

Meanings of 'connection' with the environment: Findings from outdoor educational programs in Scotland, Alaska and Nunavut

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Abstract

The importance of connection with the natural environment through direct experiences is increasingly argued in the context of education. This study examines educational programs, which aim to build a bond between young participants and their environment, at two broadly defined social and cultural settings; Western mainstream (Scotland) and the northern minority (Alaska and Nunavut). The main participants of the programs in a total of seven study groups are respectively; White British, Alutiiq, Yup'ik and Inuit. The study explores core cultural and social values in relation to the environment in each group, and discovers different meanings of 'connection' that are addressed through respective programs. The relationship with the environment in each group is analysed and the possible causes of the relational change are discussed. Using the acquired knowledge, it also looks into the programs' implications for education for sustainable living.

Introduction

Sustainable living is now generally accepted as important, and people's relationships with the environment in outdoor/environmental education context have begun to be paid attention among researchers (Brookes, 2002; Higgins, 1996a, 1996b; Higgins & Loynes, 1997; Martin, 1999; Nicol & Higgins, 1998; Orr, 1992, 1996; Smith & Williams, 1999). 'Western' advocates of education for sustainable living generally present as models the traditional approaches of indigenous peoples (O'Sullivan, 1999; Smith & Williams, 1999). However, contemporary attempts by indigenous peoples seeking to help young people 'bond' with the land have not been extensively investigated.

Following a careful selection process, a total of seven educational programs in the UK and North America were chosen to explore participants' core values and concerns regarding the environment. The research design was 'mixed' and based primarily on participant observation, supported by interviews and written surveys. Interviews were conducted to organisers, participants, parents and other involved community members. The participants were interviewed either at the end of the programs or sometime after the completion depending on logistical situations.

The main research question was:

What is the nature of the relationships with the environment expressed through educational outdoor programs in various settings?

My intention through this study was to explore the complexity of issues around outdoor educational programs in terms of people's relationships with their environment, and to understand the social and cultural aspects of these issues. For this purpose I adopted an ethnographical perspective. Tobin (1999) and Burawoy (1991) stress that ethnography tries to make the strange familiar and to "defamiliarise some of the taken-for-granted assumptions" (Tobin, 1999, p. 124) by uncovering the tacit understandings that underlie everyday activities. This is the task I had in my mind during data gathering and the process I was engaged in throughout my research.

While I have seven study programs in four broadly defined different cultural groups (British, Yup'ik, Alutiiq, and Inuit), my study was not a comparison in a traditional sense. The groups were selected on the basis of a theoretical framework under common criteria¹. Under the same framework, groups naturally have elements which can be compared; for example, cultural norms in relation to the environment. Therefore, my study groups could be compared and contrasted in a much broader sense. They served as a 'sounding board' to each other in reflexive interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000).

Moreover, having a Japanese background, I was detached from all groups and it allowed me to take a 'naive' view of them. Nonetheless, I have acquired a certain familiarity with northern peoples and its environment through travelling in the Arctic and living with indigenous peoples in the past. Living in the UK does not mean I understand the society or cultures within as it is a large and highly complex society, but I was certainly exposed to its various elements. I consider this perspective a strength in that it contributes to the uniqueness of an ethnographic thesis about groups in the UK and indigenous peoples in North America.

Due to the wording limitation, in this paper I concentrate on presenting findings, though evidence and extensive discussion is included in my doctoral thesis. The summary of the study groups and program descriptions are provided as tables later in the paper.

Case study 1: Scotland

Despite the concern among environmental and outdoor education researchers regarding the significance of people's relationships with the environment (e.g. Higgins, 1996a, 1996b; Nicol & Higgins, 1998; White, 1998), the group selection procedures in the UK indicated that actual programs which aim to build such relationships among young participants are either rare or too small in scale to be noticed.

My initial intention was to identify one study group in the UK. However, due to a limited number of such programs, the group size and gender issues, I selected four separate groups all in Scotland whose forms of operation varied greatly. It appeared to be problematic to bring them together as one big group, but there were also benefits to my study as the search process and the eventual spread of cases helped me better understand the UK context. In considering the overall research design, the final decision was based on the 'maximum variation' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and 'balance and variety' (Stake, 1994) approaches to sampling. The selection was made after the maximum effort in the limited time available without compromising the best possible "opportunity to learn" (Stake, 1994, p. 244).

