting on what had been achieved over the three days. No one mentioned that being in a familiar, and sometimes urban, environment (e.g., walking to the university marae) detracted from their enjoyment. One student even described the mix of rural and urban as a nice “kind of balance”. Two students saw a contrast between a “normal school camp” and the journey in terms of the level of involvement each elicited. At camp you could “sit out” an activity if you didn’t want to do it whereas on the journey there was the perception that “you don’t get an option to opt out, you had to do it no matter what, being on the journey made us do it, it was actually really fun”. The reality is that students could have opted out. Being close meant that parental support or a means of “escape” was also readily available. None of the students spoken to appeared to consider this an option, perhaps because “it was actually really fun”.

## **Cultural connections**

Whilst not mentioned frequently, several students talked of “stories from the past” that had been passed down through the family. One student spoke of how, when on the walk he reflected on the stories his dad had told him and how the trail was his ancestors’ “road”. Another student acknowledged that whilst the waka that they paddled was made of modern materials, it was the same way that people got around in the past. An interesting aspect was how, in conversation, one student stated that he didn’t know as much about the river as he

felt he should and he expressed a desire to learn more as “I just know that it is part of my life, I am there almost everyday... I think I should learn more about it”. It is difficult to say whether this desire will be fulfilled but it was an unprompted response to his fellow student’s comment.

## Discussion

The interviews provide a snapshot of some students’ experiences of an attempt at a place-responsive outdoor education programme. These students appear to have valued the journey concept and were able to see differences between it and a residential camp experience. As senior year students they appreciated the opportunity to take on responsibility and took pride in completing a challenge that brought them back to school and their home community. Some of the themes that emerged are similar to those experienced by tertiary students on a similar journey (see Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Responses from both the tertiary students and these students indicate a sense of satisfaction at completing a self-propelled journey.

Whilst the focus of this chapter has been on students’ perceptions it is clear that their experiences have been shaped by the pedagogy employed. Terena is well versed in the principles of place-responsive education and was particularly keen to give students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local environment, to experience travelling in “their place”. She also clearly outlined expectations, roles and responsibilities. Tarena also drew on the expertise and resources in her community. Staff that facilitated the programme already had existing relationships with the students, both in and out of school (e.g., through the waka club). The nature of the activities meant that students could lead and make decisions without fear of catastrophic consequences. The outcomes frequently associated with outdoor education programmes were exhibited in ways that may have not been dramatic (e.g., displaying trust by belaying or communicating effectively in a tunnel), but they were evidenced in the mundane but necessary tasks that were required to complete the journey (e.g., cooking a meal or working as a team to carry a heavy waka to the water’s edge).

Arguably one of the most relevant findings of this case study is that students see this as a viable and satisfying means to engage in outdoor

activity. It did not “suck”, nor was it described as boring or a waste of time. My observation was that the students were engaged, they appeared to be enjoying themselves, and they displayed commitment and empathy for each other and their surroundings. I can make no claims as to whether this approach is better than a residential camp. But I would be bold enough to say that it is a viable alternative; it allows a substantial level of authentic student decision-making and autonomy, it does not require an undue emphasis on risk management, it is financially less demanding on families, it goes some way to connecting schools (teachers and students) with local places, it allows the development of relationships between staff and students unhindered by the intervention of outside experts, and its ecological footprint is possibly less than that of a programme requiring greater logistics in terms of transport and built infrastructure.

It must be remembered that this programme is embryonic and it will undoubtedly be refined in the future. What it has done is lay a solid foundation for staff to further develop more nuanced approaches and strategies to embed place-responsive practices in the programme. For example, Tarena is keen to get a Tainui elder involved next year to strengthen the students’ knowledge of the river.

## **Signposts to a place-responsive pedagogy**

Place-responsive outdoor education, is by its very nature, tailored to specific locales and communities therefore it is not possible to prescribe a generic programme nor list of activities. Wattchow and Brown (2011) have however highlighted four signposts of place-responsive pedagogy that may act as guides. The adopting or adaptation of these ultimately rests with the educator - for each place and its community has different needs. By way of assisting educators seeking to implement a place-responsive programme I shall briefly outline the four signposts here.

### ***1. Being present in and with a place***

To develop a relationship with place requires that students have the opportunity to feel comfortable and at ease. This is difficult with fast moving expeditions or when the environment is continually used as a testing ground. Taking time to allow students to become familiar with the smells, textures, and shifting moods of a place allows them to simply “be”. Perhaps this is the type of difference we could strive

for rather than “highly packaged” activity programmes, which rather than being an alternative, are merely a concentrated version of the fragmented and ‘busy’ lifestyles so many experience in western societies.

To create space and time requires that educators believe and acknowledge that being in outdoor places is significant and meaningful. The position advocated reflects the call by some educators for greater attention to be placed on assisting students to develop attentiveness. As an example, Tooth and Renshaw (2009) suggest that the primary purpose of schooling is to facilitate the development of attentive citizens who are able to live in the world thoughtfully, having spent time dwelling in, and studying it. Undoubtedly outdoor education’s experiential approach offers many wonderful opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with nature through understanding and experiencing our connection to it.

## **2. The power of place-based stories and narratives**

This second signpost, builds on a heightened sensory awareness, by recognising the value of cultural meanings attached to places. It is suggested that educators draw on stories and story-telling to enrich the educational experience. After all stories, and their retelling are fundamental to being human. It is stories, written and oral, and increasingly multi media, that convey cultural values and educational messages from one generation to another. “It is for precisely this reason that stories play a significant role in the experience of places by participants in outdoor education” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.186). Outdoor educators have the opportunity to tell stories, or to invite appropriate persons to share their stories, of place. By doing so they are able to convey the meaning of place, and play a role in the building of a relationship between participants and place. In addition students may be given the opportunity to build their story of a place and incorporate it into their personal narrative. “Storytelling is not a frivolous or fanciful endeavour, it is a serious attempt to connect and make sense of where we are and who we are” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.190). As Park (1995) has highlighted, a place whose story is told is harder to dismiss.

Stories will emerge through engagement with places and those who inhabit those places. There are no hard and fast rules about what should be told. However it is desirable that a story contains material that cannot easily or readily be instructed or summarised.

### ***3. Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places***

This signpost combines elements of the first two. It encourages both “a felt, embodied encounter with a place and an engagement with knowing the place through various cultural knowledge systems, such as history, ecology, geography, and so on” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.190). It is as if we become an apprentice to place and it becomes the teacher (Raffan, 1993). It is an attempt to reconcile the division in Western culture between embodied experience and rationale interpretation. In a place-responsive approach there is the recognition that both are needed. Place cannot be understood from a purely detached or rational position, nor can it be only felt at the level of the individual. “Outdoor educators are well placed to present a truly integrated curriculum for learners; one where teachers and guides know how to thoughtfully and tactfully combine experiencing particular places with the study of those places” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.192). Berry’s (1987) four questions may be a useful to bear in mind when thinking about apprenticing ourselves to place: What is here in this place?; What will this place permit us to do?; What will this place help us to do?; How is this place connected with my home place?

### ***4. The representation of place experience***

Wattchow and Brown (2011) contend that, “the key to unlocking the potential of place-responsiveness as pedagogic practice extends the relationship of experience and reflection to include the representation of experience” (p.194). They suggest two ways of approaching this. First, as educators we can develop learners’ critical capacities “in interpreting how the place they are learning in has been and is represented in various forms of cultural media” (p.194). For example, how has this place been represented on topographical maps? What does this form of representation say about valued knowledge, and whose knowledge system is conveyed and whose is silenced? A good example of this arose during our trip. The original name for Te Rapa is several kilometres up river of the present suburb of that name. Somewhere in the map making process Europeans “moved” Te Rapa and in so doing largely erased the meanings which gave rise to the original settlement.

The second way is for learners to create their own interpretive works inspired by place. These notes, sketches, photographs and so forth can be taken home and become the basis for continued reflection.

Wattchow and Brown (2011) suggest that the integration of embodied experiences, within communities, and in places, coupled with reflection and representation that makes the work of place-responsive outdoor educators valuable in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. From a place-responsive perspective it is people and place(s) that are the foundation for curriculum development. “What is taught, and learnt, emerges through interaction rather than being delivered through set activities with pre-determined outcomes” (p.196)

## Conclusion

It is clear that this century will bring extraordinary challenges to how we live on the planet. Climate change and social and economic instability will force individuals and communities to react and evolve. Even though these phenomena are global, their impact will be experienced locally. In this chapter I have attempted to highlight the role that outdoor educators can play in addressing some aspects of the most important ecological and educational questions we face. I am conscious of avoiding grandiose claims and concur with Tinning’s (2002) call for a modest pedagogy.

I have briefly outlined some critiques that signal the shortcomings of traditional approaches in addressing students’ relationship with place. I have argued that place(s) and peoples’ relationships to them are integral to being human. Failure to enact a place-responsive pedagogy in outdoor education has potentially profound implications. For as Gruenewald (2003) argues, failure to attend to places impoverishes human experience and potentially leads to ecological degradation and the loss of cultural knowledge that we may regret.

I have briefly outlined how one school has implemented a place-responsive outdoor education programme and shown that students’ saw it as an enjoyable and educative experience. Becoming place-responsive has the potential to engage both educators and students in different ways with regards to thinking, knowing and being in places. In doing so it offers opportunities to enrich the lives of our students, our communities and our places.

A place-responsive approach may not be the only way to address the shortcomings of traditional approaches to educating outdoors, but it is one way that takes seriously the challenges that we face in

an undeniably changing world. A place-responsive pedagogy offers a potential way to reconnect people with places which is more than a “greenie twist”. It is a serious attempt to foreground the role that place(s) have in personal and collective identity and well-being. For as Park (1995) noted, “how we inhabit a place can be the most telling expression of how we sense its worth, our intention for it and our connection with it” (p.21). I would strongly argue that outdoor education experiences that foster a connection with place may provide a way for outdoor educators in Aotearoa New Zealand, and beyond, to address one of the most important educational questions of our time.

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## The Role of Outdoor Education Centres

By Brigid Graney & Simon Graney

Outdoor education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand typically combine outdoor pursuits as a means of social and personal development, with elements of environmental awareness. This chapter draws from the experience of the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre (commonly referred to as simply OPC) – Great Barrier Island, and from discussions with several other outdoor education centres.

OPC has typified the “dominant historical construction of outdoor education” focused on “risk, outdoor pursuit activities, skill development, personal growth, interpersonal relationships, and some environmental care” described in Chapter 1. So, why are we contributing here when the current climate of dialogue and critique appears to be challenging the very nature of programmes like OPC’s? Largely, it is because we have recently asked ourselves the exact question that this book is asking, namely “what are we educating for?” This has introduced a process, described by Allen Hill in Chapter 3, as we take a close look at our educational outcomes and goals. We see no need to defend our delivery of the “dominant historical construction of outdoor education”, but rather hope to inform others by describing the process we are currently undergoing. We have set ourselves on a path of incremental change, reviewing our educational philosophy, and both the content and methodology of the learning we facilitate. We acknowledge that the days of ‘business as usual’ are behind us as we step up to the challenges of being more accountable to the future.

In this chapter we describe the process we have undertaken that has led to a refreshed vision for the future. We draw from the experiences of some other outdoor centres, and explore some ideas and challenges for enacting this vision with the young people that visit the centre. The focus is on broad-based environmental learning at outdoor education centres. This may give the impression of a heavy weighting specifically toward these outcomes within our programmes, however this must be viewed in balance with all the other outcomes we aim to achieve.

Environmental learning generally is an acknowledged area of potential development in outdoor pursuit programmes. It used to be enough to name a few plants, camp carefully, and talk about some issues. The playing field has changed dramatically in the last decade, firstly with a more critical approach to environmental education, trends toward education for sustainability, and expectations of outdoor education generally.

## Refreshed Vision for the Future

OPC recently commissioned an educational review, conducted by Pip Lynch and Allen Hill. The review measured OPC's core secondary school programme against current outdoor thinking and directions. The recommendations were the motivator for a subsequent curriculum design workshop held in July 2011. The two-day workshop was attended by outdoor education academics, practicing teachers, instructors both past and present, and OPC management. From this evolved OPC's new educational philosophy – a step up from its previous mission statement. This provides a contemporary vision for the learning OPC fosters in Aotearoa New Zealand's youth, and key concepts that underpin the teaching. The process confirmed our belief that the outdoors allows powerful opportunities for learning, and defined the spectrum of this learning. By confirming, we remain resolute in the belief that outdoor education, providing visceral connections to the surrounding world, is fertile ground for educating for a more sustainable world (Cachelin, Rose, Dustin & Shooter, 2011). By defining, we brainstormed everything we could be and then selected a shortlist of what we could do best and most consistently. Five learning themes were identified, these being: self, others, place, thinking and skills. The order of these themes was very much a considered decision. Each of these themes unpacks into more detail to further define its key attributes. For example 'self' unpacks to include values, self-management and resilience. 'Place' unpacks into ecological literacy and care.

Parallel with this process OPC has also identified how it aligns with the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007). This is not about incorporating the NZC, but rather understanding its principles, values, key competencies and learning areas. This in turn enables us to understand the broader educational community we operate within, particularly given that our core user group is

secondary schools. Through this we better comprehend the added value we can provide schools as a practical extension to their teaching.

OPC has spent the last couple of years re-developing its safety management system to include three tiers – 1. Fundamental principles; 2. Instructor handbook (generic activity policies); and 3. Activity management plans (site specific information). The safety management system has proved to work very well for staff. We saw that the educational framework fitted into a similar three-tiered structure. The overarching philosophy, principles and themes form the first tier. A generic second tier unpacks the themes in more detail. Lastly the third tier, specific to a site or activity, gives concrete ideas to facilitate learning using that site or activity. This third tier is pitched at staff who are new to OPC, and those staff who have other commitments in between work blocks at the centre. These commitments include everything from instructing for schools or other centres, to trapping possums or raft guiding in California. While we don't want to spoon-feed what instructors deliver, we do want to be more directive and transparent about the expectations held by the organisation.

This refreshed educational philosophy has been instrumental in initiating a cycle of reflection and change at OPC Great Barrier. It has provided a focused and more directive approach to guiding our educators, and has gone some way to overcoming some of the challenges that are discussed further below. It will also open up opportunities for research, dialogue with industry, and problem solving within the organisation.

