

The Truth about ECOEE...

Experiences from front country travels, backcountry survival, and upcoming adventures.

This semester one of our course components for Interpretation of Cultural and Environmental Resources is to develop and present an original oral interpretation program on a topic of our choice. For example my topic was migration and I planned a 45 minute interpretation to give to the rest of the group. Initially we all were really confused what an interpretation actually was. Jeff and Steve, our grade assistant, were bombarded with thousands of questions on how to make our topics knowledgeable yet interesting. Although they were very helpful, our assignment became even clearer when we went The Grand Portage where we met Pam.

Pam was pretty much the chief interpreter at the Grand Portage who had lots of experience and knew what interpretations were all about. She gave us individual advice on how we should make our topics interesting and had loads of creative ideas. What really clicked with all of us was the cheesy 1980's movie she shared with us. It clarified five main points of a good interpretation. First was finding the meaning and relevance of your topic. Places have meaning, places have relevance, and we should be seeking and showing something of value. Second was facilitating a connection. We need to connect our resources to the visitor's or group's interest and help people care about the topic we are discussing.

Next, was remembering that the visitor is sovereign. The last and most difficult point is linking the tangible with the intangible. An example of this might be a beer bottle which can represent friendship, having fun or even a DUI. People have different perspectives of an object and you want to name something everyone can connect with



In this article you will find:

- *Leadership in Canada's Backcountry*
- *Lessons of Outdoor Education*
- *Leader of the Day: Tough Decisions*
- *Outdoor Adventure Recreation*
- *Interpretations on Interp. Centers*
- *Facilities Visited*

"A single arrow is easily broken but not ten in a bundle" –Japanese Proverb

After visiting a variety of different facilities such as Laurention, Outward Bound, the Grand Portege, Fort Williams, The Wolf Provincial Park and Camp Confidence I have learned a lot, even though there where some similarities there also is a lot of differences as well. Some of the general differences were the locations, who they were advocating to, and they all facilitated differently. Some of the similarities are they all have an affiliation with educating whether it is really young people or older people, all of them create some awareness, also in some way or another help people by giving people different experiences. Some examples of the differences are: Laurention and Outward bound even though very similar provided different types of education, experiences, and have different ways of facilitating.

Laurention is affiliated with a school district, while Outward bound is its own affiliation. Laurention caters more to the younger spectrum of cliental since they deal with local and instate schools teaching the kids the tools to better associate themselves to their surroundings and teach technical skills. While Outward Bound focus on a wide variety of ages but mostly young adults trying to turn them into outdoor leaders, and give them experience dealing with the adversities of their surroundings and the people they may potentially lead someday . Both though teach technical skills of the outdoors, they both take people out of their comfort zones and push the

individuals to grow as a person. Both places were very similar and yet very different. Next two places that are similar and different are the Grand Portege and Fort Williams. Starting with the similarities they are both areas linked to our history of North America. Both places were involved with the fur trade and the history of Native Americans and now Canadians. Both places use interoperation as a means to educate, and give people a special experience. They both strive to raise awareness, and protect our heritage.

The differences are not huge, besides the size of the facilities and location. But Fort Williams is a lot bigger and it's like the fort never died, it's filled with actors running the place like a small town, while The Grand Portege has a smaller staff and gives more of a personal interoperation of its history. The Provincial Park and Camp Confidence are not even close in comparison, really the only true similarity is that they both educate and provide an experience. The Proventil Park is geared to the education of wolfs, and giving people the facts on this miss understood animal. Camp Confidence is geared towards giving individuals and families a personal experience and education on the disabilities that is affecting their lives. They show that even thou a person might have a disability that they can be independent, that they are just like you and I, that they share the same sensations, feelings, and experiences, but just receive it in different ways.

“A nail that sticks up must be hammered down.”

*"Promise me you'll always
remember...
You're BRAVER than you believe,
and STRONGER than you seem,
and SMARTER than you think."
-Christopher Robin*



-Sarah Heller



*"Every mile is a memory, take
every step in stride."*

1st portage trail!

I have learned many lessons throughout our time in the backcountry, specifically ones regarding decision making and problem solving. Jeff has tried his best to instill a new way of problem solving, which takes all factors of the situation into account. We've all been so accustomed to memorization and regurgitation, but now with ECOEE we need to take each situation as its own and solve the problem at hand using prior knowledge, and improvising on the spot.