The UK study groups were:

The John Muir Award (JMA) Gullane Group

The JMA Tranent Group

The Green Team (GT)

A Trailblazer Camp of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS)

¹ The main criteria were that the group: provided educational programs for young people; focused on connection with the environment; were based on the local natural environment; and had community involvement and exhibited a sense of local program ownership (or having an input on local history and human resources in the area).

The JMA scheme is an educational initiative of the John Muir Trust, a conservation organisation in the UK. The stated purposes are education, social and personal development, and to encourage a youth-environmental agenda (John Muir Trust, 2003), focusing on “wild places²”. It provides three levels of awards named Discovery, Explorer and Conserver. The Green Team (GT) is a non-profit environmental education organisation based in Edinburgh, promoting young people’s learning through programs centred around conservation tasks. The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) is an environmental conservation organisation that aims to protect and promote Scotland’s natural and cultural heritage by purchasing and maintaining important properties.

From analysis of interviews and conversations with program organisers, it became clear that their educational programs were a response to environmental degradation that they regarded as indirectly caused by people’s detachment from the environment. Some organisers also intended to assist young people who are likely to get into trouble without having something worthwhile to do.

The organisers considered building a relationship with the environment as fundamental to enhancing a pro-environmental attitudes, but this consideration was not actively manifested in the programs. The view that conservation is a ‘good thing’ was never critically examined with young people, and it was an unquestioned foundation of their educational programs.

While to a certain extent the programs expanded the existing environmental interests of the participants, the young people’s interests and concerns tended to be limited to what they did during the programs. Though many stated changes in their environmental behaviour within a limited range, some changes clearly stemmed from concerns for humans rather than the environment. Often environmental activities were disassociated from their daily lives, and the end of the program was the end of their environmental involvement.

The environmental programs in Scotland that I studied were institutionalised and the community involvement was virtually nil. Motivation for attendance was generally based on perceived approval of the award schemes by society: they add value to a CV and are backed by a social and parental norm which views ‘environmental protection’ and ‘social service work’ as a good thing for young people to do. Therefore, for ambitious students, the environmental projects became one of the requirements for success. Getting an award and boosting their CVs was used by organisers as an incentive to attract participants to the programs. However, having participated in them, some young people valued the experiences for different reasons other than solely a ‘requirement for an award’.

The research analysis suggested that people who were associated with the study programs in the UK were distanced, or considered many other people distanced, from the natural environment. In the study groups, many young people’s relationships with the environment appeared shallow and idealised. In order to build a cognitive and emotional link between an individual and the environment, many reasons were provided to the program participants. This illustrates that for many participants human dependence on nature is unreal and invisible. One of the reasons given in attempting to convince young people of environmental responsibility was to say that the area is ‘ours’ (in the sense that we live in the area and we

² By ‘wild places’, the JMT means ‘where the impact of mankind is minimal’ and ‘where people came into closest contact with nature, where we can enjoy the richness and variety of life on this planet and understand our place within it’ (John Muir Trust, 2003).

have a right to use it) and thus we have a responsibility as well as a benefit by looking after it. This is an appeal to the participants' self-interests, and is contrary to the organisers' apparent desire to promote intrinsic value in nature. This is not to say that enlightened self-interest has no value, but if this is a compromise needed to lure young people to participate in environmental work, it is further evidence of their distance from the environment.

Linked to this, the programs aim to build a pro-environmental attitude to 'preserve, care for and protect' the environment. While this shows the perception that part of the environment has been seriously degraded, it may also reflect a perceived separation of humans and nature, imbuing people with a power to control the natural world. It was also suggested that nature is a 'place' to go for recreation, and the programs re-enforce this perspective. In this context, the programs offer 'enjoyable experiences' outdoors.

Case study 2: Kodiak

The Kodiak region is consisted of many islands, and Kodiak City is the main arrival point from outside with an appearance of other American towns. The city and its vicinity have over 90 percent of the region's total population and only 13 percent were Alaska Natives³. On the other hand, villages were predominantly Alutiiq and rely on subsistence for their food. It is considered that the early influence of Europeans, and the population decrease by epidemics and encroachments from the larger American culture, significantly influenced Alutiiq culture (Partnow, 1993; Pullar, 1992; Pullar & Knecht, 1995). Researchers alert that Alutiiq language is at risk in the sense that it is spoken by few children (Goddard, 1996; Leer, 2001), but the cultural revitalisation movement has been strong since the 1980s.