Overall, this sharpened educational focus has initiated a process of *filtering* and of *application*. By more clearly understanding the learning experiences we are trying to achieve, filters can be applied to potential content. We are aware of the breadth and depth of sustainability as a subject, for example as outlined by the Key Concepts for Education for Sustainability (Ministry of Education, 2010a). We clearly cannot achieve everything given the length of time we work alongside students nor given the demands of meeting other learning objectives. We can however, apply appropriate content that is relevant to the type of programme we deliver, is relevant to the place that it is being delivered and, most importantly, is relevant to the students.

The task from here has no quick or simple resolution. Rickinson, Lundholm & Hopwood (2009) provide plenty of evidence about the challenges and complexities presented by environmental learning. Their book focuses on formal learning situations (school and university), however the insight it provides has broader application. It is easy to develop learning outcomes but it is a whole new challenge to ensure that the learning process is actually effective and is making some sort of impression on the students' learning experience. This seems particularly challenging in the value-laden field of sustainability and the environment. This learning experience is likely to be highly variable and dependent on what each student brings to the moment including socio-economics, family-held values, perspectives, emotional dimensions, perception of relevance and general interest. Rickinson *et al.* (2004) describe this challenge as taking into account the complexity of the teaching-learning processes and the important differences between the *espoused*, the *enacted* and the *experienced* curriculum. And this describes exactly where OPC currently sits. Other outdoor centres and providers are at a similar point...

Adventure Specialties has recently been involved in a development process directly relating to the environment and sustainability. A collective of six Christian Outdoor Education providers gathered in June 2011 and developed the Raurimu Accord 2011 which sets out Environmental Care for Christian Adventure Organisations. The accord is presented from a Christian faith perspective for protecting, caring for and restoring Creation now and for generations to come. The aims are:

- Empower lives of personal responsibility, which lead to restored relationships with the Creator, the world around us and other people.
- Design programmes informed by the DOC Environmental Care Code and principles of Leave No Trace.
- Promote awareness of other creatures and our need to protect and care for them.
- Model sustainable practices for management of our buildings, properties and activities.
- Challenge the pervasive consumerism that underpins environmental decay.

- Minimise impacts of travel on local and global ecological systems.
- Seek opportunities to partner with conservation organisations.

Adventure Specialties comment that ‘that’s the easy part, now comes the hard part of enacting the Accord’ (Simpkin, personal communication, October 2011). Both OPC and Adventure Specialties are at the same juncture, having formulated their respective *espoused* curriculum (again we give focus to the environmental aspects of the curriculum). The *enacting* of the curriculum is something that they, like us, are grappling with. It is easy to identify what the task is and what learning will encompass, but how to incorporate this into a rich learning experience with students? There is the added challenge of ensuring the curriculum is consistently enacted and experienced, when balanced with all other aspects of the programmes. The experienced curriculum will be difficult to know, and given the difficulty of collecting empirical evidence from the students themselves, it will be a challenge to measure its success. A great opportunity for a future research project!

The other challenge embedded within this is having the flexibility to ‘start where the learner is’ for any environmental learning. This variability is a common theme between outdoor education centres. Programme participants range from those being assessed for Level 3 Unit Standards in Sea Kayaking, right through the spectrum to those who have never been to the beach before. This will have a significant impact on the *what*, *how* and *why* of their learning experience. Dealing with the variability between and within groups is a challenge any educator must address...

The Marine and Education Recreation Centre’s (MERC) predominant user group is from lower decile schools in South Auckland. Many of the students attending MERC have never been to the beach. Here, one of the key sensory experiences is to discover that the sea tastes salty! (Grace, personal communication, October 2011). This starting point will greatly influence the level that anything is pitched at them.

Educational outcomes defined by an outdoor centre can be superseded with unit standard and achievement standard training

and/or assessment required by a school, or the personal development focus a programme may have. There can be significant time pressures added to a programme to ensure this delivery. To answer this call, we are developing a set of 'non-negotiables.' These are social and environmental outcomes that are expected irrespective of client group or specific requirements. For example, Leave No Trace principles, self-care and positive team participation will be some of the non-negotiables.

## Attending to change through the learning experience

As individuals and communities we are deeply implicated with the direction planet earth is taking, so what are the personal and collective skills required for a better tomorrow? Again, we can ask — what are we educating for? When blending environmental learning into education, the ultimate goal surely is to shape an ecologically literate citizenry prepared to make environmentally responsible choices in all dimensions of our lives (Cachelin *et al.*, 2011). Ecological literacy is about understanding the patterns and processes by which nature sustains life and is based on creating and nurturing communities (Capra, 2005). In addition, it is a better understanding of the *hidden* impacts of our actions that will assist us on our journey to become not only ecologically literate, but ecologically intelligent (Goleman, 2009). What better place to incorporate this language than when surrounded by working natural communities in the outdoors. It is still early days, but imagine if the language around the Centre was directed toward systems thinking, reflecting lessons from ecology - the web of life, the cycles of matter, the flow of energy. A team of students suddenly becomes a community striving for better functionality and immediately relevant lessons are all around – resilience, strength in diversity, interdependence, networks of relationships, cooperation, connections. This learning from nature is a core principle of ecological literacy and is described well through numerous case studies in *Ecological Literacy: Educating our children for a sustainable world* (Stone & Barlow 2005).

Outdoor education can aspire to the high standards of teaching scientifically based ecological principles, experientially, and from which a broad based understanding of sustainability can emerge (Cachelin *et al.* 2011). It is here, with the incorporation of intentional language and metaphor that the foundations of sustainability can be reinforced at outdoor centres.

The shift in focus of ‘what we are educating for’ now requires an associated shift in how we facilitate the experience. How we frame things, the language and metaphors we use and the links we make. For example, if we are educating for better communities then what are the skills that students need to be effective community members? To date, we have used the term ‘team’ for much of our facilitation processing. However, in this context, ‘community’ may be a more appropriate and relevant term. Does everyone belong to a team? Does everyone belong to a community? Will these participants remain as part of the same team back at home or will they be part of a broader community? This approach has the benefit of linking learning themes together. In the context of OPC then, it is not only the theme of place that addresses environmental learning. There are requisite skills to be found under all other learning themes (self, others, thinking and skills).

As a starting point to identify the specifics of what some of these skills are, we looked to the Key Competencies (Ministry of Education, 2010b) and Action Competence Framework (Teaching & Learning Research Initiative, 2009) for Education for Sustainability. Here is a long list of personal and social attributes required for a more sustainable world. Outdoor education centres are ripe ground for active application of many of these attributes in authentic ‘felt’ situations. This may be as much about developing the social competence of students in these authentic and often challenging situations as about teaching the nuts and bolts of global issues or sustainability per se. We acknowledge the scepticism about outdoor education’s ability to deliver on social competence and citizenship claims (Lynch & Hill 2010). However we believe that lack of evidence to support social competence is more about the complexity of gathering evidence rather than the inability to facilitate change. We remain encouraged by plenty of anecdotal evidence from students and teachers.

While the teaching in the outdoor context may or may not be specifically directed at sustainability, the authentic experiences, application of social skills and facilitation of the experience in a reflective cycle are all recognised skills that tomorrow’s problem solvers need (Ministry of Education, 2010c). Many of these skills are facilitated during the programmes that outdoor centres are delivering today.

We are in a phase of seeking tools and techniques for incorporating ecologically focused foundations within programmes and are fortunate to be in these research rich times. The introduction of place responsiveness to outdoor education has been a timely example of this.

We have identified untapped opportunities for integrating place responsiveness (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) and connection into the OPC Great Barrier programmes. Some of the signposts outlined by Mike Brown in Chapter 5 are easier to integrate into our programme culture than others, for example Signpost 1 - being present in and with a place is relatively easy to incorporate within our programmes. Others such as Signpost 2 - The power of place-based stories and narratives, is a challenge for us primarily because we do not have the luxury of long-term residential staff. Most of our staff live in other places and come to this new place for short-term blocks of work. As a result, Signpost 3 - Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places - may take these staff more time and personal commitment than a full-time residential staff member. How do we address this challenge? We are being adaptive and are providing local histories on the back of charts and maps. The aim of this is to assist instructors and their groups learn more about the places they are journeying through, together. We recognise that this presentation of 'information and facts' is not a technique supported by the proponents of place responsiveness however, it is a valid step toward the ideal. Outdoor centres attract participants who have often travelled a significant distance from their 'place'. While place responsiveness has a focus on getting to know our neighbourhood place, there is merit in connecting with aspects of place on a national scale...

Outdoor centres such as Outward Bound offer a means to connect to places often far from home and through this provide a larger context of what place means (Maclean, personal communication, October 2011). The value of place is not exclusive to an individual's local environment - there is something invigorating about journeying somewhere new and the stimulus that new scenery, topography and ecosystems can provide.

## Learning by Living

Residential outdoor education centres such as OPC provide more than just learning through 'on programme' outdoor experiences. There are rich possibilities to extend this learning to the living 'domestic' context and most outdoor centres incorporate various aspects of this. Ultimately we seek an experience where all parts of the programme – both programmed and non-programmed time have been consciously developed. We are ideally situated for this. Great Barrier Island is off the grid for mains power, water and sewerage. We are reliant on a diesel generator although there is an ongoing programme of conversion to alternative renewable energy sources. Part of the water cycle is managed on site – collection and treatment of water through to waste disposal. Many people on the island grow their own vegetables and catch fish to complement the diet.

This place then is well set up for role modelling. Should market supply and demand shift, we are well established for a course more focused on sustainability. The vision we have for OPC Great Barrier is that the domestic component of the time on the island will complement the learning in the outdoor context and reflect many of the lessons we are trying to share. There are opportunities for students to manage their power and water allocation, harvest food from the garden or even to allocate groups 'green credits' (Higgins, 1996) which they can earn or spend depending on choices the group makes through the week. We have quite a journey to get there. One of the key challenges is shared vision within and between organisations. We lease space from a landowner who manages the domestic facilities - OPC operates out of a big shed full of gear. Food and accommodation, waste management, energy, water, is all managed by this other party. There is no centralised leadership of the facility as a whole, and so shared vision for a programme can only result from an ongoing process of influence and patience. Every organisation faces challenges similar to this. Departments compete for resources, staff have different ideologies and values, field versus marketing versus education versus catering all have their own operational and financial imperatives that need to be aligned.

At the time of writing, we are confident that a new 5 week residential programme will be starting next year. This programme is being developed by OPC and a mainland secondary school. The duration

and focus of the programme will allow application of many of the more visionary ideas we have. This will include cross-curricular learning and the integration of environmental learning into daily life.

## **Finding your own voice**

Creating learning experiences around ecological literacy and human-nature relationships can seem intimidating for someone without either a personal interest or specific training on the subject. Personality types differ and, in order to speak from the heart, an educator must find the approach and translation that best works for them. Only then can it come across with passion and authenticity. For example, an instructor shared with me how uncomfortable the 'barefoot walk' methods for teaching nature awareness made him. He described it as being too fluffy and that it left him cold. He therefore found it difficult to share this style of teaching with his students. After he had done a Leave No Trace training course he suddenly found an approach and language that resonated with him. While Leave No Trace is about caring for and conserving the outdoor environments we recreate in, there is ample opportunity to extend and link the learning. This may incorporate the choices we make in our everyday lives and the resulting impacts that link back to nature, and even how we care for the community urban spaces that we recreate in. Another instructor incorporates aspects of caring for place into his teaching by framing it around a 'Bush Gangster' theme, where the group is encouraged to look after the 'bros' in the 'hoods' (the woods). Look after the 'bros' because they look after you. Another instructor is an avid Sea Shepherd supporter. In any week it is his personal mission to get more people closer to the tipping point where they are inspired to do their bit to save the world. These examples demonstrate that there are different routes to a similar outcome and the importance of finding a means to share this, in an authentic way with students. There are potential tensions created through differences in the values held by the teacher (educator) and those of the learner (Rickinson et al, 2004). It is perhaps more beneficial to have general discussions, continuums or games that focus on exploring and understanding personal values rather than 'imposing' hierarchical values held by an educator.

## Addressing the future by training today

Four out of five of OPC's learning themes (self, others, thinking and skills) are well defined and documented in terms of what they look and feel like. Staff generally have a clear idea of how to facilitate and encourage discussion around these themes. It is the remaining theme of place which is a new skill area for many. Outdoor educators own personal ecological literacy needs developing in order for them to share this with students.

How then are tomorrow's educators being trained to deliver this forward looking outdoor education? Personal observation indicates that for many instructors 'environmental stuff' is mainly taught by those who have a personal passion for it. Historically, this has been supported by the 'silo' teaching of environmental education by outdoor training organisations. It can be seen as a discrete discipline in the outdoor industry – much like rock climbing or kayaking rather than being infused throughout all disciplines. It is either something you pick up naturally and therefore integrate into your teaching, or is an 'elective' that can be avoided or dismissed. Novice instructors are sometimes found wanting in their ability to, for example, run an environmental presentation, or may feel challenged when expected to relay interesting stories about place. As an employer of outdoor educators, we will increasingly be seeking those who are also skilled with tools and techniques for weaving ecological language and sustainability links into their practices. It is encouraging to see some of this capacity building by tertiary education providers to meet outdoor industry needs. An example is the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology who offer a variety of diploma and degree level qualifications with titles including 'sustainability' or 'environment' alongside outdoor education.

## Concluding thoughts

Outdoor centres have a valuable role to play for outdoor education in the 21st Century. There are many examples around the country of centres producing what we believe to be good learning outcomes. However some of these outcomes are based on a paradigm that is being questioned. This chapter and this book are part of creating a new paradigm that has the potential to inform and develop both practice and research in the coming years. Some current thinking

presupposes a dichotomy between learning through outdoor adventures and education for sustainability. However there is a place for both and each can enhance the other - in developing programmes educators can select from a wide variety of tools to best serve the outcomes of their client group. Outdoor education is a small but valuable part of how society creates its future. As a sector we have a responsibility to be a coherent part of creating global citizens.

