The Final Countdown

How do I explain the whole ECOEE experience? To tell you the truth I wouldn’t know where to start. Would it be easier if I talked about the very beginning of ECOEE during the spring semester where we first planned our expedition, or should I talk about the last few days at Horn Field Campus? If I wanted to fully explain our experiences I would have to write enough to make a novel! Well since this is the final newsletter for our ECOEE,

Leaving Baja California, Mexico was a bitter sweet moment for the group. It left a bitter taste in our mouths because it meant that our trip was coming to a close. The sweetness came from the thought of seeing our friends and family again and talking to them until we were blue in the face. Staying at the Grand Canyon was a great way to end the trip portion of the expedition. The group took tons of photos, listened to interpretive talks and soaked in the sights. Once we left the canyon we headed back to Horn Field to prepare for thanksgiving break. I know my break was well needed! Once the group came back together at Horn Field after break we started to clean all of the gear we used throughout the semester. We filled out evaluations on each other and prepared for the banquet. The rest of the newsletter will describe this more in detail. But I wanted to thank everyone for their thoughts and support over the semester, and I hope these past four months went as exciting as it was for us!

~ Quinn Moore

The following articles are written by the students of ECOEE 2013. The Publications and Promotions Committee compiles the entries; how they are written and any errors are at the fault of the writer.

An Excerpt From Our Journal

“Night” Written 11/10/13

Once upon a time there was a mouse, but this mouse was not some ordinary mouse. It was a kangaroo mouse. It had big black feet, white fur, little black beady eyes, and a long skinny tail with an adorable puff of fur at the end. This mouse enjoyed scampering and hopping around as it scavenged the sand on the beaches of Baja California during the cool desert nights. It never enjoyed being out in the hot sun, so it slept in late and came out to explore the sand under the bright moonlight as usual. But one night the kangaroo mouse discovered something different. These large things were on top of the sand! And these large creatures lured between these large things! There was something else different as well; a delicious smell, but the mouse had to move about these strange, scary things to get to this delicious smell.

So it sat a moment and debated whether it should stay or should explore. Curiosity grew inside the mouse and it quickly scampersed to the edge of these large objects on top of the sand. “Oh, cool.” It thought, “I can squeeze myself underneath most of this weird thing.” And so the mouse moved toward the small, keeping itself close beneath the smooth, large object and the fine sand at its feet. It grew really close to the source of the smell when the large object above it moved away, exposing the kangaroo mouse to these bright, blinding white beams. Terrified, the mouse began to panic. After hopping two large jumps out of fear, it remembers its challenge to itself. The kangaroo mouse mustered up the bravery to find the source of the smell despite the bright lights and the loud noises coming from the large creatures. The mouse darted to the left, the right, then under a corner of white material, and finally it arrived to the source. It picked up the little tortilla crumb and nibbled on its delicious new find in silent victory.

The kangaroo mouse scampered away from the large objects and creatures until it reached the green plants by the sea water. And then, it found a new smell.

~ Andrew Busker
Speaking to the Heart

What does interpretation mean anyway? In my opinion, interpretation is way easier to describe than it is to actually do. Interpretation is relating the topic you are talking about back to the audience. It makes the audience truly care about the subject, because the goal is to get to their hearts and make it relevant to them. In an interpretation there are tangibles and intangibles, the subject being talked about and then something to see or touch.

While on ECOEE I’ve learned that I’m not the only one who struggles with interpretation. Many of the outdoor education centers that we visited thought they were demonstrating an interpretation to us, but really what they were doing is an outdoor education lesson, not interpreting it. Interpreters know their subject inside and out. I think that some of the best interpretations are the ones where a story is told, because who doesn’t like a good story? What better way to get the attention of the audience and the quickest way to their hearts.

Throughout the semester besides our backcountry expeditions canoeing, kayaking, and backpacking, we also have stopped at many national parks along the way too. While we are taking in the beauty of these parks we also attend interpretive walks and talks. We take notes over their presentations and then critique them. There’s been some pretty good ones and some pretty bad ones. I was surprised to actually see bad interpretations given by park rangers, I thought they would all blow my mind away with their professionalism, but little did I know.