The study program was called 'the Academy of Elders/Science Camp (the Science Camp)', carried in Afognak Island, northern part of the Kodiak archipelago. The camp was organised by Kodiak Island Borough School District and the Native Village of Afognak, a tribal government. In its present form the camp started in 1998, and usually runs two sessions of one week during summer. The young participants, as well as Elders⁴, educators and community members, came from throughout the region, and the majority carried Alutiiq heritage. Living in tents in spruce forest with few modern amenities such as TV and telephone, the participants learnt experientially, interacting with each other, adults and the environment. They were expected to find a topic for their 'science projects' which integrates traditional knowledge with modern science. The analysis came from two observed camps in 2001 and 2002, though main interview data are from the 2002 camp.

The program was very flexible without tight scheduling in advance. The coordinator spontaneously responded to the situation and what Elders suggested, and encouraged everyone to participate in teaching and learning. Partly assisted by the fact that many people were related or knew each other, the camp was transformed into a tight-knit community where children felt safe to make mistakes. Some people who were interviewed felt that compared to the past the contemporary communities have become less interactive, and were not transmitting cultural values to children to the extent they used to. The camp's atmosphere was viewed as valuable for children's development.

³ The term 'Alaska Native' or 'Native' is generically used by indigenous peoples themselves in Alaska. A 'Native Alaskan', on the other hand, refers to anyone born in Alaska.

⁴ I follow the usage of 'Elder' in the literature concerning Alutiiq people, rather than 'elder', to emphasise their position as culture bearers rather than referring to an age category. In referring to other study groups, 'elder' does connote the same meaning.

The 'Alutiiqness' was stressed throughout the period. The Science Camp was a response to the Elders' call to re-establish their identity by having older and younger generations brought together. There were concerns among some Alutiiq people about cultural discontinuation among a section of young people due to the assimilation history and social changes, which some believed had led to social problems (Pullar, 1992). Many children who participated in the program did not have significant subsistence experiences. The study discovered significant differences in interaction with the land and life-style between children in the city and villages, and individuals in the same village. The camp was also planned to encourage academic confidence among children, connecting school and traditional science.

My fieldwork data, supported by a body of literature, shows that for the Alutiiq subsistence and identity are inseparable. Many Elders during the camp affirmed that subsistence was the base of their culture. However, the study program did not systematically conduct subsistence activities, and did not teach subsistence 'skills' to the extent that the children could become independent. It was never their objective to make the participants enable to practise subsistence from the day after the camp finished, but rather to provide an opportunity for them to understand the subsistence 'way of life'. Clearly the coordinator was aware of the limitations of the 6-day camp in a year. Invisible aspects of 'experiencing subsistence activities' were expected to instil symbols which associate the participants with Alutiiqness (Partnow, 1993). Sharing certain cultural concepts may be enough to carry on collective identity as Alutiiq, regardless of whether or not they practise the subsistence lifestyle themselves.

There were indications that the young participants and parents I interviewed tended to feel that they were not much exposed to 'Native culture' in their daily life. They appreciated the camp as they could 'learn more about culture and heritage'. The Science Camp is viewed as an effort to integrate 'Native' and 'daily' cultures through active culture building and transmission in a context where invisible and intangible as well as practical aspects of learning are valued. However, this cultural construction is complex and not free from tension. Each individual, including children and Elders, has had different experiences, and so the meaning of identity is personal and the concept of being Alutiiq is different for everyone. One night during the camp, participants were discussing how to sharpen stone *ulu*. When someone said "We can use a knife sharpener", someone else opposed this and said "It's not a Native way" (Fieldnote, 19/07/02). What is acceptable as a Native way for everyone, and what does it mean if a Native way at camp is different from their practice at home? The educational program as a process of cultural revitalisation in the contemporary Kodiak context contains highly complex elements and challenges.