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## Bicultural perspectives of education outdoors

### Part 1: A Pākehā perspective on biculturalism in education outdoors

By Maureen Legge

#### Introduction

*The kuia stands on the steps of the wharenui to make her call as we walk slowly across the marae ātea.*

*“Haere mai! Haere mai! Haere mai!” She calls and then pauses momentarily before adding, “Haere mai rā e te manuhiri tuārangi e”, her voice holding onto the last note with a haunting sound. She has black glossy, curly hair, shining eyes and a ringing voice that sends out her message of welcome and aroha.*

*“Haere mai! Haere mai! Haere mai...” she continues her call of welcome. Her karanga never fails to bring a lump into my throat and tears to my eyes. She smiles. She has told me this is a joyous occasion and she is happy to be welcoming us. Her hands wiriwiri at her sides as she slowly moves back into the interior of the wharenui.*

*(Legge, 2006)*

In this chapter, I narrate aspects of how I have worked as a Pākehā teacher educator to establish cultural competency in order to meet the challenge of including Māoritanga in teacher education. To illustrate my experience I use autoethnographic excerpts, drawn from my PhD research (Legge, 2006). Autoethnographic authorship and representation is deeply personal, using the researcher’s life experience as primary data and studying this lived experience through investigating subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The excerpts I use reveal something of my cultural limitations and vulnerabilities, to show how through immersion on a marae, my ‘ways of knowing’ have been challenged but my cultural competency has been enhanced.

The New Zealand historian Michael King (1999) wrote that Māori<sup>1</sup> had every right to be able to be Māori in their own country Aotearoa New Zealand<sup>2</sup>, and to expect Pākehā<sup>3</sup> to respect them. This principle

underpins my work as a teacher educator in physical education and outdoor education. For the past twenty years I have been working in partnership with a Māori outdoor education provider where learning about tikanga Māori and the outdoors are closely linked. My work is with undergraduate physical education teacher education (PETE) students who annually accompany me to Northland, New Zealand, for an e noho marae (marae stay). During our stay the turangawaewae of the marae and local places of sea and forest, are the means to learn and practice tikanga Māori.

The e noho marae programme was developed for the PETE students to address such questions as: How can teachers understand what it is to be Māori? What is a culturally responsive pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand? This means the PETE students are at the centre of the e noho marae programme while culture is the catalyst for their learning. Prioritising learning activities that foreground culture as the catalyst means the PETE students participate in wānanga, role-plays, leadership and membership responsibilities, over a range of topics relating to tikanga Māori.

Initially I was motivated to undertake a 'quest' for cultural understanding because I wanted to support effective teaching in the physical education and outdoor education. I realised that few students in my classes had access to Māori culture in authentic ways (Legge, 1996). My rationale was to work towards cultural understanding through first-hand experience on the marae, and afterwards in the contemporary physical education setting on campus. E noho marae

<sup>1</sup> Māori – the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa New Zealand; Aotearoa is the Māori term for New Zealand. Māori is an official language and has become increasingly common that the Māori and English names for the country are used. Although the NZ Government has yet to formalise this naming as the official title of the country.

<sup>3</sup> King (1999) defined 'Pākehā as an indigenous expression used to describe New Zealand people and expressions of culture that are not Māori... derived from the Māori word 'pakepakehā' meaning fair-skinned folk' (p.10).

<sup>4</sup> Active seminars are a teaching and learning innovation I have developed. The students research topics in te ao kori, and present them actively to a small group over a 40 minute period. Actively means there must be hands on learning where the researcher conveys social, cultural and practical knowledge through their topic.

is supported, before and after the event, by on campus lectures, group work and practical student led active seminars<sup>4</sup>. I felt that it was important to be Pākehā and take a deliberative stance to nurture Māori culture because in doing so I could act as a role model for other non-Māori outdoor educators and physical educators.

*Each time I visit a marae I like to sleep in the same part of the wharenuī. I like the view of the wharenuī from this space, my back is against the wall of the tūpuna and I can look at the outdoor view when the front door of the meeting house is open. From this vantage point I can easily watch what is going on in the house; perhaps this is why the tūpuna photographs have been given this spot! I have spent long nights struggling to stay focused and attend to the korero in the wharenuī but because of the ritual of passing the tokotoko stick, I have been able to learn and experience traditional practices and to gain an insight into what being Māori represents.*  
(Legge, 2006)

From a personal and professional perspective my partnership with the Māori outdoor educators has not only supported and developed the PETE students' cross-cultural understanding, it has been significant to my own cross-cultural awareness. While I have led the PETE students, with the best intentions into the Māori world, I have not been immune to cultural errors or misunderstanding.

*During stays on the marae I have been personally challenged to comply with expected roles. I was very annoyed once when a kaumātua told the women in my class that if they were menstruating they could not swim. I was indignant and said so; "These are fee-paying students. Not being able to go out, on or in the water because of a natural bodily function seems to be archaic!" My comment was dismissed and an expectation that the protocol would not be disregarded hung in the air.*

*On another occasion, when an appeal to comply with the kaupapa of not being on or in the sea during menstruation was again requested, I offended Auntie Heni, one of the kuia. I repeated my resistance to the request by making a flippant remark about the status of menstruating women. My observation was with regard to modern technology designed*

*to accommodate menstrual fluids and I recalled many times on previous visits to the marae, before this cultural protocol emerged, when I had been menstruating, and had swum in the sea. I felt frustrated that it was now a problem.*

*Later, when I was told that my comment had been offensive to Auntie Heni, my immediate reaction was to be defensive and argue the point some more. However, on reflection I felt regretful because I had not meant to be impolite. I respected the wisdom of this older woman, and did not see her insisting we follow the kaupapa as the problem, but rather that there had been inconsistencies over this matter. (Legge, 2006)*

Becoming bicultural is problematic because as a Pākehā I have had to gain knowledge, understanding and application of values and beliefs that are unfamiliar in order to achieve a sympathetic understanding of a Māori worldview. Despite my commitment and interest in Māori culture, I have been perplexed to find that my own cultural understanding and acceptance of unfamiliar cultural practices has continually been challenged. To highlight this point further, I use the following excerpt to illustrate how immersion on a marae challenged my 'ways of knowing', but my cultural competency was enhanced through better understanding.

*We were standing beside the parked bus on the dusty road. It was very hot. The cicadas were making a deafening noise and every time a car went past, we had to move to one side and then regroup to stand silently, listening to the old man's voice as he continued his dialogue while the dust settled, cloaking everything in a fine brown layer... I was bored, fidgety and hot. I wanted to run down onto the beach and plunge into the cool water. I was so tired of listening to the same old stuff! No that's unfair; it was not the same 'stuff'. I didn't know that the area in front of us, now covered by a rough pine plantation, had been the site of a tribal massacre and burial!... Time marched on but the kaumatua was not going to let us forget the significance of the place as he recited endless karakia in Māori and then in Pākehā, explaining his kinship links and connections to the events of this place... My body felt invaded by the tension and wanted to twitch and jerk and run. How can this man talk for so long? How come he doesn't see my discomfort and relent? I raged inwardly.*

*Doesn't he know how demanding it is to listen to endless speeches in Māori?... I looked at the Māori people standing nearby. They belonged to his whanau. They stood and listened, their bodies apparently closed to the heat, their hearts and minds open to his words. He was telling them their history. I was just a bystander, probably an obtrusive one, who bought students here to this place every year to participate in a lived experience of their marae. There it is! Think about it! The meaning finally struck me. This man is the experience!*  
(Legge, 2006).

My experiences of marae stays fostered bicultural understanding through reflection on my own actions, beliefs and experiences. Challenged to be tolerant and accepting of difference, when I would have preferred familiar and more comfortable ways to understand, believe and respect, what I don't know, my reactions forced me to think and reconsider how I had missed opportunities for the cultural exchange I was pursuing! I realised I acted ignorantly. I was self-centred wanting things on my terms, dismissing the other culture.

However, the challenges implicit in 'being Pākehā' (King 1999, p.9) and committed to helping PETE students understand Māori cultural practices goes further than personal issues – it runs the risk of being immobilised in the face of postcolonial politics. Smith (1990) for example, questions why 'others', such as professionals like myself, seek to develop culturally sensitive knowledge and skills. Smith's concern is to wonder whether or not there is a hidden agenda. In defense of her stance, Smith cites the historical relationship of cultural sensitivity practiced by the nineteenth century missionaries. While the missionaries developed knowledge of Māori language, customs and values, and an understanding of Māori cosmology, their main interest was the "capture of souls" (p.53). In the process, they redefined Māori cultural beliefs and practices, and marginalised other beliefs, with the overriding intention to change the people concerned.

Smith advises non-Māori, with an interest in Māoritanga, that cultural competency be demonstrated through recognition of their limited expertise. She cautions that, despite trying to improve their understanding of Māoritanga, 'others' can be positioned in the sense that they – 'know all about the habits of the shellfish kina' - but this information may not be enough for informed cultural access. In other

words, attempts by 'others' to develop a bicultural approach through the addition of a Māori perspective could mean, seemingly Māori friendly activities run the risk of cultural distortion, providing a distinctly non-Māori experience!

Intuitively, even before I read Smith's comments, I have always been self-conscious of who 'I am' when I work within Māori cultural practices. Because of teacher power and the dominance of white middle class teachers it seems even more important that teachers like myself are culturally aware. Cultural awareness is about cultural consciousness raising, Friere's (1970) *conscientizãcion*. *Conscientizãcion* aims to construct a positive, coherent identity with another culture through personal connections so that a person is able to move from disconnection to cultural awareness that is personally significant. From my experience, to be culturally competent, mere contact with Māori culture is not enough. It takes time practicing customs, values and beliefs for personal meaning to develop a consciousness, about the social context in which Māori exist, and how cultural aspects might link to their day-to-day lives. Being able to identify with a culture rather than being concerned with difference is a defining moment in cross-cultural understanding (Behar, 1996).

Emerging bicultural outdoor educators need to take responsibility for including tikanga Māori in outdoor teaching and learning contexts. Fleras & Spoonley, (1999) suggest that central to developing cultural responsiveness in New Zealand it is important to understand the Treaty of Waitangi and its obligations, and acknowledge the many different types of ill effects colonisation has had on Māori. Avenues to promote cultural competency and sensitivity, and to expand personal knowledge about Māoritanga can be through such means as attending hui; Māori language classes; field trips to marae; extensive reading and seeking the support of Māori mentors. At a fundamental level, bicultural strategies for practitioners would be to learn the correct pronunciation of the Māori language, especially the names of places visited with students in the outdoors. Any effort to take part in 'Māori experiences encourages immersion in the culture. Alongside these capacities outdoor educators need to be willing to learn about their own cultural horizons and identity, in addition to accepting the limits of their cultural competence.

If these kinds of experiences occur alongside the application of book-learned knowledge, outdoor educators open up the possibility of being able to integrate an understanding of cultural identity and tikanga Māori into the outdoor settings where they teach (Legge, 2010). However, if outdoor educators adopt more persuasive ways for the inclusion of Māori culture by building outdoor education partnerships with local hapū and iwi, knowledge and understanding of Māori culture can be strengthened because outdoor practitioners, and their students, can experience first hand the diverse realities of Māori, and the cultural significance of their lives (Legge, 2006).

There is a challenge to including and making Māoritanga relevant in the face of activity responsive outdoor education. What I do is aimed at directly and indirectly offsetting traditional perceptions of outdoor education contexts. I believe that to be more open to Māori values we have to share in their knowledge and experiences. I am confident that Pākehā educators can contribute to the Māori 'project' but Pākehā will always do so as 'outsiders'. However, it is naïve to expect that everybody is going to be supportive and there will always be resistance of some form or another. What is important for Pākehā to be confident is the support and encouragement of Māori people.

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## Bicultural perspectives of education outdoors

### Part 2: E Tohu: A direction for Māori in the outdoors

By Howard Reti

Imagine witnessing a bolt of lightening as it strikes a tree and causes fire, right before your eyes. You look at it, struck with awesome wonder, you smell the fumes of smoke and you cough gasping for fresh air. Moving closer to the flames you feel the heat by reaching out your hand, and then pull it back quickly because the heat is so intense! You look around - to see if any one saw you - lucky for you there was no one.

This is the first land wānanga of fire, in other words 'education in the outdoors' regarding fire. For Māori, fires were an essential element for life, giving heat and light, cooking food, and for ceremonial uses. Many wānanga were developed using fire, for example sacred fires were connected to warfare, hunting and food gathering. The term ahi kā, long burning fires, was used to denote the people who were keeping the home fires burning. Māori originated from the wānanga of fire only a short moment in time ago<sup>1</sup>. Prior to the arrival of the European we lived in the outdoors, we were hunters and gatherers, we journeyed in the outdoors as of necessity, we learnt our language from the outdoors and we learnt our customs from the outdoors.

The wānanga I want to talk about is the wānanga regarding an open invitation to the fire. It is a tradition in the outdoors that if you see or smell smoke and see people gathered around it you draw near to it. At the edge of the fire you announce yourself, and you are made welcome to come closer, you are invited to get warm, share in food, conversation, and to stay the night. This is one of the oldest wānanga to mankind, and is still practiced in the outdoors today, and by many cultures. It is a wānanga that modern society has evolved from as teachings have been passed down in this time honoured way. When there is a hui at the marae each night that the wānanga or the hui continues, tikanga requires that one outside light is always left burning. The reason for this is so that a person needing warmth and

<sup>1</sup> Wānanga refers to learning. See Glossary for definitions of other Māori terms.

shelter can see the light and know that someone is there, just like the fire. Unfortunately the 21st century laws relating to conservation, insurance policies and risk management draw us away from this tradition with the ruling 'light no fires'.

European colonisation brought Māori into a modern society at an accelerated pace. As with accelerated learning you have to hang in there because if you let go, you spin out, getting battered and bruised. European contact altered and reduced Māori contact with the outdoors. The Māori moved from bare feet to shoes, from hikoī to riding a horse, from waka to sail, from a raupo whare to iron and timber housing, from puipui to flour sack clothing, from kiwi cloak to tuxedo, from fisherman to architect, from the country to the city, from mau rakau exponent to playing sport, from te reo to English. By the time we stopped and looked around we had left the outdoors behind!