My favorite interpretation wasn’t even planned. We were at Yellowstone National Park and we got up really early one morning at 4am to go and try to see some wolves. It wasn’t until 6am after a little bit of driving around that we noticed a lot of people gathered off the road with their scopes and cameras out. We pull over, got out of the vans, walk up, and sure enough they were all watching a pack of wolves eating their breakfast. It was then that we met Ranger Rick (no joke his name was Ranger Rick) who had given us the most amazing interpretation about that exact pack of wolves. The best part was that you could definitely tell how much he loved his job.

~ Shayla Hill

Teaching the Group a Thing or Two

As our group was preparing to exit the beautiful and pristine Baja California there was one final chapter in our ECOEE journey as outdoor educators; we all had to present the final draft of our outdoor education topics. As the weeks wore by throughout our ECOEE journey some took better advantage than others of opportunities to provide “teachable moments” to the group, where we wander upon something interesting that exists naturally and has been touched upon in our lesson plans. The culminating conclusion of our lesson plans here in beautiful Baja California is to combine all these teachable moments into one spectacular lesson for the group to learn from and enjoy.

Most of the lessons offered insight into their respective topics as we close out the field of outdoor education for the year. Information was presented in such a way so that it would have a resounding and relatable impact as we move back in to our regular lives. Some students drew diagrams on our sleeping tarps, some had us build shelters, others had us even play a game of tag themed to their education topic; but everybody had the group do an activity that was in some way related to their outdoor education topic. As a whole I am proud of how far the group has come over the course of ECOEE in the field of outdoor education. Much improvement has been made sense our first attempts at providing an educational experience for one another all the way back in the Canadian wilderness during late August and early September. The Baja California lessons not only mark an end to our Outdoor education class, but moreover to the end of the year and the end of an amazing experience in ECOEE.

~ Elizabeth Flesher

“Everybody believes in something and everybody, by virtue of the fact that they believe in something, uses that something to support their own existence.”

Frank Zappa
The Great Outdoors

As ECOEE is coming to a close and many of the expedition members prepare to head home, I am reminded of the grand outdoor adventures the members have experience on the expedition. Whether we’re canoeing through the grass river, hiking through the forests of Ansel Adam, or sea kayaking in the sea of Cortez, outdoor adventure recreation has played an important role in our lives but also in many other individual’s.

In experiencing the outdoors and observing the natural surroundings, we gain a better understanding of the involvements of our beautiful world. Spending time enjoying the outdoors also provides an opportunity to reset the wilds of everyday life. As I experience on ECOEE, camping, watching the sun set below the mountains, leading peers through an array of obstacles there is no doubt that outdoor recreation helps instill appreciation of the important roles of our natural resources, environment and wildlife to our quality of life.

Learning Without Walls

Throughout this whole expedition we have been teaching one another about certain topics in the environment such as: trees, habitats, ecosystems, mammals, plants, weather, etc. Usually a student learns about these topics in a classroom, through books, or from the internet but learning these topics in an outdoor setting, where they are more relevant, makes a lot more sense. We have visited a few places that have the philosophy that students learn better about science and the environment if they are actually interacting with the environment. The most recent place we have visited with this philosophy has been my favorite place so far. Los Angeles County Outdoor Science School, or LACOSS, brings in 5th graders and has them stay in cabins for a week while they attend lessons with naturalists and scientists. I observed so many great things while being there, for one the students were excited and engaged in most everything that was being taught. Learning about tide pools and the life that lives in them allowed the students to touch, see, and experience it firsthand. The interest and curiosity the kids had about everything the tide pools held was amazing. If these students were taught these things inside a classroom I could easily see them falling asleep, drawing, or being distracted by other class mates, but being able to be engaged in the subject really changed that around. While I was there I also noticed that the kids easily remembered things that were taught that day while they were doing their homework. This showed that being able to stay focused, interested, and engaged allowed for the maximum learning potential. While reflecting on my experience at LACOSS I wondered why anyone would try to teach anything inside a classroom especially when it comes to energetic 5th graders who have a hard time staying focused. Not only did the kids learn but they were excited to learn and happy to share information they had learned with others. Looking back on our topics for ECOEE and what we have taught one another I noticed that the things I remember most were the things taught using the environment. For example trees made a lot more sense when I was able to use my senses to interact and learn where in the location was most relevant, the outdoors. My view on education from these visits and experiences has changed and helped me have a better idea of what I would like to do in the future and how I would like to go about it.