Case study 3: Russian Mission

Russian Mission is a Yup'ik village with 320 residents, facing the Yukon River in Alaska. There is no road system to connect to other villages, and communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta are physically isolated and the usual means of transportation are a plane, a boat in summer or a snow machine in winter. The environment, which supports a wide variety of wildlife, has sustained many aspects of human life over generations. Many residents agreed that an average of 65 percent of their diet came from subsistence. There is no verification of this figure, but this perception only indicates the great significance of subsistence in people's mind. However, people stated that the practices were declining in their lifetime.

The study programs were Russian Mission School's classes. The present principal Mike Hull was appointed in 2000, and since then the school has developed an outdoor education program as part of their school curriculum for students between the 6th and 12th grades. They conducted various subsistence-related activities throughout the school year, including a 3-week canoe/camping, caribou hunting, and ice fishing. Their outdoor experiences were integrated into other subjects such as writing, reading and computer literacy.

Interviews with residents of Russian Mission led me to conclude that the traditional mode of transferring knowledge was not functioning well because of the social change in the community that was partly brought about by the introduction of school. In this context, the school's outdoor curriculum was devised to give young people the local knowledge necessary to sustain their lives in the area, and also to address the social and educational issues which were attributed to (assumed) low self-esteem and uncertainty about identity. The organisers aimed to assure the students' identity based on their relationship with the land. Hull especially hoped to cultivate a 'receiver' attitude to nature rather than 'taker' mentality. Ultimately the school aimed to help the students become responsible and contributing members of the community based on Yup'ik traditional philosophy of *Yuuyaraq*⁵, Yup'ik way of life.

Generally the young people had difficulty in expressing themselves verbally concerning their experiences on the land. However, observations show that they were systematically expanding their experiences, accumulating practical skills and knowledge and getting to know their land through school programs. Some students who had little previous substantial outdoor experience formed a strong interest in being on the land and became aware of a connection with their heritage. They all came to understand that their life in the village directly depended on their environment. As the Yup'ik language is now not spoken in the village except by elders, and as community members' traditional values and beliefs are patchy, it would not appear to be easy for the young people to learn *Yuuyaraq*. Nonetheless, they still held some traditional values and beliefs among themselves and these could be strengthened if the community intended. Some of the students had already developed deep relationships with their environment, and the school's programs were contributing to this. Some expressed that nature was their 'home' and said they found 'peace' being on the land.

The school's attempts to integrate subsistence activities into their curriculum was received very well by the community members, because it meant that the school was supporting community values. Both the organisers and the community members felt that the programs would help the students prepare for their lives whether they choose to go for higher education or decided to remain in the village. However, there were conflicting views in the community as to whether the village lifestyle should be actively promoted among the young people.

It was revealed that many Yup'ik residents spent less time on the land now than before and their attachment to the land had to be retrieved from their past experiences. Nevertheless,

⁵ 'Yuq' means a person, and 'yuuyaraq' literally means "how to be a real person" (L. Bush, 22 March 2002). Napoleon (1999) translates it as "the way of the human being" (pp. 4-5), and defines as the law by which Yup'ik lived. The term covers a range of broad and deep concepts, including morals and values, and it is based on a way of living closely to the land as community. Bush said "if you follow *Yuuyaraq*, you live in harmony" (L. Bush, 22 March 02). To live in harmony includes relationships not only with other humans but also with animals, spirit and all the other elements of the world.

they expressed and demonstrated their intimate relationships with the land especially through attachment to subsistence food, which seemed to be an integral part of their sense of identity. The significance of learning practical skills went beyond the individual's benefit to an expectation that the students would help their families and the community as a whole. Their relationship with the land was expressed as inseparable from their heritage and a way of life. According to Yup'ik philosophy, education for their way of life delivers all necessary learning. In this respect, 'being on the land' was important in learning how to become a whole Yup'ik person.

By actively integrating community values, Russian Mission School became a more integrated part of the community. It departed from the conventional approach of school and showed the possibility of achieving something that schools in rural Alaska are generally claimed not to have done: to equip the students practically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually with what they would need to live in the village and beyond. However, the extent to which the goals have been achieved and the possibility of other unforeseen outcomes would need to be examined longitudinally. This case study raised many important questions: what is the purpose of education, how important is the cultural and geographical context in the process of education, and how relevant is this model for other peoples and societies? The influence of external educational institutions, which have different perceptions of these fundamental issues, seems to lie at the heart of the issues which the organisers tried to address through the outdoor programs in Russian Mission School.

