Wandering and Wondering

BY KAREN MCVIER

Wandering and Wondering. This theme was suggested by our board member Kyle Lichtenveld while we were discussing names for this journal. While, ultimately, it was not selected as the name for the journal, we knew that we must theme an issue Wander/Wonder.

What draws me to the concept of wandering is that when I look for definitions of the term, it is described as “to travel aimlessly from place to place” (google) or “to move about with no destination or purpose” (Oxford.com). Often in our lives, we are traveling with a destination in mind—of going from A to B—and we have to get there in “this” amount of time. How often do we get to enjoy the learning and pleasure of walking without a destination or a time frame? And how often do we get to touch and share this with young learners? Wondering is often described as a physical activity, however it is sometimes used to describe a wandering mind, or wandering conversation.

This past summer, I had the wonderful pleasure of teaching a summer institute called Place and Critical Eco-pedagogies with Dr. Marcia McKenzie from the University of Saskatchewan. Most of the students were from the Critical Environmental Master’s of Education Cohort. During the first week we focused on urban education while the second week was land-based education. During our urban education course, we gave an assignment called a Dérive. As hopsecrets.com describes, “it’s a dérive or one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there (para. 2).” We organized students in groups of 3-5 people and then we gave them all afternoon to experience a dérive. We asked them to meet at a specified location. During the debriefs, we found students wandering and wondered. They popped into shops they had never before visited, observed daily life in different neighborhoods than the one in which they lived, they learned about organizations they hadn’t known about before, they had deep conversations about issues such as city planning and gentrification, and they shared personal stories that they wouldn’t have been able to in a regular classroom setting. The whole experience was framed through a critical ecological education lens, so much of their discussions centred on social and ecological injustices as well as “possibility” in the neighborhood.

Wandering and Wondering went hand in hand in the above experience. Sometimes wondering is thought of as more of a cognitive experience, however when I think about myself, some of my best wondering happens when I’m wandering, and often vice versa. I am happy to see that the new Sask Curriculum is encouraging more wondering. Learning outcomes are now more open-ended and students are able to demonstrate their understanding of the outcomes in a number of ways. They are geared more towards projects, for example the senior science curricula all have a student-directed study outcome, where students are encouraged to inquire into topics of their choosing and interest. For example, a few of my favourite indicators (teachers are expected to cover about 3-5 indicators for each outcome listed, but it can be more or less too) from the new Environmental Science 20 curriculum include:

**Outcome:**
- **1.** To relate the concept of sustainability to human well-being and to the role of science in the development of sustainable practices.
- **2.** To analyze the relationship between human activity and the environment.
- **3.** To understand the impact of human activities on the environment and to develop strategies to mitigate negative impacts.

**Indicator:**
- **1.** To articulate the importance of the four elements (i.e., earth, water, wind and fire), a sense of interconnectedness with the environment and respect for Mother Earth

While some of the articles in this issue are geared towards asking questions and wondering, others challenge us to go wandering. For example, Norm Henderson encourages us to ask “what makes a good trail?”. Nick Olson gets us to wonder about and question our own entitlements to the land and how we identify and connect to the land. He writes about connecting, not just to the topical: what we see is what we get– but to the intricacies and structures that support the world around us. Elizabeth Brittle encourages us to ask about the role of technology in environmental education. Pam Belcher writes of environmental education programs offered by the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and how they get students to wonder about sustainability in our daily lives and in our schools. The Curriculum Brought to Life article helps smaller children wonder more about ownership of animals, with the story This Moose Belongs to Me. Ben Sackville, in our Research from the Field article, asks us to think about how art education can help students address environmental issues, and how that sometimes involves wondering and wandering.

Our photo essay by Juliane Murray is about wondering around and wondering about how her identity links to water. And our Towards Decolonization article helps us to think about wandering on a canoe trip, and how First Nations and non-First Nations women wondered about and participated in reconciliation. Even our poetry by Julienne Bickle, asks What Has My Culture Done? Pairing together Wandering and wondering is essential because often they cannot be separated. I hope you enjoy this journey through the issue as much as I do. Challenge yourself to not go through the journal in a linear way. Flip around from page to page, read it backwards, pick it up and read something then go for a walk and think about it.
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PLACE, LAND, & LEARNING

POST-SECONDARY PROGRAM PROFILE

BY KAREN MCVIER AND JEFF KNEVEL

What is the program called that you are taking?
Adventure Tourism Business Operations at the College of the Rockies

Where is it located?
Golden, B.C.

What kinds of things have you been doing and learning about so far? So we started the program off with some outdoor electives that were sort of dependent on nice weather before the snow came. Examples of those electives were a week-long backpacking trip through Bugaboos Provincial Park followed by a week rock-climbing and then another week of white water kayaking. That brought us into October when the in-class portion of the program began. Since then we’ve been in the classroom learning about the Principles of Tourism, Natural Interpretation, Leadership Theory and Computer Science. Just before we break for Christmas there will be another round of winter electives this time starting with ice-climbing and ending with backcountry snow touring.

What has been the most challenging part of your program? Oh for me getting back into school mode has been a fairly tough transition and it’s a college program so the material and the assignments come at you fast and furious. They gave us a week off in November already just to let us catch up on our work and to have a little mid-semester break – which was well needed.

What has been the most exhilarating part of your program? This is a tie for sure between rock-climbing, which I had never done before and white water kayaking, which I had only done a small amount before. With one it’s the thrill of getting higher than perhaps you’ve ever been before and then taking a look around when you’ve finally gotten to the top to see the majestic view, then of course the relief of being lowered or rappelling to the ground. With the other it’s the thrill of hitting big water and feeling like a kid again amidst those immense waves that knock you around as if you were just a play thing.

What do you hope to do once you finish? I would like to get my foot in the doorway to be able to start doing some guiding. Maybe start off with Sea-kayak guiding because I will have my level 2 instructor course in that and do that for a few years while I pursue the rest of my certification to become a certified mountain guide. From my understanding it’s pretty rigorous screening to be able to get your certification in that and we just aren’t given that extensive of training in that field at the college. But really the sky is the limit and who really knows where they might end up when they’re done this program. They do provide us with the training to be able to start up your own business so maybe some of us will end up going down that route.

Anything else you’d like to say about your experiences so far? Just that it’s been such a really positive experience so far and I feel very fortunate to be able to be out here in B.C. doing this.
**PLACE PRACTICE**

**By Pam Belcher, Education Coordinator, SES**

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) has been offering its program, Destination Conservation Saskatchewan (DCS) around the province for over 20 years. Focused on conserving energy and water and reducing waste, the program helps students understand both the technology and the behaviours that help us to conserve. Sponsored by SaskPower, DCS is currently offered to classes in schools, where students explore a variety of stations like energy efficient lighting, composting, transportation and water use, among others, and identify actions they can take in their own schools, and at home. DCS staff support students to plan and implement those campaigns, and provide additional learning resources to teachers along the way.

The issues and materials in DCS workshops are regularly updated to represent current and innovative technologies, and best energy conservation practices. As a result, the program has often been used to support the implementation of energy retrofits in schools around the province. More recently, the SES has built on the strength of DCS by adding other education programs and resources to help teachers address emerging environmental issues.