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, when the emergence of contemporary Māori activists demanded the recognition of the tangata whenua and that the Treaty of Waitangi be honoured, that there was an upsurge in Māori realising the need to reclaim their cultural identity. Returning from the towns and cities to their papakainga for noho marae, wānanga and back to the ngahere and moana, many Māori took steps to re-educate themselves by journeying on old trails over the land and sea. Tribal outdoor programmes mushroomed throughout the motu. Māori ventured on expeditions such as the Ngati Porou outdoor journey 'Hikoī to Te Maunga Hikurangi' led by Joe McClutchie, and the 'Ngati Wai Voyage of Tukaiaia 1989' from Te Rawhiti to Aotea led by Howard Reti. These journeys reopened ancient trails and allowed whānau, hapū, and iwi to reconnect with their customs, values, traditions, art, music, whakapapa, and te reo. These activities rekindled the participants' sense of being Māori.

From my experience working in the outdoors over the past 30 years I have found that most of the young Māori participants have been deeply hurt in some way from the conflict of tribalism versus fitting into contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand society. These hurts are the effects of colonisation where loss of land, language and cultural identity lead to poverty, poor parenting, violence in the home, failure at school, gang influences, alcohol, and drug dependency. To help

heal these young people, our outdoor initiatives have assisted them to travel down three paths. Firstly, their rightful path as tangata whenua people of this land, a path given by birth to be Hoori or Huhana (George and Susan). Secondly, along their wairua (spiritual) path that only the outdoors can give to them; the smell of the fern roots just after a shower of rain has passed, listening to the lapping of a continuous shore break on a isolated beach, laying on Papatuanuku watching the tops of the trees dancing in the sky and realising how insignificant you are to mother nature. The final path was to follow the physical aspect where energy is exerted in the ngahere and moana. This is where the confidence gained by working as an individual or in a group, taking on the physical challenges of the outdoors, builds self-belief and character that can be drawn on in other contexts for more effective schooling, employment and family relationships. Māori in the outdoors to this date has not only been about recapturing the past but healing oneself and moving forward.

Traditional use of the outdoors centred on the provision of food, shelter, and warmth, but modern living has changed this focus. In recent years there has been a huge transformation for Māori outdoor users. While contemporary Māori still enjoy the resources of the outdoors for collecting kai moana and harakeke for weaving, many also use it for recreation. Some Māori now take their own leisure time with family and friends by going into the outdoors to pursue activities such as tramping, camping and fishing for the pure fun of it.

Looking from the past to the future, Statistics New Zealand (2005) identified a population of 625,100 Māori people accounting for 15% of the population in 2001. It is predicted that by 2051 the Māori population will reach 800,000 or 22% of the total New Zealand population. By 2031, one third of all children in the country will be of Maori decent. However, at ages of 65 and over, even greater Māori population growth is predicted - in excess of 300%. There will also be substantial increases in the population of the very old, those people over the age of 75 years. These two trends, a higher proportion of Māori in the school age population and a rapidly increasing older age group means that the changing dependency ratio will impose additional burdens on the working age group.

I suggest that the burden on the working force will encourage more Māori into the outdoors as a positive activity that they can do as

individuals or together with friends. Away from their work and family responsibilities these people will want to be personally challenged and goal orientated using high-end technological equipment to keep them safe, warm and connected. While younger children and the elders will spend time together recreating, fishing, swimming, camping, hunting, and gardening. Māori will be a key stakeholder in the outdoors.

Increasing participation of Māori in the outdoors has already lead to Māori tourism initiatives where tourists experience cultural activities in outdoor contexts, for example, pōwhiri, hangi, waka, kai moana gathering, and Māori historical guiding. These initiatives not only capture offshore tourism they also include local and Māori users. The growth areas of Māori adventure outdoor tourism is a chance to show case our culture. They also create opportunities for much needed employment and generate educative opportunities for qualified Māori leadership in the outdoors for example, NQF 0931 National Certificate in Te Ao Turoa (Level 3).

In this chapter I want to continue down a path of a story, not a path of statistics and fact. I feel like a budding Monet but instead of painting with a brush, I want to paint with words. I believe to be a fully artistic painter of words I need to use my feelings, intuition and vision. We must choose to move forward from the past. I see Māori in the 21st century taking the challenge that the outdoors offers. Just as in the past societal changes moved us away from education in the outdoors, modern society in the 21st century will move us back to the outdoors. I see Māori moving from a 100-person waka to the smaller crew of a waka ama to a single canoe in the Olympics. I see the movement as resilient individuals who can stand in both worlds strong in their cultural identity and comfortable in te reo Māori. I see Māori venturing into the outdoors as a personal test of oneself and their ability to meet the challenge of the outdoors. I suggest this idea because increasingly I see Māori emerging on the national and international scene, competing as individuals in events such as the Commonwealth Games, the Olympics, amateur and professional golf, and moving from Māori Iron Man to compete in national and international Iron Man events, while proudly holding onto their cultural identity.

If contemporary society is kind to Māori, and there are many government initiatives that have this intent and the means for

implementation, imagine a Māori child, teenager, or adult of the future venturing into the outdoors in the 21st century. I see them preparing on the kitchen table, planning a route, studying the trends of weather patterns, outlining a risk management plan, budgeting, packing, applying for access and consents. They will have light weight tents made from sustainable material that provides shelter from all extremes of weather, light weight sleeping bags that are temperature controlled with special cushioned bases, self-heating meals like crayfish mornay in a packet, wrist watch GPS, behind-the-ear chip satellite telecommunications with internet back up, eye ware delivering live feed video to the home, and all of this technology supported by solar and body warmth energy packs. They will venture into the outdoors with the mindset to give back to the outdoors and leave only the minimum carbon footprints.

I close this chapter by returning to the witnessing of the first bolt of lightening causing fire on earth. I want the reader to see that the technology, we are using now and in the future, comes from the universe just like the lightening bolt that taught one of the first wānanga in the outdoors. My hope is that we will always be warm in heart and spirit, and continue to keep those home fires burning.

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## **Constructing a sustainability identity through student action projects**

By David Irwin

### **Introduction**

Chapter two identified that education for sustainability offers significant challenges to historical models of outdoor education, while chapter 3 signaled how a socio-ecological framework and associated approaches can inform alternative pedagogies. This chapter explores how undertaking student action projects within outdoor education has the potential to change the way we perceive how we use the outdoors and what can be achieved there.

Identity is the term used to explain who we are as individuals, communities, cultures and nations. Identity is a term that implies a complex and shifting array of perceptions and realities that are difficult to capture at any single moment but that define us all the same. People are active players in the formation of their identity and the identity of others around them, and any discussion about a sustainable future must turn to identity, for the way we live in the world is defined by how we perceive ourselves within that world. In this way, education and identity are deeply entwined, for learning experiences help to explain who we are, what we believe in, and how we behave.

This chapter first explores identity as a complex and multi layered understanding of who we are as individuals and communities, and briefly discusses some of the processes by which people assemble their identity. The chapter then argues that learning about sustainability and undertaking action projects provides a valuable context within outdoor education for these processes to take place, and a number of examples of action projects from my own teaching are outlined. The chapter concludes that education for sustainability in outdoor education creates spaces for students to reflect upon their identity, helps students find a sense of community and obligation to the land, and can create a new understanding of their place in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Understanding identity

Groups of people form shared or collective identities as a result of a complex interplay of constantly shifting perceptions and interactions. The land people occupy is part of this interplay and ever since earliest times, groups of people have looked to their natural environment as a source of inspiration and collective identity. Kaufmann and Zimmer (1998) describe three key ways of thinking about the relationship people have with nature: as universal and historically persistent (which does not explain how relationships and perceptions change over time); as reflective of national virtues (such as socio-cultural concepts of freedom and liberty); and that the symbols of the landscape held by groups of people are contingent on “particular cultural and political contexts” (p.3). Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, the dominant interpretation of who we are in relation to the land draws from the colonizing processes of taming the land, of hardship and hard work, of roughing it and being at one with nature, and these ideals inform the communities that we belong to. Contemporary influences of consumerism and global culture as portrayed through the mass media have also proved to have much influence, as the following student reflection reveals:

We are an oppressed people, influenced at every turn to consume, take, exploit the world and people around us, to think only of ourselves. In the pursuit of individual satisfaction, we are persuaded to ignore the needs of others, our communities, and most of all, the environment. In our lives, everything has taken a back seat to personal gain. ... We are always striving to make ourselves more and more comfortable in our surroundings with little thought for the consequences that are far removed from our actions. (Excerpt from student report)

Within the context of communities, individuals are engaged in the creation of their own identities. This is a process that della Porta and Diani (2006) regard as “...neither a thing one can own, ... but as the process through which individual and/or collective actors, in interaction with other social actors, attribute a specific meaning to their traits, their life occurrences, and the systems of social relations in which they are embedded.” (p.92) Communities can take many shapes. Within outdoor education, notions of community extend to

schools, outdoor education centres, polytechnics and universities, and even applies to distinctive sub-groupings such as year groups, classes, or programmes. I work at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) and our programmes, such as the Bachelor of Sustainability and Outdoor Education, create distinctive communities within the institution. The students dress differently, behave differently, and as a group share similar aspirations and values with each other. Important here is that social identification with a community is the perception of oneness or belonging to a group. Use of the term we when referring to the collective reinforces the sense of belonging.

However, belonging to a group also suggests change because belonging to any community is not static. The process of reconstruction to align our own identity with a changing community context has been called identity work (Cockburn, 1998). This is a process of active transformation based upon thinking and working on perceptions of oneself, and of the context as one perceives and experiences it (in Chapter 7 Legge described a powerful example of this work as it relates to bicultural perspectives). Importantly people look to their day-to-day lived experiences to remind themselves who they are and to their communities to define who we are and how we are different from other people. This process explains the way individuals and groups celebrate the similarities that define their group as being different from the similarities defining other groups. For educators exploring identity related to sustainability, the idea of we and they are important.

This is because authors such as Plumwood (2002) suggest that not only do people distance themselves and their community from relationships with other social groups that they perceive they have little in common with, but that they also distance themselves from relationships with the environment. Therefore, any redefinition of who we are as individuals needs to be reflective of a wider ecological context, “of ‘studying up’ to find the source of our problems and difficulties with nature” (Plumwood, 2002, p.167). This is an important point for educators, for both social and environmental aspects of who we are and what we believe in need to be included in student learning. For example, the following reflection of Pākehā students working with rangatahi from a local Kura Kaupapa draws together cultural and environmental threads:

I felt ashamed and guilty, a great burden of responsibility and regret clumped in my belly. The murky waters of Ōpāwaho are such a powerful example of how the culture I belong to has created such great distance between ourselves and the people of this place by the mismatch in value we place upon our resources. What was once a rich food source, a means of transportation between the raupō and tussocks of the Canterbury Plains, has today become a convenient way to [dispose of] waste. (Excerpt from student report)

The first sentence of the reflection indicates that the process of identity work is a messy business, and when deeply held values such as the understandings of cultural positions or relationships with nature come into question, much self-doubt can take place. Where student groups are comprised of multiple ethnicities, social backgrounds, ages and genders, the importance of creating safe spaces for identity work becomes even more critical since the baggage associated with different world views and experiences provides for considerable tension.

Safe spaces are places where students can explore different ways of thinking and being in a way that marginalises conflict between participants. By focussing on what is shared rather than what is different, students can find common ground while acknowledging difference. In this way, the reconstruction of identity builds upon the understanding that others are equals engaged in the same project but holding a different reality. As the above example demonstrates, outdoor education provides a rich context for such a focus to take place.

The widespread engagement of individuals and communities in projects that seek to affect social transformation is called social movement. Social movements provide opportunities for individuals to locate and develop relationships with other people with similar values and goals and can play a key role in the formation of national identity. For example Bell (1996) describes the importance of both the anti-apartheid movement and the nuclear free movement of the early 1980s to national identity in Aotearoa New Zealand. Such narratives allow students undertaking action projects to align themselves with their understanding of what it means to belong to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Activism is an integral and often highly visible element of social movements and provides a powerful force to draw people together towards a common goal. In this way, the formation of personal and collective identities that hold sustainability in common is linked to how people act, as well as their perception of reality provided by myths, symbols and imaginings. Collective action, (described by Giddens (1997) as people gathering to pursue shared interests such as the anti-apartheid and nuclear free protests) is seen by della Porta and Diani (2006, p.91) as being characterised by the intersection of collective involvement and personal engagement. The two aspects of collective involvement and personal engagement are important to remember when outdoor educators are looking to create situations that allow students to explore an identity related to sustainability. Sustainability is held in common by people across the diverse tapestry of organisations such as environmentalism or the global justice movement intent on bringing about social transformation. Significantly, these social movements and the individuals that they are comprised of tend to have a focus on reacting to global issues on a local scale.

It is this common goal of a shared vision of a sustainable future that can also bridge between ethnic boundaries and historical grievances. For example, Māori academic and artist Charles Royal (2008) argues for the forging of new ways of knowing and behaving relevant to the 21st century that draws upon existing knowledge about how people conducted themselves in the past, particularly in relation to local people making local decisions based upon local knowledge. Importantly, Royal links obligation that people have to the place that they live, of needing to find celebrations derived from local traditions, and of finding out what it means to be people of the land. He suggests what is needed is:

“...a fundamental consideration of relationships between people and between people and our natural world. We need to devise new ways by which to respect difference and diversity whilst participating in a whole called Aotearoa New Zealand. We also need to create sustainable and mutually nourishing relationships with the natural world.” (Royal, 2008, p.6)

However, a sense of intimacy with the land also needs to be accompanied by the sensitivity of the impacts of that relationship

upon the land, and the responsibility to act where that impact has negative effects. It means a willingness to change the way we do things, and striving to achieve a state of understanding and balance, and recognise traditional ways of knowing that have, in many ways, been left in the past by all cultures. It is about what a person I once interviewed called the “ancient wisdom” that intricately linked living in Aotearoa New Zealand with the natural systems of the land in a way that they become reflected in all of the social structures, values and behaviours of the people that live here. It is these elements that I associate with place responsive pedagogies described by Mike Brown in Chapter 5.