Study case 4: Igloolik

The Igloolik Island is located about 300km north of the Arctic Circle, just off the Melville Peninsula, Nunavut, Canada. The town of Igloolik has a population of about 1300, of which about 95 percent were Inuit. Inuit in the area, called Iglulingmiut, traditionally lived in camps, moving seasonally in well-defined territories. It was only in the late 1950s when the settlement, which was initially started by a religious group and a trading company, started to grow with governmental housing and health programs. Since then, drastic changes in their society have influenced every aspect of their lives. However, Igloolik is still considered 'traditional' community in Nunavut. While 70 percent of Nunavut residents speak Inuktitut language as their first language (Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, n.d.), virtually all Inuit in Igloolik spoke the language fluently when I visited. The study program, Paariaqtuqtut, is one of the land-skill courses organised by the Inullariit Society (IS), consisted of Iglulingmiut Elders. The program was unusual for the group in the sense that it involved the other communities for the first time, having a historical significance to trace the route between the two communities.

Elders' accounts, young people's perceptions and my own observations all suggest that the traditional mode of knowledge transfer was not fully functioning in Igloolik. As a result, some young people were not equipped with sufficient land-skills and knowledge to live off the land. This concerned elders and community members from a safety perspective as well as from the standpoint of future survival of their culture. They also associated young peoples' lack of land experiences with other social problems.

As schools were perceived to be failing to provide what the community felt was important, the IS program was devised as a response, taking over some of the land-skills educational responsibilities traditionally located in the family. Their rationale was to guide young people to 'be and become an Inuk', the core of this being establishing a connection to the land. For elders and other community members, being on the land would deliver everything necessary

to learn as a whole person, an Inuk. This involved land-skills, values, knowledge and other inter-related elements they would need in order to fully sustain their lives in contemporary Igloolik, not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually. The implication is that learning through the land would equip young people to cope with life in the midst of rapid social change.

Survival was defined collectively as well as individually, and identity was strongly tied to an awareness of connection to the land through time, place and the web of life. In general, people's lives in Igloolik were directly involved with the land. Their relationship with the environment was intimate, tangible and inseparable. They also believed their life and well-being were inseparable from the land. Among elders and the community members, the core social and cultural value was indicated as 'respect'. This applied to all relationships, including those with people, spirit, and the land. They placed themselves in the centre of a relational web instead of separating themselves from the environment or others in the community. Their educational program also reflected this attitude to the environment. Their program was highly flexible. They fitted themselves into the situation and altered learning contents according to the overall circumstances around them.

Having examined the participants' accounts, it became clear that their views of the experiences and the value of the IS program tended to reflect the intentions of the organisers. The young people expressed the same value of 'being on the land' and their idea of being Inuit was also very similar to that of the elders. The participants were willing to construct their identity around the land. However, this did not mean that they all liked constantly being on the land. One person who was positive about his experiences of the Paariaqtuqtut admitted that he would not last long on the land, and confirmed he was more of a 'town type'. Nevertheless, by participating in the IS project, he affirmed his connection with his heritage and had an appreciation and pride in being part of it. Participants agreed that young Iglulingmiut in general preferred to stay in town and had little interest in associating with the land directly. The young Iglulingmiut admitted that they had little to do with elders who would previously have been the major sources of knowledge and skills.

Motivating young people who have no interest in learning Inuit values and going on the land would be a challenge for the IS. The extent to which the IS's mission to promote and preserve Inuit culture has been successful is not clear from this research. However, if Paariaqtuqtut and similar land-skills training initiatives offered by the IS were responses to a political failure to meet Inuit's social and cultural needs, there was enough evidence to suggest that their programs could help in resolving to these issues. Brody (1983) states that importing a Western educational culture created "nervousness about the future and weakness in the present" (p. 210). The community needs both cash earners and meat providers and in this respect Inullariit's efforts have eased 'nervousness' in the community by committing to the continuation of their values and equipping people with land-skills. Attempts such as the IS's were significant contributions in two ways: first in providing an alternative way to pass on knowledge, substituting traditional modes of transfer, and, secondly, by signalling that the Western form of education is not 'universal'. Ways of learning and teaching as well as curriculum content should be locally adequate and culturally appropriate.