Smarter Science Better Buildings (SSBB) is a partnership between the SES and the Western Development Museum (WDM) focusing on energy efficient homes. Designed to meet outcomes in the grade 7 Science, Heat and Temperature unit, students visit one of the four Western Development Museums in Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, North Battleford, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw) for a half-day program. SSBB combines interactive displays specific to energy efficiency in buildings. At each site, historical building exhibits have been evaluated for their energy efficiency, allowing students to compare past and current building practices – and learn just how cold an un-insulated farmhouse could be! In an additional assignment, students can

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**FOR WEB ONLY**

**Program:** Saskatchewan Environmental Society, environmental education programs and learning resources

**Location:** Saskatchewan

**Target Audience:** K-12 students

**Subjects:** Science, Social Studies, Math, English Language Arts, Health Education.

**Teaching Methods:** Hands-on inquiry, action oriented, classroom and/or place-based, experiential.

**Website:** www.environmentalsociety.ca

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**By Dr. Herman Michell, President CEO of NORTEP-NORPAC**

Dr. Herman Michell is originally from the small fishing/trapping community of Kinoosau, on the eastern shores of Reindeer Lake. He speaks fluent Woodlands Cree (‘th’ dialect) and also has Inuit, Dene and Swedish ancestry. Dr. Michell is the President CEO of NORTEP-NORPAC in La Ronge, Saskatchewan.

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**Contributors**

ELIZABETH BEATTIE is with the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on meaningful outdoor learning experiences, with an emphasis on early childhood education. She can be contacted at lizbeattie22@gmail.com.

PAM BELCHER's work involves all aspects of the SES school programs, including developing workshops, lessons, and resources connected to the Saskatchewan curriculum. For over 20 years, Pam has worked with the Destination Conservation Saskatchewan program, supporting teachers to provide good environmental education, and helping students take action to conserve energy and water, and reduce waste. She has an MA in Special Education.

DAWN GUENTHER is from Saskatoon and a retired nursing manager. Her passion for canoeing took her all over the world. She feels a strong connection to creation and the spirit in moving or still water. Dawn looks forward to making life long friends with the sisters in Nimis Kahpitamotke

TERRY HARRISON has found that paddling in wilderness areas has been a passion of hers for over 35 years, beginning as a teenager. She is a retired teacher living in Saskatoon and is active in social justice issues. She looks forward to sharing laughter and tears amidst stories of pain and empowerment, while embraced by Mother Earth while on Nimis Kahpitamotke.

NORMAN HENDERSON is Director at the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) at the University of Regina. His current research interests include climate change impacts on parks and natural areas in the Prairie Provinces. He has also published a book on canoe and travesis travel in the Oz Appelle Valley. He is a member of SaskOutdoors and Nature Regina and enjoys taking his eleven-year-old daughter on field trips throughout the great province of Saskatchewan.

JEFF KNIEVEL is a SaskOutdoors member who is from Bienfait, Saskatchewan. He studied an undergraduate degree in Religious Studies at the University of Regina, worked for several years as a youth-care worker with Ranch Ehrlo, and just this year decided to leave work and take a new educational experience that might allow a future career closer to the land. We decided to ask him a few questions about his experience so far.

JAYLENE MURRAY recently moved from Vancouver Island to Saskatoon for her Master’s of Educational Foundations degree. She has a background in outdoor education and adventure tourism and has worked on the water in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. She is currently investigating the gaps between sustainability policies and practices at Canadian Universities. Water runs through Jay and she’s found a good home along the river banks in Treaty Six territory.

NICHOLAS OLSON is a community worker at Carmichael Outreach in Regina, SK. He is the author of The Adirondack Haystack Still Floats, a collection of short fiction studying twelve characters caught in the North American working class, and he curates his own series of essays at BallsOfRice.com.

BEN SACKVILLE is a pre-service educator from Regina, Saskatchewan who has just completed his fourth year in the University of Regina’s Arts Education program. He aspires to teach drama education, and hopes to help students to learn, develop, and discover their most affluent traits and abilities as they journey through school and beyond.

DR. HERMAN MICHELL is originally from the small fishing/trapping community of Kinoosau, on the eastern shores of Reindeer Lake. He speaks fluent Woodlands Cree (‘th’ dialect) and also has Inuit, Dene and Swedish ancestry. Dr. Michell is the President CEO of NORTEP-NORPAC in La Ronge, Saskatchewan.

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**PROGR A M**

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have their own building design evaluated for its energy efficiency by Sun Ridge Residential Inc. 25 Acts of Energy Conservation is a K-12, province-wide action campaign that promotes energy conservation throughout the school year, with a month of daily activities between Earth Hour and Earth Day (March 21-April 25, 2016). The Saskatchewan Environmental Society partners with the Saskatchewan Science Centre to present this action contest. 25 Acts has a number of online resources that can be used to support student actions, including scripted announcements, posters, and videos. Schools submit their projects to be entered to win up to $1000 for their school. SaskEnergy, SARCAN, and The Co-operators sponsor 25 Acts. To have a look at what schools have submitted in the last two years, go to 25acts.ca

The Boreal Watershed Monitoring project works with students in six northern communities to study the health of their watershed. Supported by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, students work with SES staff, experts from the Institute at the University of Saskatchewan, and community elders and teachers to find answers to their questions “can we drink this water?” and “can we eat this fish?” Students learn to take water, fish, and plant samples, along with a variety of water testing and water-related research, and then send monthly samples to the Saskatchewan Research Council for chemical laboratory tests. In developing learning resources in environmental education the SES recognizes that teachers need practical and appropriate resources to support new curriculum. Resources, including some in French, are online and free for download. Around the topics of energy, water, and waste, they include many lessons, audits (energy assessments), and campaigns (action projects). Three short videos present the environmental issues around climate change, oil sands development, and the use and mining of uranium in Saskatchewan. Curriculum connections and the subjects they support are included with all resources.

EDUCATION RESOURCE:
Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change video

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EDUCATION RESOURCE:
Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change video

This Moose Belongs to Me

TAKEN FROM: WWW.TEACHINGIDEAS.CO.UK/LIBRARY/BOOKS/THISMOOSEBELOONGSTM

Author: Oliver Jeffers

AGE RANGE: 5-11

Wilfred owned a moose. He hadn’t always owned a moose. The moose came to him a while ago and he knew, just KNIDW, that it was meant to be his. He thought he would call him Marcel. Most of the time Marcel is very obedient, abiding by the many rules on How to Be a Good Pet. But one dark day, while deep in the woods, someone else claims the moose as their own...

TEACHING IDEAS AND RESOURCES:

English
- Write the prequel to this book, in which Wilfred’s moose met him for the first time.
- Write a new story about a boy or girl who has an unusual pet.
- Create a set of instructions to teach Wilfred how to look after his moose properly.
- Write a list of ‘for’ and ‘against’ arguments about whether people should keep pets.
- Make some speech / thought bubbles for the illustrations.
- Write Wilfred’s complete list of ‘rules’ for Mareel, to teach him how to be a good pet.
- Make a list of ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of having a moose as a pet.
- Retell the story from Wilfred’s (or the moose’s) point of view.
- What is the plural of moose? Make a list of plurals of other animals’ names.
- Role play the discussion between Wilfred and the old lady. What might they say to each other?
- Write a sequel to this story in which Marcel finds another owner.
- Create a report about them.
- Make a food chain / food web that includes a moose.

Science
- Can you learn more about the moose? Use your research to create a report about them?
- Make a food chain / food web that includes a moose.

Art
- Look at a photo of a moose and use it as the starting point for your own illustrations.
- Make a playlist of songs that might be in Wilfred’s record collection.
- Compare your own playlist of favourite songs with those of other people in your class.

Music
- Look at a photo of a moose and use it as the starting point for your own illustrations.

Geography
- What different geographical features can you see in the illustrations?
- Where is this story set? Can you make a sensible guess about the location of the story?
- Could you find a suitable place on a map?
By Nicholas Olson

Just west of the yard in a field of summer fallow is a rock. Its existence alone isn’t remarkable; there are a multitude of rocks in the dirt around Horse Creek. All over the prairies there are rock piles, decades or centuries of rounded stones the size of softballs or buffalo skulls or lawnmowers, stacked as monuments to the neighbouring broken earth. But the rock west of the yard, picked out of the ground to clear the way for tilling, ended up being the size of a small car. Forty paces from the road it looks substantial but unremarkable; flat and several feet high, grey brown, leaning back with a salute to the sky, the remaining clover hissing at its base. The illusion disappears when it is approached. It juts out significantly, the remaining clover hissing at its base. Much of that summer was spent exploring the badlands of southern Saskatchewan. The first weekend of spring meant camping with three friends on odd looking pieces of dirt, then stomping on them, tempting our fate for a movie-like reaction from the earth. We never found any quicksand.