The next section discusses that through engaging with education for sustainability within an outdoor education context, students can be encouraged to reflect deeply upon their own identity in a manner that can lead to changes in the way they see themselves and their place within Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Education for sustainability in outdoor education creates spaces for identity work**

This book has argued for the need for students to think critically about the way they see themselves and their place in the world, and it is insightful to think about what this means from a student’s perspective. The following extract taken from a student’s reflection on developing a sense of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand gives a useful insight to what students are experiencing:

“I was influenced throughout my childhood by my father and his beliefs. I was influenced throughout my childhood by my experiences of the ocean. And I am influenced by my culture and the dominant paradigms within that culture. And currently I am challenged and influenced by the ideas and theories and experiences within my outdoor education degree – a programme which has taken my world view, turned it upside down, flipped it sideways and labelled it ‘environmental sustainability’. Being exposed to the world of academia can breed dissonance, inspiration, or agreement. It makes you think about place, about your experiences within that place, about your place within a culture and your place within a paradigm. It makes you question and challenge and

philosophise 'place'. It may put you in place or out of place or may even help you discover place. After all, that's what indigene is about – our relationships to place – whether it be ancestors or the land, the mind or our culture, it really all just comes down to our 'place' and how we make sense of that place.” (Excerpt from student report)

In this reflection the student has described the process of developing a personal position and understanding in relation to place. The student speaks of initially being influenced by their culture and dominant paradigm but then speaks of being deeply challenged and influenced, of having their world turned upside down, and of thinking about their place within a culture and within a paradigm. As Porter (2005) observes, “... deep underlying identity positions are shaken, jostled, and threatened by the call for sustainability” (p.1). The student is describing how they have entered into a process of identity work and of reshaping the way that they see their self in relation to the world around them. Their realisation and acceptance of different ways of looking at their world has seen them link this process with what they have called “indigene – our relationships to place”.

Creating the spaces for reflection as described above is critical if education for sustainability is to be successfully integrated into an outdoor education context. This requires a re-conceptualisation of what outdoor education is and how it is framed. For example Ellis-Smith (2005) has suggested that:

“...this can occur through “soft option” activities which de-stress the participants as much as possible and allow peoples inner-knowing, connection and Truth to come to the fore. The facilitator's role is to guide participants through their process, not to prescribe what their outcome should be.” (p.80)

There are many ways that such learning situations can be created, and some approaches have been well described in other chapters. For example in Chapter 4 Margie Campbell-Price has discussed exploring self and identity on multiday camps; in Chapter 5 Mike Brown has argued that place should form and inform practice; and in Chapter 9, Jo Straker describes how a long and slow journey across the Harper has been used to focus student thinking on where they are, the history of that place, and what the future might hold.

There are several key strands that educators need to consider. The first of these is that the students need to be informed. They need to understand that knowledge is culturally situated and that their understanding of who they are and how they relate to the world around them may not be as it seems. For example in my teaching about human impact on the planet to both students and staff at CPIT, and to teachers at workshops and conferences, I am yet to encounter anyone who has a clear understanding of the complexity or seriousness of the predicament currently faced by humanity and detailed in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNESCO, 2004); for most have never even heard of it. Yet this, the largest investigation into human impact upon the planet that has ever been conducted and involved over 1300 scientists from 96 different countries, contains a very sobering message; humanity needs to change the way we think, act, and behave, and with some urgency. The science is clear, it is just not widely publicised. Understanding why we need to change attitudes and behaviours must be clearly articulated by educators in an open and honest way.

The second thing that students need to understand is that millions of organisations around the world that include many millions of individual members are working to change the way that people think and act, constituting what influential academic, author and activist Hawken (2007) describes as the largest social movement in human history by far. The point here is that students need to understand that culture and the way people view the world is not static but that change is the only constant. Strongly held beliefs such as those relating to slavery, women's rights, and apartheid have been overcome through public will and political pressure. The problems of peak oil, species extinction, climate change, or social injustice, because they essentially relate to human attitudes and behaviours, are no different. Humans choose how they act and react to the social and ecological environments where they live, and because of this, the individual and community hold significant power.

The third key point is that students need to understand they can make a difference, understand how they can do so, and most importantly, gather the confidence to do so. This is called taking action, and the skills associated with taking action have come to be regarded as action competence (a concept introduced by Allen Hill in Chapter 3). This is described by influential Danish academics Jensen and Schnack (1997)

as built around the ability to act on a societal as well as a personal level in a manner that addresses solutions to problems being studied. Citing Jensen, Eames et al. (2006) describe action competence as “...a process in which students identify environmental issues, determine solutions, and take actions in ways that develop their competence for future action to solve or avoid environmental problems” (P.8).

Jensen and Schnack (1997) have observed that actions can be categorised as either direct or indirect. Direct actions are those that are aimed directly at solving social and environmental problems, while indirect actions are those whose purpose is to influence others to contribute to solving problems collectively. They also note that students must understand the greater regional, national or global context and rationale of the problem being tackled, or the educative value of the action for the student may be limited to simplistic and individualistic outcomes. Jensen and Schnack (1997) have identified four important components of action competence. These are:

- Knowledge and insight about what the problems are, the cause, and opportunities that exist to solve them;
- Commitment and assertiveness to tackle the problem;
- Having a positive vision of the future; and
- Experiences of ‘concrete’ actions to draw upon.

These important elements form the basis for teaching approaches to students taking action.

## **Students taking action**

As already discussed by Cosgriff and Thevenard in Chapter 4, the idea of taking action with a view to bring about some form of change is a fundamental part of environmental education discourse and more recently was included as one of the five aims in the Guidelines for environmental education in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1999). It is also clearly the intention articulated through the vision, principles, values and key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007b). This intention has also been demonstrated through the development of Ministry of Education achievement standards, first released in December 2007, that include in unit 90810 the planning, implementation and evaluation of an action that contributes to a more sustainable future (Ministry of Education, 2007a).

These action events constitute what are often referred to as real-life learning experiences and can offer powerful learning experiences. The following student reflection was composed after the completion of an action project with a classmate that aimed to reduce the number of cars driven to CPIT on a daily basis and is a good demonstration of the components listed above:

“This action has helped further build up my ideas and opinions on alternative transporting. After doing some extensive research I was made aware of how many different organisations have a well set up and frequently used car pooling system in place. This opened my eyes to the potential for CPIT to also reduce the number of cars travelling to and from the city each day and therefore making a difference to the amount of carbon emissions produced. The research done on alternative transport (problems with current systems and solutions) has reinforced my reasons for biking every day, and has made me want to encourage others to do the same, or at least give them ideas on how to cut down the amount of driving one does each week. This has been an informative and memorable action.” (Excerpt from student report)

The student also clearly demonstrates that they have made the crucial links between reflection on the action and personal behavioural patterns within the context of the problems being tackled, something Jensen and Schnack (1997) acknowledge is difficult for students. The action projects take place in a compulsory third year paper of the Bachelor of Sustainability and Outdoor Education degree and are worth 70% of the course grade, and elements of the assessment require: planning, implementation, reflection and presentation.

The actions that students undertake and the way they go about undertaking them tell us a lot about how students view their place in society and the world around them. Relationships can be seen to form around common goals, unlikely groups can be seen to be working together over long periods of time (sometimes beyond the academic year), and countercultural behaviours can on occasion be displayed. The actions that have been undertaken include the following examples: critical mass cycle protests that have aimed to increase awareness of the dangers faced by cyclists commuting in city traffic; organisation and coordination of car-less days at

campuses including the University of Canterbury, CPIT and the College of Education; Random acts of kindness - an international movement based upon building community and goodwill (one year two students baked many hundreds of muffins over a period of a week and would walk into classes across CPIT unannounced and give their muffins away); habitat restoration activity including arranging with local schools to identify a site in need of restoration near the school and independently funding and coordinating the restoration activity; working with youth at risk and disadvantaged adults in outdoor settings; waste audits of various departments at CPIT; lobbying of local and national politicians on a range of social and environmental issues such as supporting regional and national climate change initiatives; writing and publishing children's books with environmental themes; designing alternative models of teaching and assessment in senior school outdoor education such as drawing geography or education for sustainability achievement standards into outdoor education; designing and implementing composting initiatives including the development of composting programmes for schools and kindergartens; supporting food banks and other charity groups; and submitting and presenting submissions within the Resource Management Act public participation process, such as opposing the damming and extraction of water from local rivers for the purpose of further developing intensive dairy farming in Canterbury.

The following case study is an example of an action that illustrates how the transformative learning in education for sustainability in an outdoor education context can impact on the identity of students involved. The action has been selected to present an example of how students have engaged with the key issues of individual and national identity, social movements, community and change discussed in this chapter. The case study draws from the reflections of the students involved in the project and provides an insight into how they have been moved by the action they were part of.

### **The coffee cup action**

For their action, two students researched the number of disposable coffee cups used by the two cafés in the immediate vicinity of CPIT, together with the privately owned commercial café and student's association café on campus. As a result of their research, they decided

their action would try to reduce the demand for disposable cups from within the institution. They sought \$500 financial sponsorship from CPIT's student environmental project fund, sourced a cheap supply of re-usable thermos cups, arranged for the cafes to engage in an incentive programme (with every sixth cup free if not purchased in disposable cups), advertised their campaign over the CPIT wide email service, set up an information booth and sold coffee cups in the main building on campus. They sold over 500 cups in the first two days of their action (see Figure 8.1). The programme was then taken over by the CPIT students association and the CPIT environment manager and the cups were available for the year following the action from the student union, from reception at the trades campus and available for purchase at the three cafés.

What was remarkable about this action was the two students were able to mobilise four separate commercial catering organisations (which took a significant effort and very strategic lobbying), the CPIT student's association executive, and the CPIT environment manager,



Figure 8.1: Action to replace disposable coffee cups (photo: student contribution)

together with other staff involved in supporting roles such as looking after the on-going sales of cups. Second, all of the people involved then continued to work so that the coffee cup action continued a year after the students graduated (with coordination taken on by the students association and CPIT's environmental manager). This is a good example of a group of people with little in common able to come together to work towards a shared goal based upon sustainability principles for an extended length of time.

In their review of the action, the students described playing one catering company off against another to gain the greatest discount for the promotion, with individual companies not wanting to be seen to be less supportive of the student initiative (and therefore students in general) than the others.

For these two students, and for other students who have undertaken similar actions within CPIT, an important consideration is that they chose to act in a very local way with a vision to transform their lived-in physical surroundings and community. By focussing actions within a local setting, these students have increased their connection to that place through mechanisms such as enhanced feelings of collegiality with other staff and students; enhanced familiarity with their local context through learning about systems and procedures; giving themselves a positive visible presence in the institution that is of their own doing; and receiving positive feedback from people they do not know (for example the two students involved in the coffee cup action received a lot of positive comments from enthusiastic staff and students that they had not anticipated). Importantly they have also done something to move the institution towards being more sustainable. This link between local action and the local production of identity as described by Thompson and Fevre (2001) is a very important consideration. It means that education for sustainability should be considered in a manner that is cognisant of local needs of the students and local issues relating to where they live and it should encourage an engagement with both.

However, observation of actions by teachers can only provide part of the picture of what meaning has been attributed to them, for as Mezirow and associates (1991) note, reflection on the action undertaken in an educational setting completes the process. For the students in the action paper, oral presentations and written reflections

complete this process. The student action projects have had quite an impact on many students, as the following reflection demonstrates:

If everybody thought that alone they cannot make a difference, their lack of hope and unwillingness to make a change will result in nothing happening. This means that the current global situation will continue to disintegrate perhaps until it is too late for anybody to try and do anything. On the other hand, if one million individuals in New Zealand thought they could make a change – realised the impacts they had on the environment and took responsibility for these, then a quarter of the country would be making a difference. Through instruction and education we can first of all educate those who are unaware of the current situation in the world - encourage them to understand the impacts they have as an individual on the planet. With this understanding, students we come into contact with can then learn to take responsibility for their actions and start to change their behaviour. Through instructing and teaching, I believe we have a responsibility to ... spread the word and initiate change ... until it is so noticeable it becomes impossible to ignore within society ... assisting in finding the solution for the problem. (Excerpt from student report)

In this powerful and poignant reflection, the student has drawn together the threads of understanding global issues, the role of the individual and community in social change on a local scale, the importance of learning through action, and the role of social movements as a mechanism of social change. With her words “we can educate” she places herself within the community of educators for sustainability, and in her concluding words “finding the solution for the problem” we find hope for the future.

## Concluding thoughts

This chapter has explored identity as a complex and multi layered understanding of who we are and has discussed some of the mechanisms by which people assemble their identity. Discussion has looked to the perpetual process that individuals and communities engage in to construct and reconstruct themselves and explored how sustainability discourse and related community oriented actions

can signal an emerging collective identity constructed around sustainability. The final part of the chapter explored how education for sustainability in outdoor education can create spaces for students to explore their own identity and can lead to a new understanding of their sense of place within Aotearoa New Zealand, together with the obligations that sense of place brings.

At this point it is interesting to recall discussion in Chapter 1 that introduced the precarious predicament that humanity now finds itself in. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNESCO, 2004) describes a planet in crisis and argues that the changes required in policy and practice are significant, urgent, and currently not underway. The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2005) recognises education as a powerful context to bring about such changes, and places responsibility on all sectors of education. What do these words mean to you and how will they impact your practice as an educator in the outdoors? From my perspective, the changes that the UNESCO projects call for should in no way be considered modest. The changes that are required are radical and urgent, and as outdoor educators we need to engage with these challenges within our respective settings. With a focus on identity: who *we* are, what *we* believe in, how *we* behave, who *our* communities are, what are *our* common goals, outdoor education can provide a powerful context for change.

This chapter has included examples of action projects such as the coffee cup action that challenge our traditional understanding of what can be accomplished in outdoor education. The strong relationships that outdoor education has had in the past with environmental education (outlined by Mike Boyes in Chapter 2), the communities and environments we work within, and the issues we have the potential to confront through our engagement with place, all provide opportunities for learning that we cannot overlook if we are to say (when we look back on the decade) that as educators we were active agents for change in a time of social and ecological crisis.

