Editorial

James T. Neill

Welcome to the Outdoor Council of Australia

The Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA) is the new peak body for outdoor education in Australia, created by the merger of the Australian Outdoor Education Council (AOEC) and the Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia (ORCA). As the new representative body for the outdoor field in Australia, the OCA takes a significant step towards placing outdoor recreation and outdoor education under the one umbrella and giving both fields a broader representative framework.

Over the past 10 to 15 years there has been considerable discussion of the philosophical relationship and divide between outdoor recreation and outdoor education in Australia (e.g., Martin, 1998). This appears to have been necessary and healthy as each field developed a unique identity. In recent years, though, the two fields were brought closer together via inputting into the development of a national framework for training in outdoor skills. At the end of the day, there is much in common between recreation and education in the outdoors. With the creation of OCA, there are new opportunities for strengthening both fields.

Jackie Kiewa, the outgoing president of the Australian Outdoor Education Council (AOEC) has been closely involved in the merger. Jackie Kiewa's article in the refereed section, "The End of an Era: Welcome to the Outdoor Council of Australia", traces the philosophical relations between outdoor recreation and outdoor education, and explains the developments and decisions that have lead to the creation of the OCA. In the non-refereed section, Kathy Kingsford overviews the structure, purpose and current tasks for the OCA.

Connecting Outdoor Education to the World Around (Viewpoint - Robbo Bennetts)

In the Viewpoint, Robbo Bennetts, outdoor education teacher and, most recently, Education Officer of the Victorian Outdoor Education

Association, explores the theme of connectedness in outdoor education in Australia. Robbo Bennetts suggests interconnections between outdoor education, the war in Iraq and the history of the Australian landscape.

A Survey of Outdoor Education Curriculum in South Australia (Scott Polley & Bronte Pickett)

In the second refereed article, Scott Polley and Bronte Pickett present a survey of outdoor education curriculum within South Australian high schools, "The Nature and Scope of Outdoor Education in South Australia: A Summary of Key Findings". Respondents to the survey were outdoor education coordinators and school principals. In general, outdoor education was found to be quite prevalent in South Australian high schools and a valued part of the curriculum, even though it is not a compulsory, legislated part of school curriculum. Outdoor education programs were found to most emphasize personal and social outcomes; in contrast, environmental outcomes, whilst valued moderately highly, were not seen as being achieved very well. Despite its appeal, outdoor education in South Australian high schools faced many challenges, particularly with respect to economic, staffing, and logistical issues. Polley and Pickett's article makes a valuable contribution to developing a regional, national and international perspective of how outdoor education is being implemented. It provides a valuable addition to the previous study of outdoor education implementation in Victoria (Lugg & Martin, 2000). Hopefully, similar studies in other states and countries will be conducted, a task that could potentially be fostered at a national level by the OCA.

The Role of "Sense of Place" in Outdoor Education (Alistair Stewart)

In the third refereed article, "Reinvigorating Our Love of the Home Range: Exploring the Connections Between Sense of Place and Outdoor Education", Alistair Stewart eloquently invites the reader into his understanding of the connections between "sense of place" and

outdoor education. Expedition-style outdoor education is nomadic in nature, moving from place to place. On the other hand, coming to a more intimate understanding of environment and nature can come about by deepening one's sense of relation to particular places. Although "sense of place" is much talked in some outdoor education circles, the literature connecting "sense of place" with outdoor education has been lacking. Alistair Stewart's article succeeds admirably in mapping out valuable philosophical territory in a down-to-earth manner. The article does this primarily by discussing Alistair Stewart's own thinking and examples of sense of place experiences along with the views of North American nature philosophers, and the emerging Australian literature on this topic.

Facilitating Group Discussion: Watch out for Subtle Influences on Group Meaning (Mike Brown)

In the fourth refereed article, "Paraphrases and Summaries: A Means of Clarification or a Vehicle for Articulating a Preferred Version of Student Accounts?" Mike Brown analyses possible ways in which a group facilitator wittingly or unwittingly influences the dominant meanings which emerge from group discussion. Traditionally, the facilitator's role in outdoor education has been relatively uncontested, as though the instructor plays an objective, unproblematic role by asking reflective questions and proffering "summings up" (paraphrases) of group discussions. However, in recent years, there has been increasing critique about the problematic power relations wielded by group instructors and how this can bias participants' interpretations and understandings of outdoor education experiences.

Mike Brown's article presents qualitative evidence and examples of some of the ways instructors manipulate group discussions to privilege meanings which instructors are most vested in believing. Mike Brown's qualitative investigation is novel, and warrants replication and extension. The conclusions are disturbing, but consistent with post-modernist critiques of group facilitation, and sound a warning call to facilitators and outdoor educators to become more aware of their potential myriad influences in outdoor education experiences.