Later in summer we visited Castle Butte, a massive ice-age-created structure of sandstone and clay reaching to the sky of the Big Maddy. A few miles from there we navigated to Buffalo Effigy, the flat outline of rocks which shape a buffalo on the highest hill around—a sacred site now part of a pasture, likely fenced off and somewhat preserved. A few weeks later we camped at St. Victor Petroglyph Park, time-worn carvings on horizontal rock on the top of another highest hill in the area. These three sites of identity and significance to the First Peoples, all purposefully placed on top of the highest of hills, existed long before my maternal grandparents settled in the area—around Harpface, Brooking, RACHELL—and began creating their own monuments in picked rock piles and homesteads.

In the snow-covered short-grass prairie of Horse Creek, I attempted to experience the ranching and farming life in which my family was once rooted. I picked bales and fixed fence and tried to be useful. When on break, to bolster my writing craft, I urinated poems into the snow in cursive.

When heading south to move lumber or check on cows it looked as though the clouds that rooted on the hills—that en-close the badlands were the end of the world, which in my own way, is the truth. The badlands are dead land and past them is a barbed wire pasture fence that is patrolled with drones and satellites of the American border guard. Other border-adjacent land is sold off to multinational companies scavenging for oil whose only identity in the land they own is corporate identity. The end of the world and the end of identity exists in deserts and robots and contracts.

I have a vested interest in preserving this land from such ominous ends because I feel connected to it in some vague, flaky kind of way. My friend who has lived here his whole life and whose family has farmed it for a century offers the same. Giving up his land would be the last thing he would do, and because of his connection to the land he acknowledges that he knows to some extent what it might have felt like when the settlers came. I identify with the land that sits atop the badlands because of personal history, but this land does not identify with me any more than it identifies with the farmers or ranchers or indigenous peoples or the Queen who leases it out or that rock west of the yard.

The connection felt from being on the land, from spending time caring for it and working it, is universal and real. I am not entitled to this land, nor is any one person or group of people. Instead the land has an entitlement to be inhabited by people who identify with it, because those who identify with the land are more apt to treat it as it ought to be treated. To be an asset to the land, to be the type of person that the land is entitled to, I learn as much as I can about how it works and how to live well on it. About all its intricacies of connectedness, which offer lessons of how to exist and how to relate. Like the rock west of the yard, I am not out of place standing alone on the prairie, I only look that way when I am dug up from the city and thrown naked in a field. Like the rock, my ancestral composition lies in the soil, just as everyone else.

Each time I visit the badlands and hills adjacent I seek out the highest geographical point possible—to feel the wind’s unmitigated power or to fully realize the thunderstorm that approaches. Monuments that mark time, the carvings and effigies and buttes of the area, are locations of height for a reason. They are standing points that we revisit to watch the thunderstorm of the future steadily move in. The easiest place to keep your feet grounded for change and resistance is in community and identity. Strengthening our connection with these highest places is the only way to ensure the thunderstorm doesn’t come in and drown us all out and that we ensure that we are walking home, we see the pits of quicksand that would otherwise swallow us up.

I drove out of the yard and left the farm behind with a year of vagrancy and foreign experiences on the horizon. The rock west of the yard sat silent with the ice fog painted low in the background. The rock will quite likely be there when I get back.

To look just on the surface, and think that what you see from horizon to horizon is all that is needed to survive, is to misunderstand your place on the ground which you stand. To scale its heights to learn its lessons—one must be alive to the under-lying structures that support the visible and not-so-visible world around you.

Works Cited


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Each time I visit the badlands and hills adjacent I seek out the highest geographical point possible—to feel the wind’s unmitigated power or to fully realize the thunderstorm that approaches.
A FUTURE VISION FOR SASKATCHEWAN TRAILS

BY NORMAN HENDERSON

We all love trails, but we don’t often stop to think about them. We should. We need good trails. Some parts of the world are lucky and have many excellent accessible trails. Saskatchewan, frankly, not so much.

By “trails” I mean routes designed for self-propelled motion. I do not include snowmobile trails or the “Red Coat Trail”, a tourist route for motorists that follows highway 13 across the south of the Province. I do include canoe routes, bicycle trails, cross-country ski trails, and hiking trails. I include routes in wilderness and open country and the multi-purpose trails now found in our urban centres.

One of the major issues facing Canada is increasing physical inactivity and resultant ill health in too many people. Additional to the physical health aspect of trail use, some people are also concerned about “nature deficit disorder” – we are thought to suffer mentally from inadequate exposure to nature. One of the simplest solutions to these issues would be if people simply walked more. While many of us love wilderness and backcountry trails, the bigger priority may be encouraging urban and town trail development and pedestrian and bike-friendly urban cores. These demonstrate to people that walking or biking to work or to services can be an everyday event that works well. Put bluntly, making walking an everyday experience is more important than providing for the occasional hike.

In fact, one of the striking features of Canadian hiking trails is that we typically drive, sometimes for hours, to get to them. Unintentionally this has contributed to the common public perception that bipedal motion is a minority activity, a somewhat exotic behaviour. What we really need are actions and infrastructure that support a shift towards viewing walking and biking as everyday and normal.

Terminology can be revealing. What we call “hiking” (with the grand connotation of an expedition), Europeans call “walking” (and do not make out to be a big deal). In their day-to-day lives many more Europeans walk than Canadians. I think this greater participation and the normalisation of walking as an experience should inform our vision for Saskatchewan trails. Our trails vision could be that increasing numbers of diverse people use trails in sustainable ways that improve their physical, intellectual and spiritual well being and encourage them to self-propel in everyday life.

What makes a good trail? One that is used! By this simple definition, many Saskatchewan trails compare poorly with the average grid road. But it is not so much what trail characteristics encourage use. These include separation from motorised traffic, clear route-marking, loop trails (that return to their starting point), nested trails (which offer a variety of loop lengths from the same trailhead), water features, wildlife, viewpoints and views, and diverse and attractive landscapes (whether urban or rural). Although we in Canada think first of natural landscapes as walk-worthy, people are equally attracted to cultural experiences. These are more common in Europe, where you can follow a biking trail through vineyards on your way to a castle, for example. But they also exist here in Saskatchewan: the famous hike along Kingsmere Lake has a cultural objective: Archibald Belaney’s (Grey Owl’s) cabin in Prince Albert National Park.

Above many other attributes, accessibility ranks as key to trail success. If it costs a lot in time or money to get to the trailhead, not many people will use it. Only a few world-class trails, like Canada’s West Coast Trail or Spain’s Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James), can be somewhat remote and still attract many users.

Saskatchewan is not famous for its trails and it is worth reviewing our challenges to understand how we could improve. We have a vast landscape with a relatively sparse population; this makes trail provision difficult. Where the majority of us live, southern Saskatchewan, the landscape is relatively treeless and flat – not ideal for hiking. Forested hiking experiences are generally distant from where most of us live. Private ownership and private lease rights control most of the southern Province. Annoyances like ticks or mosquitoes can be abundant. In the autumn, a beautiful hiking season, much of the landscape is subject to hunting. People of all ages have become more sedentary and more indoor in their activities.

We have challenges on the infrastructure side too. Parks Canada has recently abandoned winter trail maintenance at Prince Albert National Park. The Trans-Canada long distance trail remains incomplete and stalled in Saskatchewan. A Saskatchewan Trails Association report summarises that “...trails in Saskatchewan are underfunded, underdeveloped and under promoted.”