One example would be on my LOD day we had to make an arduous portage that ran over a mile long, and after that we needed to paddle about 16 km. After the grueling five hour portage we started on the rest of our day, once we got to the 4 mile lake we had to paddle across the winds kicked up to about 16-18 mph which is just on the border of white capping. Paddling in a 16 mph headwind is very difficult and now with the waves rising we had to pull off to look for a proper camping spot to hunker down for the night. This posed another problem; there wasn't a close by area that would suit our four tents and 14 people, so we needed to continue and paddle about another two miles to an island in the middle of the lake. Once we got there it seemed the island could hold a few tents but not accommodate all of us, so we went around to the other side which provided ample camping space for us all, so we made this our home for the night.

This specific situation taught me that unforeseen things will always happen and that I need to be able to and that I need to be able to make quick and proper decisions based on the information I have at hand.

Another big lesson is problem solving with an individual and how to go about that in the proper way. Many people in life will have their problems with others, but a lot of those people will either leave the situation as is, which is avoiding the problem or others will just explode and worsen the situation. But one thing we learn on ECOEE is conflict resolution, and with that entails certain tactics that aren't meant to hurt either party in the disagreement, but are meant to look at what both sides can do to help the situation and work through their problems. We've learned that it's a two way street and both people involved need to express things they personally do and the other person does that is creating the rift in their relationship. By having open communication lines like this it makes it easy for the problem to be resolved because each person can understand what they personally can do to change for the better.

So many relationships in the outside world are lost due to lack of communication. Jeff tells us frustration stems from unmet expectations, and many of those expectations are either not expressed verbally or are too high. ECOEE thus far has taught me many lessons to bring to other arenas of life, most importantly a new outlook on problem-solving and decision making.

-Tony Beyer

Connecting the tangibles to the intangibles! 6 words that seem to be the hardest in giving and preparing an interpretation presentation. Having given no interpretation presentations before the start of ECOEE I was unsure what, how, when and why of the interpretation art. And to make it a little more difficult I choose the topic of settlement! Settlement, the broadest topic and ranging that you can pick in the US. These problems were mostly given a light on them by Pam. The amazing woman who oversaw all of the interpretation at Grand Portage National Moment. She was so gracious to give us handouts, tips, tricks, and advice. What made the most interesting and helpful are the videos. Having the interpretation topic of settlement this was a huge boost to understand and draw a connection of the audience to the information and story of the settlement of Ontario. The video was about the Objibway people. The people who lived in Ontario. This video not only connected the history, trades, and day to day life of the people but it connected to me. The connection was the tangible of what tools they used (a canoe) for transportation to the intangible meaning of my journey, struggle, and day to day life on the English River.

A simple video that connected the way of canoe and how important it was to their life. As simple as it may seem I also am realizing that presentation of interpretation takes many hours, many experiences, much knowledge and research to present a topic of interpretation. This provided me with a very good and clear direction to efficiently organize my presentation.

-Nicki Smith



Each facility or organization has their own unique mission and philosophy – these two things have a major impact on the way in which the organization is managed and operated. When we visited Camp Confidence in East Sull Lake, MN we were pushed into a world designed specifically for people of any age with disabilities.

Although the name of the organization gives the hint that it's a “camp” the staff like to think of it as more of a resort where participants have the opportunity to do things they've never done before such as archery, kayaking, canoeing, cross country skiing, and lots more.

This is a place where handicap people will come to realize that they have more abilities than they do disabilities. Education at Camp Confidence is on a completely different level than most other facilities. For example, they have a wildlife area where it is likely to be assumed that participants would learn through identifying the different animals and specific information about each animal; instead, education is often implemented here through more simple means such as sight and touch – a participant might learn much more by petting a bunny and then petting a deer and noting the differences than they would if they were told that the deer was a white-tailed deer and is native to North, Central, and South America.

Another place we visited was Grand Portage National Monument. This park focuses more on teaching American and Native American history through interpretation lessons, display cases/pictures, and even wayside exhibits. Unlike Camp Confidence, Grand Portage advertises to the public as a whole and doesn't have any specific audience they're trying to draw in.

Outward Bound is very different from either of the facilities listed above. Although they're like Camp Confidence because they establish learning through experience, challenge/adventure, and a supportive environment, they accomplish this learning by using 28 day expeditions, group challenge courses, and other such activities. They wish to see their participants develop character and leadership skills through their programs. Another way that Outward Bound is different from the other two facilities is through size,

Outward Bound is composed of over one million acres where Camp Confidence is only 148 acres – but both facilities are the appropriate size for the programs they run and the goals they wish to accomplish through those programs.