~ Rogelio Hernandez

Guess Who...

1. Snorkeled in the Sea of Cortez
2. Was teased by Jeff
3. Stayed up late doing homework
4. Saw a gray whale while kayaking in Baja California
5. Slept in the vans as we traveled
6. Did not set their tents up properly
7. Got lost for 2 hours while backpacking
8. Burnt food
9. Did not shower for 30 days
10. Was eaten alive by mosquitoes
11. Had very dirty clothes

Answers on Last Page
Becoming Leaders

“Judgment is the act of integrating previously learned information with situational factors to arrive at a decision.” ECOEE 2013 has learned from our experience during the semester that our judgment and decision making skills are not quite as good as we thought they were. We have made some mistakes... Oh boy have we made some mistakes! But I can guarantee that most of those mistakes won’t happen again, because they’ll never be forgotten. That’s why when learning to become a leader it’s best to learn by the mistakes that are made so you won’t make them again.

Learning how to become a leader is done through experience. Whether that be making the decision to have your group paddle on a chilly forty degree rainy day, or making the decision to have your group stay in a hotel because it’s too cold and windy to have your group sleep outside in tents. There are bad decisions made and there are good decisions made and that’s how a good leader is formed. Good leaders also adapt to different situations very quickly and well, because it’s required. There are many factors that cannot be controlled, like the weather so you have to adapt and you have to change the plan.

Being an outdoor leader is more than just leading a group, it’s also taking care of that group. It’s the leader who looks out for their safety and best interest. The leader is the one everyone in the group looks to for the plan. Whether that is plan A, B, C, or even Z, there’s always a plan, because usually the first three don’t work out. A leader always plans for the worst and hopes for the best.

One of the biggest things in being a leader is being able to look at all of the options and then try to make the best decision, not necessarily the “right” decision, but the best one. All of us students would always get frustrated with Jeff when he wouldn’t simply answer our questions, would just sit there and look at us, or say, “What do you think?” He was letting us learn. If he would have told us what to do we wouldn’t have learned it, because we would have been told before we even got the chance to learn it.

Learning is experiencing, we experienced how to become a leader, and that’s something Jeff taught us all.

~ Shayla Hill

The Importance of ARC

During our trip on the Environmental Conservation Outdoor Education Expedition our group has been able to visit many different adventure recreation programs. These programs allowed for us to come and see how they operate. We were able to see how trip plans were made with logistics of vehicles as well as see how these programs were able to get funding to continue supporting their programs.

With getting to experience these many different programs, ECOEE has allowed for us to learn a lot about the many different experiences these programs can offer, as well as how they can be a foot in the door experience for us after we graduate.

Throughout ECOEE we were able to visit programs like NOLS and Summit Adventure who are able to take their students too many places ranging from in the states to different countries overseas. We were also able to visit smaller adventure recreation programs like ARC which is out of San Diego State University.

While ARC is a smaller program and may not be as wide spread, this program has been able to offer an experience that is very similar to NOLS and Summit Adventures. Through its program ARC is able to take the students that attend their trips and get them motivated and interested in the outdoors by first hand experiences. They can take them to many places to teach them different skills as well as teach them about the natural world around them. A way that this program has added incentive to their courses is adding college credit. By doing this they may a win-win situation for the students. They are able to receive credit for college while getting to go out and do something amazing.

With programs like this getting students away from the internet and their phones, we can see how there are benefits. Through their first hand experience of adventure recreation the students can gain experience as well as learn to appreciate the outdoors more. With this happening, these students can not only better their own lives, they can also begin to help and better the environment as well.