But Saskatchewan has some trails success stories as well. Amongst our cities, Moose Jaw has created an impressive route network. Moose Jaw trails combine options for bikes and walkers and offer an excellent mix of sheltered and open trails with paved, grit or packed earth trail bed options. While anchored in the Moose Jaw River Valley, the network ranges throughout the city, and offers river, hillside, and valley top trail experiences. No one in the city is very distant from a trail. Moose Jaw trails are an under-celebrated urban inspiration.

The Skytrail (currently temporarily closed for structural repairs) at Outlook is another success. This is an example of a combination cultural and natural trail experience. The cultural experience is the magnificent steel frame bridge that spans a vast valley and the natural experience is the fine views looking down onto tree canopy and deep into the waters of the South Saskatchewan River. The Skytrail combines art and aesthetics with an exhilarating outdoor experience. Despite being a bridge to nowhere in particular, it is well used. Not only do tourists walk it, but some local residents are inspired to walk across and back every day. Moose Jaw and Outlook are the kinds of trail successes that we need more of!

Saskatchewan does have trail opportunities. As the provincial demographic ages, there is an increased demand for walking experiences. The multi-purpose trails in our cities are well loved and generally well used – we need more of them in the Moose Jaw model.

Outside urban areas we also have opportunities. Alberta has created the Iron Horse Trail on an abandoned railway right of way. The trail runs from town to town through aspen parkland in east-central Alberta. Many other jurisdictions have repurposed rail lines into trails. This is an idea we could make more use
of The Qu’Appelle Valley, with its myriad tributary coulees and spectacular main valley and lakes, is surprisingly trails impoverished. Particularly in the cottage areas and towns of the valley we should work to provide more and better trails. On the other hand, the proposed Trans-Canada Trail is linear in nature, with long stretches through open country far from urban centres. Even if the trail is completed most sections are never likely to see heavy use in Saskatchewan. The Trans-Canada Trail should not, in fact, be our priority.

It is one thing to have trails, but how can we also encourage people to use what we have? For example, our historic canoe routes are world class, but relatively little used. It is difficult and daunting to embark on a major northern canoe journey without a lot of experience, so perhaps what is needed to encourage more canoeing is easy canoeing (and kayaking and paddle boarding) options in more populated southern Saskatchewan.

Trail use can also be encouraged by special events. These could be booklets, passport style. Each page would briefly describe a particular trail. On each described trail, at the half-way point, there could be a post with a unique metal stamp or punch and trail users could self-validate their achievement onto the relevant passport page. Collect all the stamps and we could validate users as trail super-achievers and give some reward or recognition of achievement. Such a challenge (and recognition) could motivate a surprising number of people, including families, onto our trails. Passports could be issued locally, by the provincial parks ministry, or by an organization like SaskOutdoors or the Saskatchewan Trails Association.

Citizen science engagement in research and ecological monitoring is still another possibility. We can encourage people to post photos of their trail experiences. We can invite people to monitor for particular plants or animals or record environmental conditions or changes during their trail experience and upload that information to a database or website. Over time this would build a trails-engaged citizenry.

There are still other ways forward. Stakeholders should be encouraged to adopt local trails to promote and watch over them. Imaginative ideas like soundscape trails or night hike trails are possibilities. Whatever new infrastructure or event ideas we try, however, our measure of success should not be trail provision, but trail usage. We need to get ourselves and Saskatchewan “in motion”.

Works Cited
*Saskatchewan Trails Association (no date) “Pathway to Success: a strategy for trail development in Saskatchewan”

People love purpose and they love destinations. Grey Owl’s cabin attracts hikers and canoeists for an overnight trek. Cabins along the ski trails at Duck Mountain attract skiers who can fire up the stove for a cup of tea or hot chocolate. Such features lift these trails into a higher class, but most of our trails lack them. There is nothing to stop us creating structures or features along many other Saskatchewan trails to increase usage. For example, some of the most interesting trail experiences in Europe, both urban and countryside, feature art objects along trails. Perhaps we could create a Saskatchewan prairie or deep forest art experience.

We could also provide people with trail passports. These could be booklets, passport style. Each page would briefly describe a particular trail. On each described trail, at the half-way point, there could be a post with a unique metal stamp or punch and trail users could self-validate their achievement onto the relevant passport page. Collect all the stamps and we could validate users as trail super-achievers and give some reward or recognition of achievement. Such a challenge (and recognition) could motivate a surprising number of people, including families, onto our trails.

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authority and objectivism help to strengthen the position of a leader in relation to others, they are not always qualities which demonstrate the concern, remorse, and humanity which environmentally-conscious art requires.

As they relate to the roles of students, the qualities of leadership do not ask that an individual asserts control or authority over his or her peers, but that they act as a moderator; a perspective lens through which ideas can filter before arriving at a conclusion. Students who wish to be leaders must reflect on why they want to be one, as each student's prerogative for gaining the respect and attention of peers will differ. “A good leader is one who understands the interaction among the variables that produce leadership and is able to help foster it in others” (Nemirovich & Kosi, 1997, p. 56). Here, the key word is “others”. The goal that a true leader works towards is not based in personalized greed or ambition, but on the needs of everyone in their group, organization, or community. Therefore, students who wish to lead must understand these needs to effectively organize and initiate their plans. This is particularly necessary within the realm of art-making for an environmental cause. Having empathy for environmental issues is essential for students who want to enact change, and one way of achieving this is by creating works of art which contain themes of sustainability, localisation, and community.

The role of environmental education

In Saskatchewan, diverse biomes and landscapes are naturally infused into the history of the cultural identity of its citizens. However, I fear that recent events in technological innovation, particularly through globalization, are beginning to cause a dismissal and undervaluing of such ecological roots or, as Mark Graham (2014) refers to it, “a sense of rootlessness and alienation from public purposes and local natural environments” (p. 187). This is not merely an issue native to Saskatchewan, but to a wide array of first-world countries, particularly in North America. Graham (2007) has indicated that “there is a widespread commitment to prepare students for success in an economy that is often individualistic, global, unsustainable, and inequitable” (p. 376). Like others, Saskatchewan citizens are losing their personal connection to the land on which they reside, which may cause a failure to identify themselves as citizens of this naturally rich and diverse province. What environmental education allows teachers to do is to ensure that students are provided experiences which link them to the province in a tangible way.

Through environmental education practices in arts education, arts educators help students to cultivate compassion and empathy for the ecology of the province and allow students to begin to identify themselves as intellectual and artistic citizens and leaders who have the potential to influence the society in which they reside. From the perspective of a pre-service arts education teacher, my argument is that environmental awareness in elementary and secondary education has
the capacity to influence the individual, civic, and cultural identities of student-artists by inspiring leadership qualities within them. This is a result of explicitly engaging students within Saskatchewan’s various biomes and ecosystems. As students creatively respond to their experiences, there will be opportunities for educators to cultivate artistic and culturally-conscious discourse about current environmental issues in Saskatchewan and the importance of investing oneself into one’s immediate surroundings as a way of becoming active members and leaders of a sustainable culture/community in their lives during and following school.

environmental awareness in elementary and secondary education has the capacity to influence the individual, civic, and cultural identities of student-artists

As students fail to recognize and respond to circumstances from a location-based personal identity, they become less qualified to take on, and more uncomfortable in, positions of leadership for environmental change. Graham (2007) warns that “education that ignores issues of ecology and community becomes complicit in their erosion” (p. 375). Without defining ecological surrounding as an important part of the social self, people become inherently isolated. This idea is not necessarily unnatural, though that is part of the problem. According to one examination of the relationship between humanity and nature, “Humans tend to separate themselves from the natural world in which they evolved, and this shapes the ways in which they define their relationship with nature.” The motivation to control, conserve or protect nature is determined by our perception of this relationship (Brymer et al., 2010, p. 97). What Saskatchewan teachers have the opportunity to address in their classrooms is a revoking of this tendency. Though a massive undertaking, an ecological identity crisis such as this has the potential to be addressed.