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## 9

**Harper Pass: A slow journey across the Southern Alps****By Jo Straker**

Jeff was from the spacious Canterbury plains, which was possibly why the primeval West Coast bush with its dense and dripping foliage had not impressed him. But four days into the trip, he was on his hands and knees fossicking in the ferns to get a closer look at a rotten log. Glowing fungi, which lay unnoticed by many, drew him into an aesthetic and inquiring relationship with a unique piece of Aotearoa New Zealand. Taking the time to encounter the environment through sensual experiences can help us notice the intimate, reciprocal practices, of the human and non-human world. As Suzuki and McConnell (2000) suggest, modern society no longer understands the relationship it has with the world, a world we all depend upon.

The outdoors has a romantic appeal for many New Zealanders. It certainly does for me – I love interacting with outdoor environments both close to home and further afield; it revitalises me and helps me remember what is important about life. Fascination with the adventure, drama, and beauty of the outdoors are, and will remain, fundamental parts of outdoor education, but in keeping with the other chapters, I want to move beyond simplified discourses of challenge, to explore other connections and learning which being outdoors offers. Often this learning remains in the background, implicit in so much of what outdoor education is about, but rarely expressed except by references such as ‘you had to be there to understand.’

Over the last seven years, with the help of other staff, I have taken groups on a slow journey through the Harper Pass as part of what is now the Bachelor of Sustainability and Outdoor Education at CPIT. One aim is to help students appreciate how the social, cultural, and environmental history of places influences what they know and what they believe. This requires challenging some of the embedded systems of knowledge and introducing a range of different perspectives. Engaging with, and learning from, the environment as we travel along the trail provides opportunities for exploring ideas, but so too does the communal sharing of stories and ideas.

Harper Pass has a rich Māori and colonial social history as it was an important route over the Southern Alps. Māori knew of a route

over Arthur's pass and down the Otira Valley, but preferred crossing Harper Pass; there was more food in the rivers and swamps along the way to sustain them. In the summer of 1865, with gold rush fever at its peak, the Harper pass track became a muddy, boulder-strewn mess, and many died trying to cross (Ross, 2008). An efficient alternative was needed so 1000 men were put to work to forge a road through Arthur's Pass. Berry (2002, p.12) talks of the differences between paths and roads, extolling the virtues of an intimate path winding through the land, adapting to contours and moving around obstacles, allowing travellers to slowly acquire knowledge of the land



Enacting a southerly front on the journey. Image taken by Jo Straker.

in all seasons. Roads however, were constructed to move people over the land with as much speed as possible. Obstacles and hindrances blasted away with little concern for the land as human needs dominated. It is my belief that some elements of outdoor education, often driven by financial constraints and efficiencies, have become more suited to road travel.

The guide book recommends four days; we take eleven, slowly winding our way up the Taramakau River and over Harper Pass. Movement along the track encourages a style of outdoor learning which is physically engaging, yet allows time for reflection, questions, and lively debate. These opportunities for shared, contextual, and relational experiences focus on appreciating not only where we are, but how that influences ways of knowing.

This chapter merges stories and events from different trips along the Harper trail exploring ‘relationship issues’ we have with the outdoors. Initially I discuss some of the practical topics of leaving the city, walking, fires, technology, naming, and categorising, then move on to the more culturally contested ones of sacredness, wilderness values, sense of place, and finally some ways in which outdoor education can contribute to shaping relationships with the world.

## Why Journey?

It is hard to think of a term which captures building a connection with the land as we move through it, better than the term journey. Jaunt, pleasure trip, excursion are a bit lightweight, yet expedition, foray, sortie, or venture seem to indicate a militaristic conquering and competing with the land. Journeys seem to emphasise the path not the destination; allow for deviations and detours; and focus on being ‘so somewhere’.

Opportunities for spending time outdoors are declining, as SPARC (2008, 2009) notes changing lifestyles and immigrants from quite different cultures has led to less overall participation in outdoor recreation, resulting in a decline of knowledge about the environment. With fewer opportunities and less knowledge, outdoor education’s role of taking students into a range of different environments is becoming even more important. Direct intimate encounters allow for sensory and emotional experiences, which enhance our connection to the outdoors, enrich our knowledge of ecological systems, and provide opportunities to reflect on how certain places influence who we are.

While Aotearoa New Zealand is renowned for its clean green image, Park (2006, p.196) challenges that, noting “our world-beating levels of native bird extinctions and wetland loss, and the confidence with

which within a century we carried out one of the most comprehensive transformations of indigenous nature the world has seen” are leading us to a state of irreversible damage. Water quality is also declining, a NIWA study indicated that pollution levels were so high that it was unsafe for children to swim in most of the country’s lowland rivers (TerraNature, 2005). These are sad indictments on our attitude of care, but just telling someone to care is never enough, an emotional link needs to be developed. Most people tend to build up care for places which are familiar or make them feel good, this requires opportunities and time for students to have fun and become acquainted with an area. I am not suggesting that developing attitudes of care are as simple as having fun somewhere, only that positive experiences tend to trigger positive emotions which may help germinate a seed of care.

Care comes in many guises – love, jealousy, or over-protection, to name but a few. One aspect of caring for the environment that appears impressive is our record of having nearly a third of our land separated off in reserves and National Parks. Yet Cronon (1996) and Park (2006) suggest that reserves disconnect areas from their surroundings exacerbating the problem of not cherishing the urban areas where most of us live. Positioning nature ‘out there’ and separate from where many of us live, can potentially remove us from the social root causes of what has come to be known as environmental problems. Outdoor education journeys which explore the interconnectness of places help to blur boundaries and connect dots with lines of travel. They may not directly address the problem of how to care, but they can provide opportunities to advocate for different ways of valuing where we live and how we live.

What causes humans to degrade their own environment in pursuit of economic growth and consumer products is far from simple, well beyond the scope of this chapter, but I have come to realise that many of these practices are perpetuated in the stories and language we hear, share, and often accept without question. Changing and challenging these assumptions from within this pervasive cultural web is very difficult. In taking people away from cultural hubs into wilder, more natural areas, they have time to develop alternative perspectives and realign their values. As Berry (2002, p.27) suggests

Until we understand what the land is, we are at odds with everything we touch. And to come to that understanding it is necessary, even now, to leave the regions of our conquest – the cleared fields, the towns and cities, the highways – and re-enter the woods. (Berry, 2002, p.27)

As outdoor educators, we do not often query what role being outdoors plays in education, let alone whose outdoors, which outdoors, or what the students perceive it to be. In one sense these questions have no answers, but asking helps raise awareness as they highlight the different meanings and relationships we form with the outdoors. In Aotearoa New Zealand outdoor land has been, and still is, hotly contested as groups claim or re-claim land for a variety of values and uses (Pitts, 1992, p.87). Each place can be spoken of, written of, and valued in multiple ways (Wattchow, 2004). Yet in outdoor education it is often conceived as what it is not – in this case not the classroom. Wattchow pleads for the places we teach to be more than that; to be encountered on their own terms with stories to tell. If outdoor education involves building a respectful connection or relationship with the environment we live in, then we must pay close attention to the places we encounter, and allow them to share their stories and, in my opinion, there is no better way than spending time travelling slowly and listening to the land.

## Leaving Christchurch

There is a sense of apprehension in the van as many of the students have not spent such a long period away from the comforts of home. On the road many remain disengaged. I sense that the dairy farms, shelter belts, and irrigators which pattern the plains in a patchwork of greens and brown go by unnoticed. This grid system is evidence of our relationship of dominance. It has been imposed across much of the plains ignoring the shape of the land, and as Carter (1987) suggests, is so ubiquitous that it seems normal and neutral. More important for the students though, are the pies, toilets, and coffee at Springfield. It takes time and distance for city mindsets to fade and open up to different views of the world.

De Botton's (2003) *Art of Travel*, discusses how visiting outdoor sites became part of a Western social tradition in the 18th century, when city dwellers travelled to the countryside to restore health and

harmony to their lives. The Industrial Revolution caused radical changes in the way people lived and worked, leading to a sense of loss for the rural way of life. In response, writers and poets enthused about the joy of nature and started to associate the countryside with moral purity, whereas cities were deemed to be sinful iniquitous places. While this highlights how changes in society can construct ways of thinking about place, and how rural and urban sites became partitioned, it is not easy to shake off these pervasive ideas. Many students accept without question the positive aspects of nature, yet show ambivalence to the many fine achievements found in the human constructed world. They expect to feel and experience certain emotions when outdoors and continue to seek out those experiences which in turn reinforce them.

### **Crossing the Otira River: walking, river crossing, entering the bush.**

Rather than the traditional maps of education, outdoor journeys hint at wild areas and opportunities for students to find their own way. Sitting in a van we could remain detached, but at the Otira River the chilly waters wash away any notions of detachment. We divide into groups, the tallest upstream. Supporting one another we enter the current. Some groups resist the current taking a direct line, others move with the current angling downstream, allowing the river to direct their passage. This slight adjustment of the body, responding to the forces of nature and working with it rather than fighting it, is part of becoming attuned, part of building a connection. Socks and boots are soaked and likely to remain wet for eleven days, but this immersion along with hugging support of each other quickly sets the scene for the bodily engagement we will have over the next eleven days.

The packs are cumbersome, unfamiliar appendages which we have not quite adjusted to, so we tread carefully as we pick our way through the trees. Brian, my fellow instructor, encourages the students to shake hands with a prickly juvenile totara, “how we meet and greet each other and the world is important” he explains. Some already knew its name, but many did not. The totara is an icon of the bush, yet many students are unfamiliar with it and many of the other plants. We weave through young red beech regenerating on mass after a flood, step over a mossy log and then suddenly pop back out onto

the gorse banks of the Taramakau River. What is indigenous and, what is not, confronts us as we stand on the northern boundary of the Arthur's Pass National Park. As Park (2006, pp. 195-204) highlights there seems to be no middle ground, no places where we blend indigenous nature with where and how we live – it is either reserved, or left to those who want to maximise economic return by changing it in irreversible ways.



Using journals to enhance the journey. Image taken by Jo Straker.

We wander up the broad Taramakau Valley where the distinction between track and not-track blurs. The terrain affects the length of stride, position of the head, and movement of the arms. Some weighed down by packs drop their heads and plug on becoming oblivious to what is around, others swing their arms and swagger along in the open spaces almost buoyed by the space, or maybe the prospect of being first to the campsite. As the track narrows through

the West Coast bush it becomes a full-on body workout; we hold onto branches to steady or swing ourselves around obstacles, we clamber over fallen logs or drop to our knees and crawl underneath. The style and character of the track introduces kinaesthetic qualities to our travel. Our ways of moving along a track shape us and the track; there is mutual engagement, learning occurs – not necessarily in expressible ways.

Other senses are also engaged: we listen to a korimako (bellbird), smell the honeydew, taste water cress, and note the change in wind direction and temperature preceding the southerly front that will arrive soon. Each individual is also having their own experiences, sensations of hunger, thirst, sore shoulders, knee strains, or cold feet, influence how much they focus on the self and how much on where they are. These enduring urges and routine actions embody meaning, which can lie tacit and dormant until well after the trip. Within outdoor education there is often much emphasis placed on a style of experiential learning which requires verbalising reflections, as a way to bring forth pre-conscious knowing, but in doing so much can be lost; not every experience needs to be fixed by words.

Understandings of the environment are shaped through the act of walking and stopping, looking, and listening. Our ways of engaging or disengaging constitute our landscapes and learning. I overhear raptures of excitement as one group spots a bright blue entoloma fungi, but another group moves by uninterested as they discuss stories from elsewhere, and chatter about what seems trivial to me. On early trips I was sometimes frustrated by this apparent lack of engagement; I now realise that everyone develops their relationship in different ways and while some crave knowledge, others need time and reassurance to start to feel comfortable with where they are.

### **Lake Kaurapataka: naming, fires, and technology**

We usually camp by Lake Kaurapataka for a few nights as one of the goals of the journey is to become more familiar with the flora, fauna, and fungi of the area. The students bring along some interpretation books to help them identify and name what they see, but these books offer a type of knowledge which reduces and classifies the world from a Western perspective. The language of classification categorises and objectifies the way we look at things, creating a picture of nature as

planned, ordered, and separate from us. We talk a little about how plants get their names and encourage them to create their own names which might help them remember a particular plant. Some enjoy that, but others want the 'real' name. It is a struggle to achieve a balance between accurate naming and individual improvisation, but over the years I have tended more toward spontaneous naming and telling stories which respond and adapt to local features or events. Talking about the kahikatea swamp where someone lost their boot, or where someone spotted a parakeet helps them become aware that they are involved in the on-going history of the area, regardless of how recent that history might be.

As we addressed the issue of naming plants, one student asked why Latin names were 'real', English names 'common' and Māori names exotic alternatives. This generated a flurry of debate about colonisation and how language denigrated indigenous conceptualisations of nature as primitive or unscientific and therefore less worthy. I believe it is a positive sign when the students start to question and challenge some of the more hegemonic practices of society. Teachable moments such as this can lead on to other debates. This opening for example moved on to conversations about the sort of messages we unintentionally pass on when we talk of tramping, route planning, and map reading and how that can focus on the activity rather than the here and now of where we are.

As it starts to rain we light a small fire – 'fires damage the natural habitat' some argue, 'they're part of the experience' others extol. The debate see-saws around technology, fossil fuels, insect habitats, and that pesky weka which is rummaging in someone's tent looking for food, until one student challenges 'why are you more worried about fires here than in Christchurch? - surely the air where we live is important too and we're always driving and polluting back there.' It is one of those 'aha moments' outdoor educators often speak of; I could almost feel the zing in the air when some realised that they could make choices about how to live wherever they are, and that thoughtful caring environmental practices are not restricted to natural environments.

As more rain arrives some migrate to their tents, while others erect a make-shift shelter out of tarps. Poles of various lengths and quality are found, but eventually a shelter takes shape. Free standing tents,

like gas cookers require little adaption to the environment, the place becomes a mere backdrop as technological solutions dominate. GPSs and SPOT trackers do not even require looking at a map or the surroundings, let alone the stars to tell you, or others, where you are. Erecting flysheets, collecting fire wood, star gazing, whittling spoons, and cooking damper require students to search for and discover the intimate opportunities each campsite offers. As the week progresses we learn to blend in and work with what we find, although as with all experiences not always successfully. One student sheltering under a tree emerges in the morning with a sodden sleeping bag, and the fire is re lit so we can help dry it out.