Summary of the study groups and programs

To provide more specific information on the study groups and programs, Table 1.1 summarises the key characteristics of the groups, and Table 1.2a and 1.2b indicate key features of the observed programs.

Table 1.1 Study groups and programmes

| Organisers | Group's key characteristics | Observed programmes |
|--|--|--|
| Inullariit Society <i>Igloodik, Nunavut, Canada</i> | A non-profit organisation established in 1993 to preserve and promote Inuit culture, language, heritage and traditional values. All Inuit individuals who are 55 years old and older are eligible for membership. Year-round land-skills training courses are among the activities the society conducts to achieve their goals. These are for young Inuit in Igloodik who are willing to learn. The society selects appropriate instructors from among elders. | Paariaqtuqtut ('meeting on the trail') |
| Russian Miisson School <i>Russian Mission, Alaska, USA</i> | Of the Russian Mission population of 322 (March 2002), 120 enrolled from preschool to high school. Grades 6 – 12 are targeted by the programmes. Apart from the principal, four school staff, including two local men, mainly deal with actual classes. Almost all the students are Alaska Natives, mainly Yup'ik. The extensive outdoor programme started in 2000. | Middle School; various classes High School; subject 'Subsistence' |
| Kodiak Island Borough School District / Native Village of Afognak <i>Kodiak, Alaska</i> | KIBSD oversees 8 town schools and 8 village schools. Their Alutiiq/Unangax Regional Coordinator is responsible for the camp programme. The NVA is the federally-recognized tribal government representing the original inhabitants and their descendents of Afognak Island. They are open to participation from all students in Kodiak Island, and participants are chiefly Alaska Natives, mainly Alutiiq. | The Academy of Elders / Science Camp 2002, 2001 |
| National Trust for Scotland <i>Edinburgh, Scotland, UK</i> | An environmental conservation charity which aims to protect and promote Scotland's natural and cultural heritage by purchasing and maintaining important properties. For 22 years (as of 2002) they have organised volunteer work and conservation projects. NTS has recently started camps specifically for 16 and 17 year-olds from anywhere in the world. | Kintail Trailblazer |
| The Green Team <i>Edinburgh, Scotland</i> | A charity to promote young people's learning through programmes centred around a conservation task. Two to three volunteers take turns to lead the programmes. It serves as a vehicle to achieve the JMA and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They call for participation throughout the region, and the participants are mostly white Scottish. | 2 residential programmes 2 one-day programmes |
| John Muir Award Gullane Group <i>Gullane, Scotland</i> | A voluntary group of young people who are recruited at the youth club in Gullane to engage in a series of activities under the scheme of the JMA. The leader is a regional representative of JMA in East Lothian. | A series of meetings for JMA Explorer Award (second level) over 6 months |
| John Muir Award Tranent Group <i>Tranent, Scotland</i> | A voluntary group formed by high school students in Tranent to engage in environmental activities under the JMA scheme. | A series of meetings for JMA Discovery Award (first level) over 5 months |