There are two definitive reasons to promote environmental awareness in Saskatchewan education. First, it is a means of educating students who will go on to live uniquely influential lives following their schooling about the importance of the perseverance of Earth’s biosphere. With a focus on Saskatchewan’s various ecosystems, teachers will guide their students in learning about the cultural and environmental history of the province, and begin to develop understanding about the past, present, and future of Saskatchewan’s biomes. Second, it is a means for students to discover their own identities as citizens of a province richly diverse in both cultures and landscapes. As students construct their own stories within the context of Saskatchewan, they may be given experiences outside of the classroom which connect their school life to the overarching society that they live within. This will lead them to becoming more effective and knowledgeable leaders in their community.

I believe that teachers who afford students with experiences which allow them to make such imperative connections to natural and urban environments will help students link their own identities directly to their surroundings. These linkages will help students to cultivate a sense of personal agency for environmental sustainability and identify as living, breathing organisms who have the potential to influence their surroundings as leaders in socio-cultural, environmental, and artistic contexts as opposed to those who identify themselves as learners and intellectual contributors exclusively within the isolated context of the classroom. To further instill these connections, it is the opportunity of the arts educator to create an attitude of compassion and empathy for such causes. This is achievable through the expressive and unapologetically human qualities present with the world of art.

THE ROLE OF ARTS EDUCATION

Environmental education can be taken within the vein of arts education to connect students to their ecological surroundings and make the subject matter more personal and accessible. Erika Polmnic (2014) advises educators to begin by providing students with examples of art with environmentalist messages, which she claims “provide students an opportunity to encounter environmental concerns in ways that expands notions of how art can be created and begins a critical dialogue about our relationship to nature” (p. 17).

This uniting of artistic and environmentalist practices takes new shape as ‘eco-art education’, which Hilary Inwood (2010) says “increases the likelihood that educators can help to shift students’ attitudes as well as alter their behavior in positive ways toward the environment” (p. 34). This is a more specific branch off from what arts education more broadly represents, which is “a program of study which provides both visual and verbal languages as tools, and simultaneously develops the interpersonal skills necessary to address issues of ultimate concern through art making and viewing” (Gradle, 2007, p. 71). Inwood’s belief is that eco-art education will “stimulate learners’ senses, open their minds, and touch their hearts, becoming a powerful ally in fostering environmental literacy” (p. 34); a necessary factor in developing a compassionate and empathetic
leadership perspective for environmental activism in students. If it is necessary for students to be consistently involved in their ecological surroundings in order to heighten this compassionate perspective towards environmental issues, then eco-art education is a method by which artists can build a community of learners eager to participate in site-specific ecological discussion. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for students of Saskatchewan to use dance, drama, music, sculpture, painting, pottery, poetry, etc. as ways of reflecting on, understanding, and exploring systems through art. This perspective “might provide children with experiences that foster aesthetic sensibilities through a closer relationship with nature as a way to question our cultural perceptions” (Hart, 2003, p. 216) of Saskatchewan. Students will each interpret their experiences in their own way, thereby enlightening the peers and potentially others to their own perceptions and beliefs about environmental issues and contributing to discourse about Saskatchewan ecology, further developing their leadership skills.

The Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association, a coalition of teachers and environmental specialists in the province, has a vision for “[the] people of Saskatchewan [to be] environmentally responsible, valuing diverse and interdependent systems, working together to learn and practice ecological sustainability and healthy living for all beings.” (Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association, “Vision of SOEEA”, accessed from http://www.soeea.sk.ca/content/mission). I believe that this vision can be achieved in Saskatchewan by using the arts in environmental education. Through art, students may gain a personal connection to nature and develop a responsibility to become a leader in environmental reform and practice. Students will become more empathetic to environmental issues, and develop a real concern for the environment and an agency to enact change through the confines of the walls of their classroom. This will help them to communicate the value of Saskatchewan and its preservation to others, while also affording students with an ongoing exploration into their individual identities as artists, environmentalists, and leaders in Saskatchewan.

THE ROLE OF SASKATCHEWAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

To uncover more about who people are as individuals, it is advisable to look to the place in which they interact. Saskatchewan environments are vast and varied. The province offers a wide variety of diverse landscapes and ecosystems from lakes and rivers to dense boreal forests to the rolling dunes of the Great Sand Hills. This biome mosaic reflects the diverse nature of the identities of citizens of Saskatchewan who come from a variety of socioeconomic, religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Many have roots in rural communities, while others remain primarily urban. Some have immigrated to Canada from other countries. Others have spent their whole lives living in the same community. That being said, each citizen of this province is currently a local participant in its ecological web, and how they see themselves in this context will affect the future of the land.

Recognizing the differences between students’ cultural identities is beneficial for teachers because they will inform the classroom environment over the course of a school year. Grade 2 (2007) affirms that “if we are to understand an increasingly turbulent and mobile society in which many experience a loss of identity, boundary conflicts that are both long lasting and complex, and symbolic attachments to places both remembered and imagined, a discussion of place is essential” (p. 392). Travelling outside of the classroom with students and experiencing the natural environment that we all find ourselves in is integral for students to fully experience this kind of discourse, and will subsequently help to begin building and nurturing a community of learners. As Saskatchewan educators influence their classroom community in this way, they will afford students with experiences which allow them to identify themselves within the greater context of the province. In doing so, students may come to see themselves as individual citizens of a unified whole, each of differing backgrounds but communally linked. Practicing eco-art education with a diverse group of learners gives voice to all students who have a perspective on their urban and rural surroundings, and abandons an attitude of seeing students as isolated and immature members of society whose experiences, actions, and voices only seem to influence the confines of the walls of their classroom.

...each citizen of this province is currently a local participant in its ecological web...

These eco-art explorations may take on many shapes. Some teachers may choose to go on treks around the city, and take in some of the cultural history that seeps out of the architecture; some may take longer, overnight journeys to rural or historical communities like Gravelbourg and allow their class to experience the growth of a community on a smaller scale; some may teach students map-making and survival skills while simultaneously interacting with natural environments within provincial parks such as Waskesiu or Cypress Hills. During such explorations, artistic practice can take place. Students might be asked to listen to the rhythm of the sounds of a forest and develop a musical response to their observations, or create a sculpture out of found organic materials to bring awareness to endangered species’, or dramatize the impact of deforestation on certain wildlife.

In the classroom, these practices become work periods, separated from the spaces which inspire their creation and minimizing their significance as ‘art’. When eco-art practices are tied to the outside of the classroom and into their ‘natural habitat’, not only do they take on a more significant and immediate importance, but they are also spatially inspired and developed from experience for the specific purpose of helping to restore and maintain Saskatchewan’s ecosystems. In arts education, “Working from an ecologically restorative perspective should help promote the values of diversity, collaborative and cooperative working relationships, and consensus building. The result should be the creativity which flourishes in healthy participatory communities” (Blandy, Kongdon, & Krug, 1998, p. 241). Projects like these will inherently require students to become invested in their surroundings to fully participate in the creation of their art, thereby giving them a vessel through which to channel their perspectives on particular environmental issues and develop necessary compassion and empathy for the environment towards becoming environmentally-conscious leaders in the community.

CONCLUSION

Driven and inspired educators are always looking for new ways in which to instigate and inspire their classroom community. They model and promote teamwork, empathy, communication, companionship, leadership, safety, politeness, inclusiveness, and acceptance of others differences. However, these values are modelled only within the context of a classroom. Once the bell rings to end the day, students go their separate ways and take on new sets of values that pervade the various places in which they develop their multiple identities within other subcultures (families, teams, clubs, etc.). Students will identify themselves within these separate communities in different ways, and will embody specific versions of their self to suit their environment.