### **Locke Stream Hut: history, wilderness, culture, sacredness**

Hewn out of kaikawaka (NZ cedar), Locke Stream hut oozes with pioneering history. Historical accounts, by their very nature are written by someone. Usually that person has influence on what is remembered and what is obscured. Locke was the companion of Harper, the first Europeans to cross the pass, escorted and helped by local Māori who had been using the trail for years. Like many surveyors they struggled, their boots disintegrated and, without the help of their Māori guides, it is unlikely they would have survived. Yet the hut and the pass are named in commemoration of their historic endeavour.

During the journey students present a topic of interest which they have researched. We listened enthralled as one of the students told the story of Caroline Chevalier, the first European woman to cross the pass and then again as he confided that he had never really considered how the experience may be so different for women. Some students make links with how our stories shape the landscape not only by what we include, but by what we omit.

Although we are staying in and around a hut there is a sense of remoteness and it provides opportunities to talk about what wilderness means for them. They mention solitude, space, and bears. Bears! – we laugh, there are no bears in Aotearoa New Zealand, but the student spoke of movies and books where there always seemed to be a lone person in the woods with a prowling bear. This concept of wilderness is driven by North American sensitivities, but what of the Aotearoa version. West Coast bush is rugged and messy with vines

and epiphytes clinging on to any available limb. Trees are toppled by wind and water preventing easy travel unless there is a track. While some students hold on to images of the rugged individual heading off into the wild, others confess that they do not like it too rough and enjoy being around people. They realise how easily they have accepted ideas from another culture even when their own experiences are at variance with that.

Whether it is talking of the ferns, beech trees, geology, or bird life, many student presentations refer to evolution, tectonic plate movement and the breaking away of Aotearoa New Zealand from Gondwana. Evolution and other scientific concepts are usually accepted without much question. Other presentations have focused on Māori cosmology and spiritual relationships with the land; these are more openly challenged as they cut poignantly across closely held beliefs. Most of the students are Pākehā and struggle at times to move beyond a Western mind-set. Some aspire to achieving the level of physical and spiritual connectedness with the land which they perceive many Māori holding, others consider it primitive mumbo jumbo, or a cunning plot to gain money from the government. The students grapple with such diversity and lively debates ensue, but it is part of an important process as they try to sort out their own relationship with the outdoors.

I remember one presentation on mosses which was based around Kimmerer's (2003) book on the social and cultural history of moss. A key theme of the book is the role of traditional ecological knowledge in learning to live respectfully and reciprocally on earth. Many of the Pākehā students found the idea of reciprocity difficult as they felt humans in general exploit the natural world. Kimmerer (2003, p.101) refers to indigenous ways of knowing as being intimately connected with local landscapes allowing the land itself to be the teacher. She suggests that by paying attention to something as inconspicuous as moss the role each life-form plays within our world is increased. Several students spoke of feeling guilty about the way they just took from the environment without giving anything back. However another student spoke of how respecting resources does not prohibit using them, linking it to the way Māori offer a karakia (prayer of thanks) before gathering shellfish or harakeke (flax) or how a carver enhances a piece of wood by adding some of their mauri (life-force). In this way the environment is not seen as resources, but as an inseparable part of life and community.

## Crossing Harper Pass: chaos, complexity, and the small things that matter

It is often the small things in life that make a difference, a special moment or unpredictable event that shifts an experience in an unexpected way. When in the outdoors, it is easy to see the connections and complexity of ecosystems and how a small change can have large consequences. The butterfly effect captures the concept well; the flapping wings of a butterfly in Australia can alter a weather pattern, which can change our trip by delaying the crossing of Harper Pass as we wait for the rivers to drop. Capra (1996) suggests that thinking in terms of holistic systems helps overcome some of the reductionist thinking and Cartesian dominance present in many educational institutions. For Capra limited dualistic thinking is not only incapable of addressing environmental and social problems, but has actually created them. Understanding and appreciating interconnectedness is thus central to helping dissolve the artificial separation of humans from nature. This separation seems stronger in the city with its array of concrete structures, work pressures, and bombardment of images trying to sell us stuff.

For the students crossing Harper Pass feels like a long way from the city, we have been walking for six days and have another five to go. The weather is more extreme and the plants get smaller as they struggle to survive. To help with survival they have adapted in cunning ways. Snow tussock grasses (*Chionochloa*) exhibit mast seeding years, whereby synchronously a large percentage of the population will produce a high quantity of seed one year, but then no seed for the next five, six or seven. Beech, rimu, and kahikatea have similar patterns. This is thought to confuse anything that desires to eat the seeds, or eat the birds that eat the seeds, so that there is a greater chance of successful seed dispersal. The main predators of *Chionochloa* seeds are a midge, a fly, and a moth, but there are then seven parasitoids that attack these predators (Sarfati, 2008). Everything is trying to out-trick the other and of course one small thing can change the balance of power, causing population explosions or extinctions. This dynamic motion between order and disorder continuously reverberates through ecological systems, highlighting that small things matter.

Chaos theory teaches us of interconnections, of intricately linked patterns which do not always seem to match with what we call common sense, or simple linear cause and effect. It can even challenge the way we view learning. Learning is interactive and adaptive more like a brewing storm than the common computer metaphor of data in data out (Straker, 2005). A storm is forever changing, affected by other atmospheric conditions and in turn influencing new weather patterns. Clouds form, release water and reform. Each drop of water and gust of wind co-creates the storm. Learning does not happen in isolation; learners constantly adapt and respond influencing others and the world in unique ways. Learning occurs in the wider world of complex interactions between people, social practices, and the environment, not just through the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. Thus as we walk side by side along trails and over the Pass, learning is occurring and ideas developing in somewhat unpredictable ways.

### **The Hurunui Hot Springs: sense of place**

After the Pass we languish by the hot pools. There are only a couple of days to go and the eastern side is more open and familiar. Sense of place is a useful concept when reflecting on relationships between people and environments. It captures one way we attribute meaning and feel attachment to a place (Relph, 2008; Thomashow, 2002). While sense of place is often consigned to places with which we have long associations and deep roots, there seems to be times when even fleeting visits engage the emotions creating an almost instant connection or attachment.

Travel and mobility are considered impediments to meaningful experiences of place, especially when we visit places with our mindsets fixed. At other times we let those judgemental mindsets go and wholly immerse ourselves. I use 'immerse' deliberately, for on the journey an early morning swim in the lake, a dip in the river, or a soak in the hot pools often generate an intimate connection which can be vividly recalled months later.

Māori traditions closely connect the body and the land, as the word *whenua* suggests with its double meaning of placenta and land (Park, 2006). Land and body as inseparable offer a conceptually different sense of place from Western sensitivities, which tend to separate the

body from the environment. One exception is the way students talk about the sensations of lying in the hot pools and being engulfed by the warm water. This bodily engagement with water creates tangible sensory bonds with the environment which seem to enhance feelings of connection. Under water divers have reported similar sensations of attachment to the natural world when completely surrounded by water (Wynveen, Kyle, & Sutton, 2010, p.280). Whether it is the water or the more familiar open landscape, it is at the hot pools camp that several students have commented on 'feeling at home', 'being content to just be here' and 'belonging to the land.'

### **Lake Taylor: daily decisions**

The last section follows a four-wheel drive track from Hakakura (Lake Sumner) to Lake Taylor. It's open farmland, and the track allows groups to walk side by side and reflect on the trip. Sometimes there is an urgency to meet the van and return to friends and family, at other times a longing to remain outdoors, some have even suggested staying another day or scavenging the remaining supplies and heading back to the West Coast. This tension between home comforts and the simple life is not unusual, and it seems as if travelling from one place to another actually enhances the experience of both. We live in a mobile world so learning to build relationships with different environments whilst travelling is as important as becoming appreciative of the places which we call home. This in part can be achieved by being aware of the body whilst journeying, imagining the histories of those who have walked the trail before, and paying attention to the small details of what is around. When there is a conscious purposeful approach towards attending to places through all the senses, as well as engaging with natural and cultural histories of the place then we are likely to form respectful relationships with the land.

Without paying attention to where we are, the outdoors can become a mere backdrop for activities. The way we walk through the land and the small details we attend to build up multiple layers of meaning. Stories can also help bring a place alive, but they are never neutral; they can and do promote different values and attitudes. When care is not taken with language used and ideas portrayed, these stories can support dominant ideologies, allowing the environmental injustices to continue without challenge. The small fishing baches at Loch Katrine

are being replaced by larger commercial ones higher on the hill; there are plans for Lake Sumner and the Hurunui River to be dammed; and cattle wander along the flats directly polluting the river. Each of these stories can be told from multiple perspectives, each holds injustices, and sorting through the quagmire of contested viewpoints is no easy task. However, helping students to develop a stance which recognises that we are part of this environment not apart from it, can add some focus to daily decisions on how we want to live in the world.

### **Driving home: reflective questions**

There is always more that could be covered, but comments from the participants suggest they had a good time, and learnt things about themselves and the wider world. They started to move in tune with the rhythms of life; waking with the sun and retiring on dark, watching the stars move across the sky, and the moon grow to its fullness. Observing the stealthy kill of a spider in the morning dew or being watched by a robin as they squatted in the bush were delightful ways of recalling their feelings of connection to the web of life.

After any outdoor experience I ask myself some questions:

*Was it enriching?* Will the experience be remembered as positive, with stories, memories, values, and relationships carried forward into other aspects of their life?

*Was it useful?* How did the experience enhance life skills, awareness, knowledge or educational prospects? In what ways did it help participants understand the consequences of, and necessity to engage in wider social and political decision making?

*Was it intellectually expanding?* Did participants question things like how to live in balance with the planet or what is a quality life? Did it expand their thinking in critical or philosophical ways?

*Was it relevant?* Were there enough opportunities to relate the learning to their own lives? Was the cultural and historical context meaningful?

*Was it fun?* Did they have time to laugh, play, and express themselves?

*Did I enjoy myself?* - Sometimes it is easy to forget that I became an outdoor educator because of the pleasure and fun I have outdoors. The thrill of sliding in the snow or watching a sunrise are still important for me, but sharing some special moments along this journey and seeing students receive a similar buzz remains unbeatable.

## Outdoor education

As I noted at the beginning, this trip is a privilege, and was never intended to be offered as a universal prescriptive model for outdoor education, but more a way to re-focus on a range of possibilities. Many of these ideas are not new, but some are getting drowned out by other educational discourses especially those of assessment, credits, and achievement standards. If, as I suggest, one element of outdoor education is to develop respectful relationships with the outdoors, then it is important that students directly engage with many environments. Cosgriff, Thevenard, and Campbell-Price (Chapter 4) and Brown (Chapter 5) talk about schools organising shorter journeys which engage students in their local environment. Beames and Ross (2010) describe an outdoor journey programme which has been successfully run in Scottish primary schools where the journey is within the school grounds. The principles they incorporate are very similar: cross-curricula holistic learning; teachers supporting student generated areas of interest; learning about the landscape and relationships to it; sharing ideas with each other; and building student responsibility for planning their own learning journeys.

In summary, I tentatively offer five further experiential foci which may help develop a greater awareness of living respectfully on the earth:

- *Help students come to terms with how time spent looking after others and the environment, actually nourishes them.* Working together to light a fire or cross a river highlights this, but so too does community work. After the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, when services and ‘normal’ life were interrupted a well used slogan was “look after yourself, and then look after your neighbours.” However to build even stronger communities it could have been changed to “in looking after your neighbours and your neighbourhood you

will look after yourself.” Many in the community realised that there was more to be gained from looking and supporting others as evidenced by the student army and other initiatives in the suburbs. This is also well expressed in the Māori whakatauki:

*Manaakiwhenua, manaakitangata, haerewhakamua.  
Care for the land. Care for people. Go forward.*

- *Encourage questioning particularly of language, stories and ways of representing the world which appear natural and normal.* One way to critique one’s culture is to seek out novel sites to view the world from. These do not need to be pristine or wild, but could involve mixing and meeting groups with different ethnic backgrounds, engaging in street theatre, or finding a local site which offers a different perspective of the city such as piers, hills, or tunnels.
- *Provide experiences which are full of the joy of living.* The positive psychology movement (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009) suggests that focusing on the positive produces broader attention, more creative thinking, and more holistic thinking. To engage people in helping redress some of the environmental injustices requires promoting creative and positive ways of living, something which outdoor educators are adept at doing. Feeling guilty, fearful, and apprehensive about using resources can lower morale and result in widespread depression and apathy. I am not encouraging a style of outdoor education bent on delivering hedonistic pleasures or quick thrills, but experiences which offer satisfaction because they involve respect, effort, and commitment.
- *Blur the distinctions between cities and the outdoors.* Move beyond environmental codes of behaviour which separate out pristine natural reserves from the rest of life. Recommendations such as light no fires and leave no trace, do not take into account holistic resource use, they create boundaries between the outdoors and where we live. It becomes too easy to see the reserves as the only places where environmental care is required.
- *Recognise the importance of building kinaesthetic knowing about environments.* Direct experiences where the body

moves with the contours of the land enables sensory and emotional bonds to form, which provides ways of knowing the land and water which highlights our connectedness to the world.

Outdoor education cannot hope to solve all of Aotearoa New Zealand's social and environmental problems. To try and do so is doomed to failure, and as Brown (Chapter 4) notes our expectations must remain more modest and realistic. However, if our focus is not on solving problems, but inspiring viable alternatives for living well on the planet, then our actions and programmes will make a difference. By sharing our interests, enthusiasm, and love of life our students will hopefully start looking for positive possibilities and opportunities in the world. And if outdoor education can help students live responsibly in, and feel positive about, the world they depend on – then it has a very important role to play in the 21st century.