Safety & Fatalities in Australia 1960-2002: The Role of Supervisors, First Aid, & Rescue (Andrew Brookes)

Andrew Brookes, in the fifth refereed article, presents the second in his series of articles reviewing the 114 fatalities he identified on the public record as having occurred during involvement in outdoor activities in Australia

between 1960 and 2002. In the first study, Andrew Brookes described the general rates, categories and patterns of results. In this second article, "Outdoor Education Fatalities in Australia 1960-2002. Part 2. Contributing Circumstances: Supervision, First Aid, and Rescue", Brookes focuses on the role played by supervisors, first aid and rescue efforts.

Brookes discusses two main fatality patterns -- unsupervised teenage boys involved with moving water or height (cliffs) and the death of supervisors, often due to rescue efforts and behaviours outside normal safety guidelines. Brookes recommends regular CPR practice for supervisors, but notes that there was little to no evidence in the fatality case studies that poor first aid skills contributed to any of the fatalities. A more important factor seemed to be the importance of planning evacuation strategies to help ensure prompt medical aid is available.

In a time of rising insurance costs which is hurting the outdoor industry in Australia and overseas, we should pore over Brookes' fatality research, examine current practices in light of his findings, and educate the community with regard to the real rather than perceived risks associated with outdoor education.

Outdoor Leader Certification Schemes in New Zealand: Insights & Lessons (Steve Crosby & John Benseman)

In the sixth refereed article, "Vivisectioning the Tui: The Qualifications Framework and Outdoor Leadership Development in New Zealand", Steve Crosby and John Benseman introduce readers to the two main outdoor leader certification schemes in New Zealand and explain these schemes within the context of broader literature on leadership certification schemes. The two New Zealand schemes parallel many similar developments in Australia and overseas over the past decade or so. Both approaches discussed are national approaches. One has evolved more from the collective wisdom of experts within the outdoor field, while the other, The New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association (NZOIA), is driven by a competency-based government qualifications framework. There is some overlap between the schemes; for example, some NZOIA qualifications are recognized by NZQA. Steve Crosby and John Benseman's article provides a valuable explanation of how these schemes evolved, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and how they can be improved.

Welcome to the New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education (edited by Mike Boyes)

The first issue of the New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education (NZJOE) was published in

December 2002. The purpose of the journal is to publish original refereed contributions on all aspects of outdoor education, particularly articles that apply academic insights to practice. The journal will facilitate the interchange of ideas and information and contribute to the development of a New Zealand perspective on moving and learning in the outdoors. The work of established and emerging writers is encouraged. The journal comes out twice a year, December and June.

The NZJOE is edited by Dr. Mike Boyes and produced by Outdoors New Zealand. Mike can be emailed at mboyes@pooka.otago.ac.nz. Manuscripts should be addressed to: Dr. M. A. Boyes, New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education, School of Physical Education, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand. Business correspondence including orders, subscriptions and back issues should be addressed to: Outdoors New Zealand, P.O. Box 11776 Manners Mall, Wellington, New Zealand.

A Critique of Brand's (2001) Findings on the Effects of Wilderness Enhanced Programs for Youth-at-Risk by Simon Crisp -- and A Reply from Tonia Gray

In the final two refereed articles we present a debate over a refereed research article which was published by Dell Brand (2001) in AJOE. Brand's article reported positive psychological and behavioral effects of Wilderness Enhanced Programs for youth-at-risk. Simon Crisp's article "Publishing Spurious Research Findings Won't Build a Profession: Response to Brand's (2001) Evaluation of the Wilderness Enhanced Program" discusses several apparent errors in research design, data analysis, and interpretation of results. In addition, Crisp critiques the reviewing and editorial process that lead to the article being published.

Tonia Gray and I have previously encouraged the publication of "reply" articles because a healthy profession should be engaged in professional critique of its research and theory (Neill & Gray, 2001). Tonia Gray has written a reply (Reply to Crisp) which explains more of the background behind Dell Brand's doctoral study and the study's supervision and examination, and takes responsibility for editorial mistakes that may have been made in preparing Brand's journal article.

By bringing possible mistakes into the open and engaging in debate, the academic integrity of the field can mature in leaps and bounds. But it is also a challenge and equally important to nurture a collegial atmosphere, particularly in a small field such as outdoor education. In my view, the ideal situation would now involve a re-analysis of the data, with the results and interpretations being presented in a short article to AJOE readers. A profession which embraces its errors and finds solutions is a profession ripe for growth.

Teaching Journaling Skills to Improve Reflection in Outdoor Education Programs (Janet Dymont & Timothy O'Connell)

In the non-refereed section, Janet Dymont and Timothy O'Connell, overview their research investigating the use of journal writing in outdoor education. Their study, "Can Journaling be Taught? An Exploratory Study", is an excellent example of how research can be practical and related to improvements in practice. The study emerges from the authors' observation that "too often students are simply handed a journal and asked to write about their field experience with little or no structure provided". Instead, Dymont and O'Connell offered university outdoor education students a 45 minutes journal workshop and conducted a mixed methods study exploring the impact of the workshop on subsequent journaling as part of outdoor education programs.

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