We all divide ourselves to some extent. Whenever we enter an art gallery, a courtroom, a school, etc., we adjust ourselves to become part of that environment. Usually these environments stay separate and interaction between them can be jarring, like seeing your teacher out at a restaurant with their spouse. Context means something. Each environment that we identify ourselves within requires specific parts of who we are, and so our experiences of these places are unique. However, segregating these environments blinds us to the impact that they have, and it can be challenging to make connections between our personal environments to satisfy our unique methods of self-identification.

The duty of a teacher is to nurture the needs of his/her students to foster a will to participate actively within their personal communities and the world around them. In arts education in Saskatchewan, they achieve this by focusing on three major components in their classrooms: creative/ productive, critical/responsive, and cultural/historical initiatives for learning. Through these focuses, each student will discover more about who they are within the provincial society, and will hopefully come to realize that they have a part to play. Educators are in the position to help students connect their unique experiences to the earth and perpetuate the importance of a collection of diverse knowledge to cultivate cross-cultural identification. In this way, Saskatchewan teachers enable students to expand their worldview and grow to understand how their personal experiences with art and ecology place them in environmentally-focused leadership roles to actively garden a unified ecosystem where citizenship and identity come to fruition.

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: WANDER NO LONGER

A. ELIZABETH BEATTIE

Digital technology has become a central element of education in Canada. Improving education and increasing the use of digital technology in education have become synonymous, despite a dearth of evidence that this practice is actually effective (Pinar, 2013a). Bringing digital technology into the classroom means more than a change in the tools students use to learn. George Grant (1918–1988), “one of Canada’s greatest public intellectuals” (Pinar, 2013b, p. 3) described digital technology as a “way of life on earth” (Pinar, 2013b, p. 3). When education uses or relies on digital technology, education itself becomes part of that technological way of life, legitimizing and re-creating the technological modality of existence. This is problematic because the technological ontology is predicated on “domination over nature, a politics of imperial, bureaucratic administration, a public discourse of efficiency, and a sociology of adjustment and equilibrium” [meaning standardization as opposed to diversity] (Emberley, 1994/2005, p. Ixxx, summarizing Grant, quoted in Pinar, 2013b, p. 3). These are not the underlying principles of good education, particularly not of good environmental education (Hart, Jickling, & Kool, 1999).

...digital technology, ‘screen time,’ and virtual worlds lead to... a loss of social connections...

The use of digital technology in environmental education (EE) is increasing (Ardoin, Clark, & Kelsey, 2013; Lu & Liu, 2013). It does not make sense to dilute the effects of outdoor EE experiences with digital technology when digital technology may be the cause of this generation of children’s relatively physical inactivity, ill health, poor social relations, and underdeveloped ability to focus (Strasburger, Jordan, & Donnerstein, 2010). Digital technology is particularly inappropriate in environmental education because EE and the technological process work in opposition. In fact, EE was developed as a response to the problems caused by the technological way of life. While EE acknowledges that ‘wicked problems’ (Caron & Serrell, 2009) such as global warming, poverty, or unequal resource distribution are complex issues with geographic, temporal, social, environmental, historical, and economic aspects, the technological mode of existence considers them to be the costs of progress (Pinar, 2013b).

Pinar (2013b) posits that technology is “a totality from which we cannot actually separate but with which we can choose to not coincide completely” (p. 9). Environmental education can provide an opportunity for regularly not coinciding with the technological mode of being. Further, environmental education teaches us to reconnect and re-coincide with our environment, from which we also ‘cannot actually separate.’ For this reason most of all, it is crucial that the presence of digital technology in environmental education is reduced, not increased.

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REFERENCES

We have lost our relationship with our earth relatives. Everything on this planet created by the Great Earth Mother has a spirit, “they are around us, below us, above us, within us”. Can you feel them? Hear them? See them? Perhaps not, but you only need to believe in them, as Lyndon Linklater eloquently pointed out to me.

I’ve lost touch with those connections as society and my social institutions have colonized my thoughts, creating a subject/object dualism in my mind, separating my soul from Mother Nature. I need to find a way back to those connections, find a way to reconnect with my relatives with whom I am disconnected. And so I embarked on a journey of rediscovering and reconnecting my self with the place of water.

And so it began...

I know water, but do I truly know her spirit? Do you know water? How do we know water? Why do we know water? Do we love water? Why?

These are some questions that I found myself revisiting throughout the past two weeks. With water, the rocks, those places, spaces and splaces. I realise now that my lens was, and always had been, anthropocentric and colonial.

Throughout this journey, I found myself analyzing how human’s anthropocentric views have impacted water through development, commodification, colonialism and pollution. How we’ve used water as a racial weapon, how we’ve appropriated and abused water, how we’ve ignored waters’ intrinsic value, and how we’ve created a tragedy we may not be able to reverse.

I welcome you to join me along my journey of water self discovery...

“WE NEED TO DISCOVER/RECOVER SELF IN RELATION TO PLACE” (GREENWOOD, 2013)
Peering through the fence from the Askiy Urban Agriculture site on 20th Street West in Saskatoon, I saw a cumbersome sight. Abandoned and empty earth sat there, with piezometers sticking up like daggers, signalling the death of that land. Gord told me that those white tubes were to assess the level of contamination left behind by Imperial Oil. I couldn’t help but wonder where those contaminants were going – in through the top soil, washed away as runoff to the river and leaking down through to the water table, leaving what kind of a future for our water? The land on that side of the fence, like that on the side I stood, was contaminated. It was another brownfield, a former industrial site, where its future use was dictated by its level of environmental contamination. Thanks, of course, to human use.

The land on the side of the fence where I was standing was lucky – it had been an unused parking lot, converted into an urban agricultural site. Slightly different than other urban agriculture, this land itself couldn’t be cultivated; they had to bring in pallets and plastic containers and fill them with soil from elsewhere because the soil there was dead and poisonous.

Sadly, it didn’t strike me as odd that this brownfield site was smack dab in the middle of a low income neighbourhood. Unfair and unjust, but typical.

The Askiy site was a perfect example of looking at land, contemplating the history, assessing the current status and imagining a brighter future. The Askiy Urban Agriculture program was a great reminder to me of how our (ab)use of land affects all systems; it’s all connected, we’re all one.

“The current Disney mentality... that equate[s] consumerism with progress, plenitude and happiness helps many people remain in a state of self denial about the nature of the environmental crisis” (Bowes, 2001, p. 182)

Throughout the history of human development, we have used water as a tool for our progress. We need it for every aspect of our lives: transportation, hydration, nutrition and breathing. Saskatoon was developed primarily due to the ease of access provided by the river. From First Nations’ to colonial development, the river was the reason this land was so highly valued. This lead me to wonder about the value of water; how is it set and why? By whose measure? Is it that we are so anthropocentric, so egotistical, as to believe that we are the most important and highly valued beings on this planet therefore water’s value is based on our needs? Evernden highlights this by explaining that the root cause of our disconnect with the natural world is the simple language that we use, the fact that we exclude ourselves from the ecological image, as though we are separate (Bai & Scutt, 2014).

But we’re not separate, especially not from water. We are made up of nearly 60% water and live on a planet made up of approximately 70%; we are fundamentally connected to the water spirit. And as I drove away from Saskatoon’s water treatment plant, I caught a sight in my sidemirror. The old water works building, from 1965, and it struck me as I drove away I wondered about our connection to water and our future with water. I thought about how many people see a tap and think that’s where the water comes from. The links to our lakes and rivers, our water tables, our oceans and glaciers are so abstract for some to grasp. What about the intrinsic value of water? What about the value of water just being water?

But for society today, intrinsic values can’t be traded. It’s more profitable to work in numbers; One million dollars for developing on water’s edge, half a million for a water view. A $10,000 fine for swimming in the South Saskatchewan River within Saskatoon city limits. A fifty dollar water bill. A twoonie for a bottle of water.