~ Kyle Pickett

Quotes from Our Journey

“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”
~ John F Kennedy

“Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.”
~ Aristotle
Valuable Skills Across the Board of Life!

Over the course of ECOEE we learned lots of valuable skills that will separate you from others as an outdoor leader and leader in many other senses as well. These skills include aspects of personal interactions with other individuals and are mastered through the inner-self, learning from experience and practice in a natural setting. We were able to make decisions of large impact or magnitude throughout our experience from the beginning of the planning stage to the implantation and first-hand experience of ECOEE. Another learning experience that was key was within the communication and discussions in the group setting of debrief to how we functioned as a group. There was a surplus of valuable general and technical skills to be learned and mastered in the environment of nature which was very effective and appropriate because the wilderness provides a setting where the risk of a large repercussion occurring is less likely then that of one in society. Some of the general skills we learned through the intangible experience include conflict resolution, judgement and decision-making, risk management, how to provide feedback, and the group dynamics of group development. These skills require practice in the wilderness setting through experience and possess relevance outside of it in the position of life's various interactions such as the many relationships and choices we will encounter in the future. As for the technical skills that are great beneficiary as an outdoor leader and understanding humans initial intimate experience with the natural world; these included the modes of travel we experienced, the survival skills in a wilderness setting, wilderness education lessons, leave no trace, and climbing skills. A important quality that is present within all of these skills is the ability to adapt and work effectively according to the situation that is present with difficulties or conflicts. There were a few assessment and tests that had categorized group members into different leadership styles such as product, people, ideas, and process, the importance in that lesson was that you must adapt your leadership style to utilize the strengths of the individual to greater influence the experience in a positive manner. As we further our experience through hands on practice in the wilderness setting through experience, we will be able to greater develop a better proficiency in how these skills are to be applied. You can't forget the value of practice, which in my opinion is the key to becoming great in whatever it is you desire.

~ Norris Andriuskevicius

“Education comes from within; you get it by struggle and effort and thought.”

Napoleon Hill

Work, Work

It’s the final countdown. The workload is immense, comparable to our first week of ECOEE; though this time the process is in reverse order. Group chores at this point have become second nature, cooking and cleaning tasks need not be delegated; they are simply picked up by the people who have not completed tasks recently. As end of the year chores slowly slip away the end of ECOEE comes into sight. The big question now is: “Where do we go from here?” One of the most immediately applicable lessons learned from ECOEE comes from working with each other throughout the semester in order to provide a sense of normalcy and stability by providing the group with good food and a clean environment. While some of the more deep and intrinsic lessons may take months or even years to sink in, it is most probable that the skills we have developed in maintaining a clean and hospitable environment at camp can be easily and effectively applied to our day-to-day lives back at home.

During ECOEE we were provided ample opportunity to hone our cooking skills to a craft. By cooking for 12 other individuals we gained an opportunity to learn about providing tasty meals for a variety of different wants and dietary needs as we traveled across North America. Where we go from here does not necessarily have to be becoming a 5 star chef; but at the least we should be able to reduce our fast and processed food intake as we go back to a life of ease and convenience.

As far as cleaning is concerned we all have learned and been forced by scheduling and other group members to be able to maintain a clean living quarters and group environment. As we move back into our dorms and houses it is my sincere hope that every member of the group can maintain a hospitable home for themselves and their guests; I know I will be visiting many members of the group and vice-verse. The cleaning skills we gained over the course of ECOEE are some of the most visible and day to day abilities acquired.

~ Tyler Schrapf

Quotes from Our Journey

“Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings .”

~ Samuel Johnson

“The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.”

~ Mark Twain
Who Goes to National Parks?

The National park service is a unique collection of national and cultural treasures reserved for the enjoyment and benefit of the American people. During our expedition, ECOEE has traveled to a vast collection of national parks. During our visits, the amount of visitors and tourist flocking to view the grand beauty of the Grand Canyon, the massive peaks of the Tetons, or the vast valleys at Yellowstone. The national park service has something to capture visitor’s attention.