Table 1.2a Key features of the observed programmes: North American groups

| *f – female, m – male *YP – young people/persons *RM – Russian Mission *KIBSD – Kodiak Island Borough School District *NVA – Native Village of Afognak | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Observed programmes | Timescale and location | Participants | Style & structure | Programme features |
| Paariaqtuqtut [Inullariit Society] | 2-11 May 2002 The northern part of Melville peninsula which people have traditionally used for subsistence or traveling. | A total of 66 people. From Igloolik; 12 registered YP aged 17 – 31 (3f 9m), 6 official male instructors (elders) and their wives and families. | A journey. Camping using tents. Highly physically demanding. Framework - highly flexible | Departed from Igloolik and spent 3 days travelling over the frozen sea, river, land and snow to reach Nagvaak. Spent two days on return. Learnt from elders with real life events through travelling and living, including hunting, fishing, cooking and building an igloo. Specific elements taught included navigation, place names, hunting caribou and their treatment, building an igloo, safety, packing sleds, snow formation, weather reading, etc. |
| RM School: middle and high school classes (high school class was a caribou hunt) | 4-28 March 2002. Covered range -10 to 290 miles from RM | About 15 junior high students (aged 11-14, mixed gender), and five 10-12 th grade (aged 16-18) male students for the hunt. 2 - 4 male instructors. | A journey involving camping often for a half day for junior high students. Moderate to highly physical. Combination of structured and flexible. | The whole curriculum was designed around subsistence activities, including ice fishing, rabbit snaring, firearm safety and usage, canoe handling, handling fish and animals' meat etc. Involved bivouac under –20C, a tent and a hut. Outings were combined with information search, essay writing and creating web pages. |
| The Academy of Elders / Science Camp 2001/ 2002 [KIBSD / NVA] | One week in July to August Qattani, Afognak Island, north of Kodiak | 15 - 20YP aged 8-17 (2001 - 5f 10m, 13 Alutiiq descendents: 2002 - 7f 13m, 16 Alutiiq descendents), 1 coordinator, 4 - 7 elders, 3 - 8 educators , 2 - 3 community members, NVA camp staff | Camped at an island where used to have a village. Camp was well equipped and catered for. 2001 - traditional local food; 2002 - mainly Euro-American food Framework – 2001 flexible; 2002. Structured | YP flew to Kodiak then driven by boats to an island where some of them had direct historical ties. Activities evolved around the capabilities of the participants such as setting a dead-fall trap, carving, drawing and weaving baskets, as well as daily life events such as a seal which was caught. The 2002 camp had a strong focus on individual science projects which were linked to Alutiiq culture and history. |

Table 1.2b Key features of the observed programmes: UK groups

| *f – female, m – male *YP – young people/persons *GT – the Green Team *JMA – the John Muir Award *NTS – the National Trust for Scotland | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Observed programmes | Timescale and location | Participants | Style & structure | Programme features |
| The GT programmes *Conducted in southern Scotland, including East Lothian | 9-10 Feb 2002 Wiston | 12 YP (7f 5m) aged 15-25, 3 volunteer leaders (1m, 2f but one left on the 2 nd day) | Stayed at a lodge in countryside converted from old building. Catered. Programme structured. | Many ice breaking & team-building games. Created a large sculpture with living willow. Cut out a 'pest' shrub for less than 1 hour. The programme was cut short due to illness of one participant and a leader. |
| | 17 Feb 2002 Tranent | 8 YP (8f) aged 12-23, 3 volunteer leaders, 1 ranger | Joined by JMA Tranent Group and a local person. Structured. | Building steps for a path, tree planting. Only one step was half built. Some ice breaking games. |
| | 6-7 Apr 2002 St Abb's | 6 YP (5f 1m) aged 13-19, 3 volunteer leaders, 4 rangers | Stayed at outdoor centre. Self-catering. Structured. | Cleaning the beach, beach exploration, footpath maintenance. Some games linked to creativity and the environment. |
| | 15 Sep 2002 Kirkliston | 13YP (11f 2m) aged 15-20, 2 volunteer leaders | A day visit to the site, west of Edinburgh. Structured. | Built 6 small wooden stools (they called 'perches') in a park to improve its recreational quality. The leaders were given a written instruction, but were not fully informed. |
| JMA Gullane *Their working sites were in East Lothian | 17, 24 May, 17, 20 July, 20 Aug, 1 Oct 2001 Gullane & Aberlady | 9 YP at beginning down to 3 (2f 1m) at the end aged 15, 1to 4 leaders (2 paid), 1 ranger | Visits to local sites. Contents decided with YP. Programme flexible | YP discussed what they wanted to do in the local environment, learnt about the local area, did some conservation work, and tried to share their experiences with public. That involved planning meetings, cleaning up in a grove near the beach, visiting a nature reserve. Local ranger helped from time to time. |
| JMA Tranent *Tranent is located in East Lothian | 9, 30 Oct, 1, 14, 22 Nov, 1 Dec 2001, 21 Feb 2002 Birsley Brae in Tranent | 4 YP (4f) aged 12 - 13, 2 leaders (1 paid), 1 helper (paid) | Visits local sites. Contents decided with YP. Flexible | The same principle as above. That involved planning meetings, visiting various sites of the local area, cleaning the woodland, planting trees, maintain the woodland, making presentation at the town library. |
| Kintail Trailblazer [NTS] *Conducted in the Highlands | 17-24 Aug 2002 Kintail, Western Highlands of Scotland | 8 YP aged 16-17 (4f 4m), 2 leaders(f m), 2 rangers(m) | Stayed at a well-equipped accommodation near the project site. Self-catering. Moderate to highly physical. Programme structured | Participants gathered from various parts of the country in remote countryside. Structured around a conservation task of footpath maintenance. A day-off in the middle. |