And there we sit, turning water into money...and I wonder, what would water say?
As I cycled home along the Meewasin river trail, I was stopped by a sight that struck me. The weir, that Depression era ‘make work’ project, attracted many a tourist snapping photos of the pelicans and herons enjoying a tasty morsel at the base of the mini waterfall. What stopped me was not the usual sight of the tourists, or the majestic view of the pelicans, but a tree, teetering on the edge of the weir, balancing precariously in the middle of the channel. It reminded me of us, of society, and the blight that many are still ignorant of. It reminded me of how precarious our position in this world is, of how little time we may have to reverse the devastation we’ve created on this planet. And I thought back to the history of this water, in this place, and I wondered what it would say if I could hear it. I listened to the smooth flow of the water over the unnatural cement that blankets the floor of the river and I wondered how it felt when we created the weir. I listened to the sounds of the water crashing over and recirculating, and wondered about the hydropower project that was proposed for this site to create Green energy. I wondered how long we will continue on our path of fulfilling our needs, without considering the needs of future generations, thus recreating the tragedy of the commons? Water, one of our most precious resources, one we pollute and misuse, racialize and abuse... and my heart broke a little as I saw clearly the tragedy of our waters.

"This is what I want for children: a sensual, emotional, and conscious connection to place; the sure, sweet knowledge of earth, air, sky... an ecological identity.” (Pelo, 2009, p.30)

What would our society look like if we all nurtured our ecological identity? What implications would a deep connection with the natural world mean? Would Nature Deficit Disorder exist? I have seen that the disconnect with the great outdoors extends far further than our children; how many of us live our rat races, hurrying from one job to the next, from one place to the other, from one thought to another without even realizing where we are and what we’re doing?

If we understood our connections with the natural world, if we had that conscious connection to place that Pelo (2009) suggests, would we be in the same predicament? Would it then be socially acceptable to allow students to let go of their time schedules and just ‘be’. To enjoy their own intrinsic value, their abilities to simply exist, and the value they provide simply because they are who they are. Would they have time to explore the minute details of their surroundings, to get to know the places they submerge themselves in, to feel the world around them, to see the connections, appreciate the ties and understand the significance of one’s own actions?

WeWeb of Life

As I cycled home along the Meewasin river trail, I was stopped by a sight that struck me. The weir, that Depression era ‘make work’ project, attracted many a tourist snapping photos of the pelicans and herons enjoying a tasty morsel at the base of the mini waterfall. What stopped me was not the usual sight of the tourists, or the majestic view of the pelicans, but a tree, teetering on the edge of the weir, balancing precariously in the middle of the channel. It reminded me of us, of society, and the blight that many are still ignorant of. It reminded me of how precarious our position in this world is, of how little time we may have to reverse the devastation we’ve created on this planet. And I thought back to the history of this water, in this place, and I wondered what it would say if I could hear it. I listened to the smooth flow of the water over the unnatural cement that blankets the floor of the river and I wondered how it felt when we created the weir. I listened to the sounds of the water crashing over and recirculating, and wondered about the hydropower project that was proposed for this site to create Green energy. I wondered how long we will continue on our path of fulfilling our needs, without considering the needs of future generations, thus recreating the tragedy of the commons? Water, one of our most precious resources, one we pollute and misuse, racialize and abuse... and my heart broke a little as I saw clearly the Tragedy of our Waters.

In the communities where their access to water has been denied, or destroyed, water is a direct example of the racism, apartheid, and oppression that are rampant in Canada today. Water is sacred, and a basic human right; it should not be used as a tool of oppression and apartheid. But it is. As I stared into the water I thought about all those communities who have boil water advisories or contaminated water from industry. In 2014, there were 127 Drinking Water Advisories in effect in 88 First Nations communities across Canada. 127 communities without safe drinking water from their tap.

Ode to Water

I feel you Water Embracing me,
Comforting and cool
Raining down on me,
Feeding my food splashing me,
As I sit near you do you feel me?
Using you for my pleasure,
My fun using you for my needs,
My life using you until I’m done
You speak to us water,
But are we listening?
He said to open ourselves to you,
WATER but am I opening?
We love you water, but is it right?
We love you water but still we fight
We love you water but it’s not all right
We use you as a racial weapon,
It’s true we abuse you,
To signify our wealth we waste you,
In our ignorance of self
What will we do without you, Water,
For we cannot survive,
And when you get too tired, Water?
What happens if your spirit dies...
For we need you to stay alive
I’m sorry water...

“RACIST WATER”

WASTING THE PRECIOUS

TRAGEDY OF THE WATERS: TEETERING ON THE BRINK

“TRAGEDY OF THE WATERS: TEETERING ON THE BRINK”
After months of planning by a core group of First Nations and non-First Nations women, applications were received, in April, for the 2014 Nimis Kahpimotate trip. Participants were selected from a wide range of backgrounds, with two returnees from the year before, thus adding to stability of the group. Excitement built as we met each other via emails. Sixteen women, ages 23-62, gathered at the group campsite at Anglin Lake in late May for a weekend of preparation.

"...the fusion of ages from the 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's was lovely. We could be a sister, an auntie, a niece, a daughter, a grandmother and a mother in our group. It is representative of a family with various strengths and in diversity of phases in life..."

The weekend was full of fun, food, honest sharing, laughter, questions, canoe skill practice, safety and hypothermia training, gear demonstration, relationship building, Truth and Reconciliation Commission discussions, personal expectations and the anticipation of "really" embarking on this journey together.

"...it prepared me for the physical aspects and I greatly appreciated getting to know my sister paddlers. When we reunited in July it felt like getting together with good friends instead of strangers..."

The month of June was busy with gathering needed gear, completing the food drying, and numerous personal contacts to reassure new participants. The coordinating team also spent time contacting folks on the waiting list and accepting a couple of new, willing women when a few of the original participants were unable to go.

"...reconciliation through Sisterhood and vice-versa is on a much deeper level than most get the chance in life to do. When we come, we say we are open to whatever may come in this experience and that we are willing; we are opening ourselves to a deeper life experience..."

On Saturday July 19, participants met in Saskatoon to complete the final packing and checking of gear. Early Sunday morning, fifteen excited women loaded up and headed north from Saskatoon with our trucks and canoe trailer. By late afternoon we had driven nearly five hundred kilometers and arrived at the dock at Missinipe on Otter Lake. Nervous energy bubbled as we loaded our seven canoes and one kayak, partnered up and prepared to paddle our first strokes.

"...I so appreciated our smudging ceremony prior to us traveling forward..."

After paddling five kilometers, we pulled up at our first campsite on a point. Tents were set, wood gathered, fire made and supper simmered as we began to settle into what was to be a wonderful week of shared living experience - both the physical actions of canoe tripping and the trust building of women opening themselves to the sacredness of one another and to the nurture of land, water, and spirits.

"...the biggest hurdle for me was to trust 13 complete strangers out in the wilderness, with no way of contacting my own personal support system. That in itself was closest to my imagination of what my mother would have had to come to terms with when she was first taken to attend round lake school. I am truly grateful beyond belief that friendships were forged. Complete strangers came together in a unified mission of compassion and understanding about what has happened in our inclusive Canadian history..."

Our hearts, minds and bodies were challenged and filled with lifegiving experiences throughout the week. Every day held an array of thoughts, feelings, observations, sensations, and learnings for each woman to absorb, as she was ready.

"...I celebrate the acceptance and love of a supportive circle when sharing what was deepest in my heart..."

"...being caught in the wind and waves and drifting right into my deepest wound... I was not afraid the canoe would capsize; it was the uncomfortable feelings of not feeling good enough, being out of control and looking stupid to the group that unearthed me..."