Something that I notice that was a challenging issue facing the national park service was how to make the national park service more accessible to different segment of the U.S. population. Particularly to racial and ethnic minorities. The racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S population is more diverse now than at any time in the 20th century. There are nearly 1 in 4 U.S. citizen identified themselves as black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, or American Indian. With ethnic minority groups expected to comprise more than half of the U.S. population. There are racial and ethnic minorities that are largely absent among visitors populations of most national parks.

The National Park service has been having to find strategies to compact the low visibility of racial and ethnic minorities in national parks. To effectively serve the diverse public, National park Service has gone through finding the critical reasons why minorities don’t attend national parks. First, the park service must ensure that there are plans that promote equal access to the park for members of all racial and ethnic groups. Second, racial and ethnic groups have different use of participation and style of park use.

A New Style

As ECOEE comes to a close a lot of aspects and course elements that we have become accustomed to over the course of the semester are starting to change; group dynamics are at the awkward goodbye potion and homework has taken precedence over sight-seeing, but one aspect remains constant. There are always group chores that need done. As we return from a well needed Thanksgiving break the group now enters one of the most stressful portions of ECOEE, the evaluation week. Normally group chores are done on a rotating basis to help ensure that one person does not do too much work, and that work load is spread out so the jobs are not repetitive by having to be performed on a day to day basis. With the change in work load, group dynamics, and scheduling however it became apparent to my LOW team that there was a need for change in order to make this final week run more smoothly.

During evaluations all expedition members except the one must be present for hours on end as we go over everything each group member has said and done throughout the course of the semester; how they have improved, worked with others, educated, done chores, and a laundry list of other examples all go into account when evaluating our peers.

With the new format to how our days operate there is a hole in how the rotating chores list works. How will breakfast, lunch, and dinner get cooked when we are sitting around all day evaluating our peers in a process that is required to be unanimous? Simple: There must a new style to how we go about our daily chores. The decision to make these individuals who are being evaluated for the day is an awkward one. The group is holding a portion of your grade in their hands, carefully going over everything you have said and done throughout the course of the semester; all the while you must cook for them. Cooking is not thing only task however, there is much to be done in our final week, not only must those individuals being evaluated cook for the group, they must also do daily chores required for our final week, such as construct and clean/repair tents, or make phone calls to setup the banquet. There is simply not enough time to be wasted with idleness as we enter the final week of ECOEE. I am confident that all this hard work will pay off in the end. Congratulations ECOEE 2013, I am proud of all of you.

~ Elizabeth Flesher
Canyons, Caves, & Condors

During our stay at Grand Canyon National Park, we took advantage of the many programs the rangers and volunteer rangers provided throughout the park. These programs share the beauty, history, and mystery of the Grand Canyon to its millions of visitors using the art of interpretation. As we ventured along the south rim of the Grand Canyon, we experienced the different methods in which rangers and volunteer rangers use interpretation to teach the visitors.

Interpretations presentations can be broken down into categories. Interpretive walks lead the audience to different points along a path or trail while the ranger or volunteer ranger discusses the topic as they lead the group around. Interpretive talks are stationary and the audience gathers around the presenter. Night programs are also stationary, but last about twice as long as a typical interpretive talk. For each type of program, one presentation stood out for me.

We went to an interpretive walk about the geological history of the Grand Canyon. We walked along the rim of the canyon while the ranger, with Northern Illinois roots I will add, discussed with us the rock layers and how they got there over time. Throughout the walk she used food analogies to describe the geological forces at work in the canyon and she used her arm as a timeline, which allowed her better relate the information to the audience. By the end, we stood safely near the edge and gazed out upon the vast canyon, putting its creation into perspective.

The night program we went to took me a little by surprise. We sat down in this theater of sorts and faced a massive projection of a PowerPoint presentation. “Oh, no.” I thought as I assumed we would have to endure an onslaught of uninteresting slides about caves for the next hour or so. I am glad I was wrong. Scott, the ranger presenting the program, talked with enthusiasm and passion, while using active language. He did not make it feel like a lecture instead, his presentation felt as if he was talking about something magical, amazing, and a truly important part of his very being. I learned a great deal of new facts and walked away from the presentation with a new appreciation for caves and Grand Canyon National Park. Mission accomplished for the National Park.

