Editorial

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Outdoor and environmental education - both together as outdoor environmental education; and separate as outdoor education and environmental education – is a broad church. This new issue of the Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education provides evidence of this breadth. In this one issue are papers that draw on methodologies as diverse as phenomenography and quasi-experiment, topics as diverse as risk and biophilic expression, populations as different as kindergarten children and adolescents. In addition there are papers that have grown from thesis studies and others that have emerged from larger, funded, collaborative projects. Some have a theoretical focus, others an empirical one. Yet connecting them all is the aim of influencing practice, of informing practitioners. Translation may still be required to enable access to the ideas in some of these papers, while others speak more directly; however I take the liberty of suggesting that all of the authors would like nothing better than to engage in further communication about their work.

The first paper in this issue is “Back to the garden: Ontario kindergarteners learn and grow through schoolyard pedagogy” by Kate Macdonald and Mary Breunig. Kate and Mary report on a study that asked Canadian kindergarteners and their teachers for their perspectives on outdoor learning. Working with children as participants can be a challenging task. These researchers were creative in their methods, employing strategies such as having the children take them on a tour of their centre, asking questions along the way. Findings point to the importance of this educational context for enabling children the flexibility to co-construct their learning, rather than being positioned merely as the targets of modes of learning orchestrated by adults to achieve objectives narrowly defined by adults.

In “Mistakes, risk and learning in outdoor education,” Sam Cure, Allen Hill and Vaughan Cruickshank draw on one of the key messages for educators promulgated by John Hattie, which emphasizes the importance of learning via feedback; an educational demand that requires the availability of opportunities for making mistakes in order to learn from them. This can be perceived as countering the important discourse around risk and safety that has been part of educating in the outdoors for many decades. Through a small scale, qualitative, empirical study focused on the perspectives of

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teachers, the authors of this paper discovered that teachers were less likely to provide opportunities for students to make mistakes in shorter programs, wherein teachers had not themselves had opportunities to build trusting relationships with students. Conversely, in programs where teachers had come to know students well, more opportunities for making mistakes were provided. This potentially highlights the situational particularity related to the management of risk in conjunction with learning, which can be guided by standards but in the course of enactment involves professional judgment.

Glyn Thomas, in his paper “Pedagogical frameworks in outdoor and environmental education,” provides an important service to those with responsibility for program development. Drawing on his experience with school reviews in Queensland, Glyn seeks in this paper to share the critical significance for those involved with creating educational programs, of discussing, developing and communicating a pedagogical framework which provides a rationale for the educational decisions that go into program design and implementation.

The theory of biophilia has played an important role in helping to improve understanding of human-nature relationships. In their paper, “The effect of an outdoor orientation program on participants’ biophilic expressions,” Nathan Meltzer, Andrew Bobilya, Brad Faircloth, Denise Mitten and Resa Chandler employ this theory, specifically through the Kellert-Shorb Biophilic Values Indicator (KSBVI) instrument, to investigate students’ relationships with the natural world as influenced by a university outdoor orientation program in the USA. As well as introducing the KSBVI instrument as a tool for undertaking investigations pertinent to outdoor and environmental education, the authors report the insights gained; insights that will help to inform program designers in relation to achievement of program goals in this area of human-nature relationships.

The final paper in this issue reports aspects of a larger scale, quantitative, empirical study undertaken in Australia by Ian Williams, Lauren Rose, Monika Raniti, Joanna Waloszek, Paul Dudgeon, Craig Olsson, George Patton and Nicholas Allen, titled “The impact of an outdoor adventure program on positive adolescent development: A controlled crossover trial.” In this paper the authors do an excellent job of making the methodology and methods employed in their study accessible to those less familiar with such modes of investigation – meaning that the paper is longer but provides a service to readers often missing in papers communicating investigations of this type. There are important corollaries that emerge from this investigation, both for outdoor and environmental educators generally and in specific terms for those researching outdoor and environmental education.

This issue also contains an important book review written by Heidi Smith. Recently released is a text, years in the making, that further illuminates the issue of gender when this lens is applied to this educational profession. *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Outdoor Learning*, edited by Tonia Gray and Denise Mitten, provides candid access to numerous voices not normally heard in the various discourses that constitute the profession and professions articulated through the term outdoor learning.

A full issue indeed! And as important as it is to see these papers in print and to celebrate the authors and their work, it is perhaps just as important to acknowledge the editorial processes which have enabled these papers to eventually see the light of day. A big thank you to all the un-named reviewers and others who have contributed to these papers, for without your collegial input the journal would not be.

John Quay is Editor of the Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education.