Laurentian Environmental Center offers unique outdoor experience to the citizens of Minnesota. The actual buildings are owned by the school district and they have 40,000 acres to access. About 70% of their participants are students who come from the urban environment. As far as educational experiences go they offer a four day wilderness survival course, they do gun safety classes, interpretation lessons, and more. They are against putting a high ropes course up because they feel that it will take away from the experiences the participant would receive from the other activities available and therefore would work against their philosophy.

We have traveled to these four facilities and many others already and focused on examining the way each one is ran, what they're goals and values were, and how they implement their values in what they do. These experiences have helped us, and our future experiences will continue to help us immensely in our RPTA 449 course which focuses on the management of outdoor adventure recreation.

-Brandon Wessels

“Dream as though you'll live forever, live as though you'll die tomorrow.”- James Dean



To say that my time spent in the backcountry wasn't the learning experience of a life time would be a false statement. Every early morning that I awoke held a whirlwind of both planned and unplanned lessons waiting to be discovered on a portage trail or around a camp stove. Each day I was Leader of the Day, (LOD), I knew I had to keep a positive appearance in every situation, especially when it came to making decisions.

It took me a while to realize that I didn't have to be "Super Girl" to skillfully lead my comrades, but just use my resources such as weather and being observant to my group. A leader's responsibilities vary by their position, but in the outdoors the guidelines are strict. Process planning, understanding the difference between actual and perceived risk, taking care of the group's physical and emotional needs are just a few crucial outdoor living skills needed for this type of leadership.

On my first day of being Leader of the Day in the backcountry, I was petrified. Leading 13 strong individuals with their own opinions and skills is intimidating, but adding strong winds, choppy lake water travel, bitter cold rain as well as golf ball size hail adds a tad bit of pressure. None the less, these elements were all thrown at my group and I as we paddled our way to my LOD goal of Jarvis Lake. Jarvis Lake was 20 miles away by paddling so planning ahead for places to stop prior to our destination was a must for both the group's physical and mental well-being. Not only is it important to have a plan of escape if a situation were to occur providing shelter for a short period of time, but for the group's overall safety it is important to map out campsites along your travels in case a need for an extensive shelter presents itself.

I learned through previous LODs that giving your group members a small break every hour boosts their spirits and energy levels commendably, thus whenever the wind picked up, I knew a break would be needed. Breaks provide opportunities to refill water bottles, eat lunches and snacks, as well as rest sore muscles which helps boost morale amongst the group.

Once the wind died down, it'd be time for paddles to hit the water and continue on our way. But of course, with strong winds come strong waters and it wasn't long before my group was battling against the choppy waves. We made it through the waves safely, but Mother Nature threw a hissy fit at our success and quickly whipped up a few more obstacles for us to tackle before the end of the day.

Throughout the day our group experienced a sundry of extreme weather conditions, including a lightning/hail storm while still on the water. As their leader, I tried to make every decision count but found it difficult to keep calm in all of these frightening situations. Backcountry leadership is a completely different ball game compared to front country where risk rules the game. One of the hardest factors of being an outdoor leader is determining the difference between real and perceived risk. Although you can see lightning off in the distance, it doesn't mean that your chances of getting struck are not real.

No matter how much our convoy fought against the storm, I could not put my group's safety at risk once lightning started flashing in the distance as well as a light drizzle falling from the sky towards the end of our destination. With a mere three miles till the mouth of Jarvis Lake, a strike of lightning made its' presence known far too close for comfort and demanded an evacuation plan out of the water. Pulling our canoes to the nearest shore, the rain drops started getting coming down harder along with titanic size hail! The group quickly ran up the shore into a clearing with their PFDs (Personal Flotation Device) covering their heads for protection until the group tarp was available to stand under. Numerous emotions played across the faces of

Upcoming places we will visit...

After we finish our mid-course evaluations, we will leave Horn Field Campus and mosey our way out West!

ECOEE will begin with a trip to the Badlands National Park on September 17th through the 18th. From there, we will be on our way to Mount Rushmore and a tour of Wind Cave, a first time visit for many of us!

But before it gets too cold, a visit to the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in Lander City, SD, is in order on the 21st. Within the next couple of days we will be camping at Yellowstone National Park and later in September, we will meet with Teton Science School in Jackson, WY, to learn more about how their unique school.

Obviously we have a lot to do and see in the upcoming month, but we will be sure to keep you posted on everything happening with ECOEE 2011!

Check us out on our journal blog at

<http://www.ecoee.blogspot.com/>



Rapids ahead!? Its okay, we've got this!



The Convoy- English River, Ontario, CA.

"In a world where there is much to be done, I felt strongly impressed that there must be something for me to do." Dorothy Dix