The interpretive talk that intrigued me the most was one about the California Condors in the Grand Canyon area. The ranger was really friendly and he asked questions to the audience to gauge where they were from and why they were visiting the park, he joked around, and interacted with everyone, even the young children in the audience. By the end of the presentation, I learned how the condors lived here, why they disappeared, and the process the National Park is doing to reintroduce them into the area.

All these interpretation presentations showed the beauty, history, and mystery of the Grand Canyon through the way the rangers or volunteer rangers shared the information and related it to the audience. Even though each ranger used a different method to present their information, each spent a great deal of effort into discussing why the Grand Canyon is so special.

~ Andrew Busker

Aztec Adventures

Through out the semester we have attended a few agencies that were “adventure recreation.” One of the ones we attended was Aztec Adventures. It was a cooperative through the Recreation Center at San Diego State University. While we were there we had the pleasure of meeting Jim Lustig who was the outdoor program coordinator. While we were at the school it was spit spot on for us before we left for Baja California and also coming back as well. We had great hospitality from him for our stay at the university. For instance, we were able to do laundry, use the WiFi, sleep inside a classroom, showers, and the use any the supplies or equipment that was in the equipment room. The second time we arrived back at San Diego State we had a meeting with Jim to talk about what programs he runs at the university and everything that goes in to it.

When we had first got to San Diego State, I was very intrigued by all the different outings he offered for students and how there is an outing each week of semester. They range from all different things, such as rock climbing in Joshua Tree National Park to backpacking in the Ansel Adams Wilderness to Sea Kayaking Baja California, Mexico. The incredible range that these students had at this university was such an amazing opportunity for them to take advantage of. It’s exciting to also hear from Jim, that usually each week the outings were packed with students, they were signed up ready to go. While listening to him talk about the Aztec Adventures, it makes me pleased to know that there are others my age who are getting the chance to do similar things to what I did for four months straight. The experiences that I have had while being on ECOEE, will be something where I will be using in my adult life such as cooking or being situational aware of when making simple or complex decisions. By this, I hope that others at San Diego State and can use their experience they have had and apply it in their life. In overview, Adventure Recreation is part of course class that we have been taking while ECOEE, which is called RPTA 449(G) - Management of Outdoor Adventure Recreation.

~ Emily Chathas

Quotes from Our Journey

“Animals, whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal.”

~ Charles Darwin

“At times it is folly to hasten; at other times, to delay. The wise do everything in its proper time.”

~ Ovid

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare it for today.”

~ Malcolm X
Practicing the Intangibles

When you are a part of a group there are stages that the group can identify to see how well they are doing together. The 5 stages of group development can be seen throughout all types of groups. From coworkers in corporations all the way to a small expedition, the stages can show you how well the group works together. The one stage that every group strives to be is the performing stage. When the group has reached this point they are able to have insight into personal and interpersonal processes that will help the group. They have become a well-oiled machine. Each member helping to their fullest and having true unity and cohesion can accomplish most tasks that are set in front of them.

Through out ECOEE this has been one of the major goals of our group, to reach the performing stage and to work together with one another in a constructive way. Throughout the trip we have experienced how hard it is to become a performing group. Through the difficulty of logistics and learning new things, all the way to personal growth and the development of our group as a whole we have endured hardships that have tested our feelings towards one another as well as towards the expedition. When we arrived down to Casa Azul in Baja California our group had believed that we were close to reaching our goal of become performing. But as our two weeks in Baja California were unfolding we soon became very aware that we were far from performing.

Our new instructor Francisco Detrell, after observing our group for almost a week, began to inform us that we are not as close as we believe to performing. For the major thing we lacked in our group was the intangibles that would bring our group together. We were then informed that if we wanted to become a performing group we needed to not only perform in the sense of getting the tasks done, but to also change ourselves in a way that will help benefit the group. In other words we should become selfless and work for the group and not for the individual. We must all delegate what needs to be done and not just rely on the instructions of the LOW’s. All take a leadership role and get the jobs that need to be done accomplished. For leaving the responsibility of that would cause many cases of miscommunication, forgotten tasks, and tasks that are done wrong. We must all take responsibility in order to reach performing.