Findings by contrasting all case studies

To a certain extent I found generational differences (such as between elders and young people) concerning their relationships with their environments, but the core social and cultural values attached to the environment were revealed as follows.

For the indigenous groups in North America, being 'on the land' was 'life' itself, and was tied strongly to their identity and well-being. Aspects of their culture and history were inseparable from the programs, whereas for the groups in the UK, people visited 'wild places' primarily for recreational enjoyment. The UK programs studied aimed to cultivate a caring attitude towards the environment chiefly through conservation work. However, in contrast to the North American cases the experience was largely divorced from daily life and paid little attention to cultural and historical heritage.

All organisers of the groups cherished the term 'respect' as an attitude they wanted to see among young people towards the environment. They all said that respect naturally entails care and responsibility, but the meanings of 'care' were different among the groups. From the fieldwork data in the UK and the relevant literature, it would seem that 'caring' in Western societies implies protection and preservation through non-use or minimal use of the wild environment. It also included the alteration and re-creation of the environment into something some people thought it 'should' be. On the other hand, for study groups of Inuit, Yup'ik and Alutiiq people, caring was expressed as 'culturally proper interaction' with the natural world, which encompasses spirit and inanimate beings. These peoples do not construct a hierarchy among all 'beings' in the world. Their ancestors have used the land over generations, but have not altered the landscape in the manner of the industrialised nations.

The disconnection appeared to be more advanced among the groups in Kodiak than in Russian Mission, and more in Russian Mission than in Igloodik. The UK seemed to be at one end of the spectrum and Igloodik at the other. It can, therefore, be hypothesised that the relationships with the natural world are on a continuum with social variation relating to modernisation. However, concerning people's relationships with nature, it was suggested that fundamental change required cultural, spiritual and ontological transformation and it cannot be seen as a natural outcome solely of social transfer.

The study programs' implications for education for sustainability (EFS) were also examined. Among North American study groups, reviving their traditional worldviews through the programs has direct implications for EFS. Nonetheless, considering the present situation, it will be necessary to include a few different dimensions to construct new knowledge for EFS, building on what they have already implemented. On the other hand, among the study programs in Scotland, some approaches seemed to appeal more to EFS than the others. However, as a whole the programs did not seem to fully deal with the organisers' concerns around sustainability.

Some Scottish or British educators may think that as their local environment is 'not wild' any longer, it cannot provide authentic nature experiences, therefore they need to go 'somewhere else' to provide 'real' natural or wild experiences. While going to wild places may provide valuable experiences from various perspectives (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998; Mittelstaedt, Sanker, & Vanderveer, 1999; Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1998; Stringer & McAvoy, 1995), the learning may not have a direct link with daily life, which is where they need to consider and practise 'sustainable

living'. Learning opportunities can take many different forms. However, whether it is Scotland or Alaska, locally and culturally appropriate education is situated within the context of their respective environments; the fundamental value to the participants is that it is linked to their identity. Educators need to explore potential and create a project integrating culture and history within their own landscape. It can be argued that people in the UK tend to move their living places so often that it is more suitable to provide 'context-free' learning experiences. However, my research suggested that the young participants in the UK showed strong attachment to a certain place, rather than 'the environment' as a general concept. This argument is linked to the fact that, for indigenous young people, learning about things which are not relevant to their daily lives is less likely to capture their interest or real understanding.

The present study has made three significant contributions to the education literature concerning people's relationships with the environment. First, the nature of these relationships varies depending on cultural and social setting and the local context plays a vital role in developing the relationships. Second, a fundamental change in people's relationships with nature requires ontological transformation. Third, while it may be beneficial to adopt certain elements from North American programs in the UK or *vice versa*, educators cannot simply duplicate cultural models as education needs to be culturally and locally appropriate.

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