"...I learned that there are many women, not just First Nation women, who are deeply concerned about what happened to children in Indian Residential Schools and are active in their personal lives to ensure fairness, equity and kindness in the many aspects of their lives. This was comforting for me, as an intergenerational survivor of Residential School, to know that there were more allies out there on my team, making space for our voices, making places safe to share and to be supported by the group while processing my early childhood trauma..."
I loved the stories of people’s families and backgrounds, I loved the heartfelt sharing, the tears, and I loved the circles of laughter echoing through the trees. I loved seeing the triumph on the face of a woman trying out the kayak for the first time, where each person was heard and respected and given the time they needed...

These are similar attributes required for a 6 day canoe journey. It was a perfect combination...

...healing from trauma on a personal, family, community and nation level takes great courage, strength and conviction. individual lives and cultural societal happenings, resulting from colonialism and residential schools. honored listening and storytelling. Many painful and honest experiences of the past and present were shared, within the framework of friendship building in a non-threatening atmosphere. There were evenings of singing, laughter, tears and sharing circles with a focus of Sacred silence was held between us.

The mornings were blessed with fresh oranges, hearty granola, coffee and tea followed by greeting the day with body prayers, smudging, stretching and often a gift of song. We intentionally lived in the present moment, listening, feeling and watching the sights, sounds, and smells around us: majestic eagles, graceful herons, calling loons, fantastic pelicans, glowing sunsets, sparkling stars, fragile flowers, spongy moss, twisting trees, refreshing water, warm rocks, and curling campfire smoke. Plant medicines were picked and mint tea offered. Refreshing cool swims washed over us as we splashed and laughed. Sacred silence was held between us.

We shared a variety of paddling partners, camp chores, and delicious, home pre dried meals. We canoed each day, sometimes in glass calm, sprinkling rain, or a stiff wind, gaining skills and confidence. "...There was a balance of First Nation/Metis women and women from the dominant culture. Working from a paradigm of the circle vs a hierarchy, all voices were important, and all experiences were valid and respected without question and judgement..."

We moved to four different wilderness campsites, each with its own integrated character of rock, moss, forest and water. We spent a day by the beautiful Robertson Falls with a choice of an extended paddle with a hike to another set of falls.

"...Building on our physical strength, nourishing our bodies with healthy good food, clean air, clean water, out in nature, which is stress-reducing, surrounded by supportive women who were specially selected for the journey, to bring to light and share from the heart some of the damage families suffered caused by Residential Schools, is the best possible environment for healing..."

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"...I loved the quiet one-to-one sharings that took place while filtering water or setting up a tent. I loved the sound of spongy moss, twisting trees, refreshing water, warm rocks, and curling campfire smoke. Plant medicines were picked and mint tea offered. Refreshing cool swims washed over us as we splashed and laughed. Sacred silence was held between us.

"...I had fun, it challenged me. It has led me to other opportunities with another participant..."

"...I didn't want to come back, I wasn't ready to..."

"...it has changed who I am and given me the confidence, knowledge and passion to discuss residential schools and other related issues..."

We continued to explore what it means as an institution to heal from the current and past crimes that have been committed in Jesus’ name, we need to return to Creation to safely break open and rebuild. As a current diaconal ministry student I am overjoyed to be a part of a Church that encourages lay-led initiatives like this, and I want to see such things continue and grow...

"...I continue to share the experience, feel the experience and yearn for more of the ‘sisterhood’ we created. It has reminded me of the importance of my personal dreams, aside from work and family. It has opened another layer of awareness of my independence and interdependence on friendships that I need in my life..."
PLIGHT OF THE GRASSLAND BIRDS

http://video.nhptv.org/video/2365580155/

From the fields of New England and Canada to the vast plains of Montana to the deserts of Mexico, grassland birds are losing their habitats at an alarming rate.

The documentary explores conservation efforts in the fields and meadows of New England; the Great Plains of Montana; rapidly developing areas of Ontario, Canada; and the Reserva Ecologica El Una in Mexico’s Chihuahuan Desert. Experts, students and volunteers demonstrate how they are working to protect the habitat of grassland birds. Host Will Lange travels to these places and explores efforts to protect the birds and their habitats, joining Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) biologist Rosalind Renfrew in the field along the way.

SHARING NATURE WEBSITE

www.sharingnature.com/natureactivities/

This website was founded by Joseph Cornell, who is the author of the Sharing Nature Book Series. It promotes his Flow Learning system of nature awareness and provides a number of activities to do outside in nature. To help you easily find the best game for your group, each one has a QuickReference Box that tells you:

- Concepts, skills, and qualities taught
- When and where to play
- Number of people needed
- Suggested age range
- Materials needed

Activities include a sound map, a silent sharing walk, a folding poem, a pyramid of life game, and more!

MOM, WHAT CAN BE DONE?

bantlephoto.com

In the fall of 2009, wildlife biologist and photographer Jason Leo Bantle teamed up with children’s author Lori Nunn on a children’s book project.

The focus is on arctic animals and the need to preserve their frozen home. Many different species are showcased in the book, from polar bears to musk ox to arctic hares and more. The story follows a young polar bear cub as it questions, “mom, what can be done?” with regards to the current climate crisis.

The story is told in a lighthearted and inspirational way with a focus on empowerment.

WADE DAVIS BOOKS & VIDEOS

www.daviswade.com

Wade Davis is an ExplorerinResidence at the National Geographic Society, so it is his job to Wander and Wonder! He is an ethnographer, writer, photographer, and filmmaker. His website includes a list of his films, books, and has links to videos of lectures that he has given, including his Ted Talk on the Sacred Headwaters.

One of his newest books, One River, describes a journey that Wade Davis did 30 years after his academic supervisor Richard Schultes did the same journey. He followed the footsteps of Schultes through the Amazon rainforest, detailing his descriptions of scientific adventure along with the stories of destruction of its indigenous culture and natural wonders over two generations.

WHAT HAS MY CULTURE DONE? BY JULIENNE BUCKLE

As I sit here
Against the rock,
Amongst the trees,
Along the water’s edge,
I wonder
What has my culture done?

From genocide to suicide,
What has my culture done?

Hate crimes, violence,
Abuse and even rape.
What has my culture done?

What gives us the right To silence,
To shame,
To oppress,
To blame.
What has my culture done?

Traditional He trampled,
Ceremonies hidden,
Oral traditions silenced.
What has my culture done?

Not only in the past
But ever in the present.
From omnibus bills,
To rewritten acts
What has my culture done?

Terrorists on homeland,
No space to occupy.
My culture turns their eyes away,
Ignoring the silent cries.
What has my culture done?

The Earth, our mother,
Has seen colonialism unfold.
She weeps for the pain
That we all hold.
What has my culture done?

Will the healing begin?
Will we accept our wrongs?
Stop making excuses
for the abuses?
Seek new ways to understand,
To heal...
I hope so.

I sit here
Against the rock,
Amongst the trees,
Along the water’s edge.
I wonder
After knowing all this,
what will we do?
PADDLING TO RECONCILIATION
AN INTERCULTURAL WOMEN’S CANOE TRIP

NIMIS KAHPIMOTATE (SISTER JOURNEY) is an intercultural Wilderness Canoe Adventure that takes place each summer in Saskatchewan. In 2012, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (www.trc.ca) was traveling throughout Saskatchewan as part of its 5 year mandate to travel across Canada to listen to and record the truth about Indian Residential Schools, and to begin a process of healing and reconciliation for all Canadians. In light of this, a group of Saskatchewan women, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, planned a canoe trip as one concrete way of sharing truths and stories with each other, nurturing friendships, and encouraging healing and reconciliation with each other, and between their communities. What they experienced was something extraordinary, a journey in more ways than one, and it was clear that the trip had to become an annual occurrence. The annual trips have taken place with equal success. See https://nimisjourney.wordpress.com/ for more information and read Dawn Guenther and Terry Harrison’s article on page 28 to find out what participants experienced.