~ Kyle Pickett

Discipline & Responsibility Are the Keys to Growth

In the Eastern views of the world, they believe that the people you live with on an expedition are your family. I would have to agree on this statement as all 13 of us spent over a hundred days living side by side, and our group interactions played a major role within our expedition attempting to achieve the difficult and impressive stage of group development known as the ‘performing’ stage. We didn’t achieve it, but I don’t believe many ECOEE groups have over the past few decades. Our group did a good job when it came to completing tasks and chores, but what I believe we lacked were the intangibles and values that a group possesses. When we first started it became apparent that we didn’t really have a discussion on what we want the group to achieve and how we want it to operate. Then by the second attempt we had created a interpersonal group values and goals contract, that must be followed similarly to any other form of instruction we have been given.

Every one had chimed in on what they wanted to see from the group, from manners and expressions to the way we would operate out of our trailer. This contract was reinforced a few times over the expedition, and it certainly benefited our group development. The instance where our group had been the closest to performing took place at the end of our backcountry experience in Baja California when we pulled up to the shore, and then following this we were able to incredibly efficiently clean and store all of the items and kayaks that we used. Even though we hardly achieved the performing stage, it was still an enjoyable experience that provided us with lots of the reasons that prevented us from reaching that level. A wonderful aspect of ECOEE that I thoroughly enjoyed was traveling and experiencing the various ecosystems and the cultures associated with them throughout the expedition, such as the Sonoran Desert, Boreal Forest, Tallgrass prairie, greater Yellowstone, Chapparal, Mountain meadow, and more. The cultural aspect that really stood out to me from the expedition was the historical information that dealt with the indigenous people, or ‘First Nation’ as they like to be called in Canada, and how they were mistreated terribly and driven out of their lands to be forced into reservations or displaced entirely. Lots of the archaeological findings about the history of these ecosystems we are making now are due to the indigenous people and could have been told to us through the word of mouth if only their culture was preserved. It fascinates me the intimacy the Native Americans were able to establish with the land, together they we one just as ECOEE together was one entity. Thank you for your support and donations, you have made the ECOEE experience that much better!

~ Norris Andriukovicius
Special Skill Sets

As ECOEE 2013 draws to an end many of us are heading back to our families, our friends, and our loved ones. The 13 of us are going back home, leaving behind the life on the road. We will return to beds, showers, real food, internet, cellphones, electronics, and civilization. We will leave behind our sleeping bags, not showering for weeks at a time, being without electronics, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and doing homework in bathrooms. But when we return home we will all returned changed. We have all grown into our own and each of us is returning with special skill sets that we did not have before this amazing opportunity. Kyle, Kevin, Andrew, Quinn, Liz, Emily, Ro, Tyler, Norris, Shayla, and I have all gotten a glimpse of what it takes to be an outdoor leader; something that Jeff and Shane know all about. We have learned the difficulties of planning and logistics, the importance of risk management, the role a leader must play, as well as how to survive in the wilderness. In the beginning of January 2013 we planned this expedition almost down to the exact day, but as you might know things do not always go as planned. Logistics and planning came into play and more than once we were forced to change plans, it is almost more correct to say that if a day did work out to the original plan it was a pleasant surprise. We all realized just how important risk management was after paddling in hypothermic weather and totaling one of our vans. We also learned the importance of having a clear understanding of what we needed to do to not only survive but be comfortable living in the wilderness. Through this all we have become leaders, each of us have taken these skills sets and molded them into what fits our personal style. This class had helped each of us in different ways, but if you were to boil it down at the bare minimum we can all survive in the wilderness, we all know how important risk management is, how plans usually never go right, and how combining all of this can help make one into a leader.

~ Cassandra Roy

Guess Who Answers... The ECOEE Crew

On this adventure, all of us had good experiences, difficult challenges, and funny moments. Thanks to your support, you helped provide a once-in-a-lifetime journey to 12 undergraduates.