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## Charting Future Directions for Outdoor Education in the 21st Century

By David Irwin, Jo Straker & Allen Hill

### Introduction

*As we move away from an ecologically imbalanced way of living to a more harmonious relationship with our surroundings, the big changes will be in the minds of individuals and their communities as they redefine priorities, values, and lifestyles. (Suzuki, 2003, p.330)*

The above quote by world renowned environmentalist David Suzuki might accurately and articulately summarise the key intent and driving force for this book. It is becoming increasingly clear that current patterns of consumption and lifestyle enjoyed by resource rich Western nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand are leading us into an uncertain future characterised by significant ecological, social, and economic issues. There is a call for change to more sustainable and equitable relationships with the places we inhabit, which stretches well beyond the bounds of education. As suggested by Suzuki, a considerable part of this change needs to occur in the minds of individuals and communities as they redefine their priorities and values. In many ways this redefining process has been at the heart of this book. As each author has insightfully articulated examples of new or alternative expressions of outdoor learning for the 21st century they have contributed to a partial re-envisioning of outdoor education theory and practice as we know it. However it is important to remember that although the book has allowed these voices to be heard, there are many other voices that have not been included. The editors acknowledge that these people are in their own way, also framing the future of outdoor education in this country, and that what has been included in these pages is by no means the only developments in contemporary thinking. However, of particular concern is the lack of diversity in cultural perspectives within contemporary outdoor education literature, and the editors wish to acknowledge the difficulty encountered in trying to find contributors to this book from spaces outside of the dominant perspective.

The chapters in this book have provided a wide range of perspectives and examples of practice. They do not represent a recipe for ‘doing outdoor education’ or even for incorporating socio-ecological perspectives into outdoor education. What these chapters do provide is a diverse array of approaches which might be employed in outdoor learning experiences, bound together by a common vision. That vision recognises the imperative to shift towards more sustainable and place-sensitive approaches to outdoor education to in some way meet the large ecological and social challenges that now loom so significantly on our horizon.

## **An imperative for change**

In Chapter 1, the editors observed that our planet is entering a phase of rapid change that scientists attribute to the accumulated impacts of human existence. Quite simply, there are too many people, and in the developed world we use more of the earth’s resources than we should. These driving forces, documented in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNESCO, 2004) are causing inequity in the distribution of wealth, the globalisation of consumer culture, widespread habitat destruction, the mass extinction of species, and climate change.

UNESCO has identified education as a key mechanism to facilitate awareness of the issues that are faced, and strongly advocate a change in values and behaviours to address the problems currently faced by humanity. The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2005) places responsibility for education for sustainability broadly across all sectors of education and seeks the engagement and commitment of individuals, organisations and governments. The editors and contributing authors take the position that humanity has no choice but to act to bring about change, and that outdoor education, with its long association with environmental education, provides a powerful medium to do so.

However, it is important to remember that education alone cannot solve the environmental and social issues mentioned above. This is because the response needed to address the complex problems described in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is primarily political. Orr (2009) argues “the crisis ahead is first and foremost a political challenge, not one of economics or technology, as important as those are. The global crisis ahead is the direct result of the largest

political failure in history” (p.6) and therefore it is naïve to expect that pedagogical changes alone will provide sustainable solutions. That is not to say that education has no role in addressing both local and global environmental and social issues, but means we must place the innovations and progress teachers make in educating for a sustainable future within the context of wider political power structures.

## **Building on the rich histories of learning outdoors**

As outlined in Chapter 2 by Mike Boyes, outdoor education has a rich tradition and history both locally and internationally. In Aotearoa New Zealand, educators have been exploring and interacting with outdoor environments as an educational context for more than 100 years. In the latter half of the 20th century many expressions of outdoor education moved towards the central role of adventure pursuit activities accompanied by notions of personal and social development. This resulted, in Aotearoa New Zealand at least, in a disjuncture between these forms of practice and broader environmental and cross-curricular goals to which outdoor education, and camping had previously been associated (Lynch, 2006). The emergence of dominant forms of outdoor education underpinned by concepts of adventure, risk and challenge have been subject to critical scrutiny and contestation over the last 20 years as discussed previously in this book and elsewhere. It was our intention to recognise the validity of these critiques whilst not dwelling too long on them. Rather we want to look towards a future vision of outdoor education which builds on its’ rich history yet moves beyond 20th century foundations. Engaging a critical socio-ecological perspective, we hope the vision embraced in this book might help outdoor education become part of a transformed future which is more sustainable, more culturally engaged, and more sensitive to place.

As well discussed in this book, the world we now live in faces social, political, economic, and environmental issues which are vastly different from the mid 20th century. In this context we would contend that the world “desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind” (Orr, 2004, p.12). Learning experiences in outdoor environments can play an important role in the development of these types of people through adopting approaches informed by socio-ecological perspectives which are more culturally and contextually appropriate to our time. This does

not mean we abandon on mass the rich history of outdoor education. Rather it means we build on this past and look forward to a future where the fruits of our educational endeavours are measured against the standards of decency and human survival, where we live well and nurture and protect the very ecosystems upon which our survival depends (Orr, 2004).

## Acknowledging our integrated world

Our planet and all life upon it are bound together in a complex and interrelated state, and many environmental and social problems result from our inability to understand this well. This book has demonstrated that outdoor education has the capacity to engage people in learning opportunities that address the complexity and interconnectivity of the world in which we live. The environment is not a passive backdrop but an integral part of how and what we learn. In the past learning environments have been seen as separate entities from the students, limiting the processes by which an individual creates meaning and understanding. Outdoor education can challenge this polarisation between place and person and recognise the learner as embedded, or living, in the wider world.

Throughout the book there have been snapshots of teaching which engages students deeply and thoughtfully in learning about themselves and the places they live. Connections are sought between students' lives and community, between the natural environment and where they live, between principles and practice, between the past, present, and future. The contributors remind us that we do not learn independently, in autonomous isolation, but we are part of a larger ecosystem and our knowing emerges through the interaction of mind, body, community, and environment.

In many of the examples of practice described, it was evident that outdoor education could extend learning beyond something students could know and repeat, to something which builds understanding; understanding which involved engagement and time for students to perform, take on responsibility, and be active citizens. It was noted that some classrooms can create barriers which shut students off from the rich hubbub of everyday life, but moving outdoors allows students to build connections, not least because they are there in the flesh.

In Chapter 2, Boyes talks of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as

embodying a way of being or internalising social and cultural norms. Haluza-DeLay's (2006) research, extends this to *ecological habitus*, which he suggests we develop from compassionately engaging in a particular place. This book further suggests that once we start to feel comfortable and appreciate our connection to certain places then this further supports our ability to live well in that place. Through engaging all our senses we develop a reciprocal commitment which requires respect, responsibility, and care. This way of living does not require a universal set of rules, but is garnered from teaching in a place-responsive way and attending to the specifics of where we are. Some of this learning happens tacitly, we absorb understanding of the interconnectedness of life without being consciously aware of what we are learning. By being immersed in the outdoors, mixing with others who not only think in environmentally friendly ways, but are willing to take action, allows ideas to infiltrate our identity and the personal narratives of how we see ourselves. Developing this level of *ecological habitus* is a slow and gradual process, but the practical know-how of living well in the wider world is a necessary step toward taking action to strive for a better world.

## The challenge and politics of change

The discussions in this book have encouraged readers to think about what outdoor education could look like in the 21st Century. The authors have encouraged readers to consider the historical way outdoor education has been conceptualised, and described a range of alternative interpretations that are informed by a social and ecological framework. The book is potentially transformative, for it is about changing how we think about and do outdoor education. At the very heart of each chapter lies the question: What is the purpose of outdoor education? The contributing authors have demonstrated that an emphasis on place, on community, on environment, on culture, on social justice, and even on curriculum can change the way outdoor education is considered.

But change is not an easy process. People tend to cling to and are defensive of those things we have become comfortable with, have investment in (particularly a strong emotional investment), or are convenient for us to continue doing. This is why throughout history societies have struggled with change – for societies tend to continue to invest in those values, beliefs and behaviours that the people within

those societies have become accustomed to (Wright, 2004). Change is often socially or politically unacceptable and the instigators of change are often challenged. Change towards sustainability in outdoor education is no different (Hill, 2010; Irwin, 2008).

Where can we go from here? As outdoor educators we need to be pragmatic about what we can achieve with our students. This means thinking about what social and ecological impacts we have through the delivery of our programmes, and moving to reduce these. But it also means thinking about pedagogy, what it is that we are teaching and how we are teaching it. What scope do we have to change what we do? Chapter 4 went some way to illustrating how the curriculum can inform our thinking in different ways, but there are many other creative options still to be explored. .

However, we need to be careful. Key themes of education for sustainability are that learners must develop an understanding of the impacts that humans are having on the planet, and to take action that moves towards a positive vision of the future. This means that as educators we must not only inform students of the dilemmas faced by modern society, but also have a focus on creating positive visions for our students and constructing learning experiences that actually work towards building a positive future.

As educators we need to be strategic, to choose our battles carefully. All of us have control of some aspects of our teaching and learning contexts and we need to work effectively within these constraints, as demonstrated by the many case studies described in this book. We need to encourage our peers and students to understand that small changes count, and that millions of people doing things differently can lead to a shift in social norms. This is the basis for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development described in Chapter 1 and EnviroSchools described in Chapter 4. But change also happens in a top down manner, through changes to the policy and regulatory framework. The curriculum has been a good example of this and provides legitimacy for adopting future thinking strategies into teaching and learning. Readers may also have the ability to contribute to organisational policy in their place of work in ways that will encourage others through policy or leadership, to become future thinkers.

Outdoor education has in the past had a strong engagement with

environmental education, and this can place outdoor educators as leaders of education for sustainability in schools. This suggests that outdoor education can provide sites of innovation within schools, demonstrating how education for sustainability can be incorporated into experiential settings and encourage cross curricular learning, a feature of Chapter 4. The connection that outdoor educators have with outdoor environments, pedagogies that involve critical and creative thinking, concepts of building healthy communities, and taking action, all position outdoor educators as potential agents of change.

Such talk reduces the responsibility for change down to an individual level, empowering each of us to have an influence, to be agents of change. Influential author and educator David Orr sums up this notion of empowerment well when he observed that the future “...is the sum total of the choices we make, and we have the power to make different choices and hence to create a destiny better than that in prospect” (Orr, 2009, p.9). The future is ours to forge.

## Looking forward with a positive vision

A significant strength of outdoor education is also the positive emotions which outdoor experiences can generate. According to Fredrickson (2006) positive emotions encourage us to expand our sense of what is possible, because when we are happy we tend to be more outgoing and willing to seek out new places and ideas. This is important because it acknowledges the importance of having fun, not only because it makes us happy, but because positive fun encourages creative exploration of the potential and possibilities of living well in, and adapting to, this rapidly changing world.

While as outdoor educators, we cannot deny or ignore the social and environmental issues identified in many of the chapters, emphasising the negative narrows our focus and we can become fixated on our own survival. By constantly drawing attention to environmental problems students can potentially feel inadequate and become disheartened. When we have uplifting experiences then we become more interested in looking outward and thinking about the kind of world we want to live in, and as Seligman *et al.* (2009) suggest, this helps to engage people in wanting to live a meaningful life.

In general we all want to do things for others and make a difference to

the world. From our work as outdoor educators we know that people work together well and enjoy sharing when they happy and positive. If we want to inspire people to live sustainably, then we should try to have fun outdoors, promote a positive outlook on life, build networks of like-minded others, role model positive alternatives to our current way of life, and then our students will have the strength to find their own ways of building a better future.

In the words of Mahatma Ghandi “We must be the change we wish to see in the world”.

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## Glossary

(Note: tribal dialects vary, hence there is some variation in macron use and spelling from area to area and author to author)

Aotearoa - New Zealand  
 Aotea - Great Barrier Island  
 Atua - ancestor with continuing influence, god, deity  
 Awa - river  
 E noho marae - to stay on a marae  
 Haere mai - welcome  
 Hāngī - traditional earth oven which cooks food with steam from heated stones  
 Hapū - section of a kinship group  
 Harakeke - New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*  
 Hikoi - march  
 Hui - gathering, meeting  
 Iwi - tribe - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor.  
 Kai moana - food gathered from the sea  
 Kaka - (*Nestor meridionalis*) endemic parrot  
 Karakia - prayer  
 Karanga - call of welcome  
 Kaumātua - elder (male)  
 Kaupapa - protocol  
 Kuia - elder (female)  
 Māori - indigenous people of New Zealand  
 Māoritanga - a generic term for Māori culture  
 Marae - tribal meeting-ground, complex of buildings including wharenui and wharekai  
 Marae ātea - open area in front of the wharenui  
 Maunga - mountain, peak  
 Moana - sea, ocean  
 Motu - island, country, land  
 Ngahere - bush, forest  
 Ngati Porou - tribal group of East Coast area, north of Gisborne  
 Opāwaho - Heathcote River in Christchurch  
 Pākehā - New Zealander of European descent  
 Papakainga - home base, village  
 Papatuanuku - Earth mother and wife of Rangi-nui. All living things originate from them.

Pōwhiri - welcome ceremony on a marae  
 Rangatahi - youth, younger generation  
 Rangi-nui - atua (deity) of the sky and husband of Papa-tū-ā-nuku, from which union originate all living things.  
 Raupō - bulrush, *Typha orientalis* - used as construction or decoration material.  
 Tainui - collective term for the four principal tribes (Hauraki, Ngaati Maniapoto, Raukawa and Waikato) in the Hamilton/Waikato area.  
 Takahe - (*Porphyrio* [*Notornis*] *hochstetteri*) endemic flightless rail  
 Tangata whenua - people of the land (Māori)  
 Te ao kori - the world of movement  
 Te Rāwhiti - East coast  
 Te reo - Māori language  
 Te Tiriti O Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi  
 Tikanga - protocols  
 Tikanga tuku iho - traditions passed on by ancestors  
 Tūpuna (Tūpuna, Tipuna) – ancestors (dialect variations)  
 Tūrangawaewae - a place where one has right of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa  
 Wairua – spiritual realm, soul, spirit of a person which exists beyond death.  
 Waka - Māori canoe  
 Wānanga - discuss tribal knowledge, learning  
 Whakapapa - genealogies  
 Whānau - family group  
 Whare - house, dwelling  
 Wharenuī - meeting house  
 Wiriwiri - quiver, shake

## Phrases

Haere mai! Haere mai! Haere mai: Welcome, thrice welcome  
 Haere mai rā e te manuhiri tuārangi e: Welcome visitors from afar





