ECOEE 2009: Off To A Great Start!

Thank You for supporting ECOEE and checking in on our progress through this monthly newsletter. This is the first of four newsletters that we will be completing throughout this semester. This issue will cover our journey from August 16 through September 25, 2009; from Macomb, Illinois to Ontario, Canada where we successfully completed a twenty-three day backcountry canoe expedition on the Missinaibi River!
Questions
By: Christine Lagattolla

How do you know when you are prepared for a wilderness trip? The information and planning that goes into a backcountry adventure can be tedious but the rewards are insurmountable. Our tasks to prepare for the 23-day canoe trip on Missinaibi River in Canada began last semester and continued when the twelve of us arrived at Horn Field Campus in August. Shopping, chores, and errands were tackled but the concern I had most was speculating what we were capable of. With all possibility stemmed from who we are, where we come from and who we want to become persists as we move through this unique college experience. But as I am passionate about seeking knowledge I posed my first question quietly regarding what could this expedition provide and how will we know that we have gotten something out of it?

Field instruction is certainly quite a bit different than traditional classrooms. The group’s exuberance that we were not sitting in a four-walled hall was enough to guarantee focus on backcountry lessons. The surrounding environment as our classroom, a forest lined waterway with the sound of rushing water over ancient rocks strewn about was generous for question seekers. The main expedition included a focus on camping and technical skills the otherwise how ‘to’s’ that establish a secure level of comfort; I took most interest in the secondary yet integral pieces. But the opportunities to teach each other a variety of outdoor education and cultural and natural history topics were ill utilized. Though we attempted, the lack of the confidence to frequently and effectively share the content burdened our content. I realized that the most learning occurred as assigned leaders of the day (LOD). As the travel and lesson selections were left up to the LOD it was the less black and white topics such as judgment and decision-making that controlled the leadership experience. As many situations occurred, paddling on the lakes and the river options beckoned any wonderer. How many miles and lessons could be accomplished in a day?

The first thing we learned was responsibility. Once we found the ability to paddle efficiently, set up camp, and cook meals we discovered elements on how to take care of each other. In realizing the decisions we had to make were not only for ourselves but considered each member of the group and the individual implications we contribute.

Regardless of the day’s schedule the vital aspect of realizing what we have learned came to life in at debrief. Each evening we would meet on the soft beach, slab of rock, or under trees to discuss the day. Here as well we could pose more questions and discover message of reasoning, justification, and analysis which frequently came from listening to each others thoughts and observations. As we stroked forward along we found more common ground to walk within our circle creating an open climate that stimulated growth while sharing thoughts and criticisms.

More technically we learned that rapids have risks and scouting one is like reading a play in a sports game as it also doesn’t always run as planned. First outlining the options presents the complexity of the decision. One such example was at Greenhill Rapids 13 days into the trip. As we referenced our resources, the guidebook and scouting the river we knew that a long stretch of whitewater ranging in classifications embedded with rock gardens or a portage trail almost a mile one way was laid out before us. When we are faced with judging the options we realize the effects of knowledge. The more you know about what you are doing the more you are able to adapt and justify and refrain from moments of uncertainty. The stretch of whitewater did become run-able after two rounds of hauling our gear but it wasn’t easy. As our six canoes and Jeff’s kayak made the way down, many rocks were massaged and steering swiftly to avoid but as it probable to occur our first and only collision and rescue situation jammed up two canoes and Jeff’s kayak. Pulling from the incident we can realize the results of the choice to paddle a challenging stretch and learn the odds of risk.

I believe that the wilderness portion of our expedition has taught us that questions can remain an infinitive request of knowledge. Questions help guide us through the process of challenges, conflict and growth as we realize that leadership is all about taking care of people. As leaders we can learn to master the skills that we can control and learn to live in rhythm with the things that cannot as Paul Petzoldt said but foremost we continue to learn that taking care of each other is paramount to inspire knowledge acquisition throughout this experience. Our group has cultured concern for each other beyond expectation. The 23 days on a river is comprised of the seven traits of love: kindness, patience, forgiveness, courtesy, humility, generosity, and honesty lived out into reality and without question an accomplishment.
Changing Perspectives on Adventure

By: Ron Wildermuth III

The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines adventure as, “an undertaking usually involving danger or unknown risks; the encountering of risks”. Before ECOEE, when I would think of “adventure”, I would picture being at the top of a mountain with wind beaten faces. It is my belief that we whom have chosen to undertake an adventure like ECOEE risk a lot more than any of us could have imagined. The main two goals of ECOEE are to learn how to be an outdoor leader and to become certified by the Wilderness Education Association (WEA) and in doing so must think about the integrity of the group before the intense, physical challenge that many of us out here personally long for.

When leading a group in the out of doors, you are constantly being tested and as our instructor, Jeff Tindall, says “don’t have your brain in your back pocket…” First and foremost you must have a subjective view of what is going on with the individuals in your group and the stability of your group as a whole. You have to take your personal feelings and desires out of the equation when leading a group. The Greenhill Rapids have been a perfect example for the group to reference back to as a learning model. Greenhill, affectionately known as “The Graveyard”, is described in our field guide as “Impossible to scout…meaner than a junkyard dog… a real CANOE SEMATARY”. It is a series of three rapids, allowing for calm eddy water in between to regain your bearings or to step out and “line” (walk canoes down the bank by ropes, or “painters”) but, absolutely nowhere to pull canoes out and portage them. Speaking of portaging, the option was to portage all the gear and canoes 1400 meters (1531 yards, that’s over 15 football fields); not a terrible distance with a narrow, hilly but solid path. And now looking back, in retrospect that would have been the choice decision. The condensed version of what really happened, was that two canoes got stuck 1/3 of the way down in which two other group members had to help in the unplanned swift water rescue. No one and no gear was damaged in the process but, as Tindall as also told us about basing the quality of our decisions on whether there was physical harm or not: “some people can make all the wrong decisions and nothing happens and, that same person can make all the right decisions and some one dies.”

(This is not actually our canoe, but one of three “mangled up canoes” that we encountered.)

Starting last semester during the planning process, we had begun to change our perspectives on adventure in the pursuit of one day assuming the role of a leader and being able to pick out the differences between perceived and real risks. Now in the hands-on situations in which we have to make timely decisions with dire consequences for more than just our own safety, the quality of an adventure is judged less for its potential to kill you and more of a challenge to find the right level of intensity. Prime levels push people to their stretch zones, the place in which they learn and adapt the best; without pushing too far and they break down mentally and physically. We have not yet met with any organization or commercial adventure recreationist but our learning by “the seats of our pants” is a greater learning experience than any questionnaire could have given us and, not to mention great life experience.
Water Is Power
By: Josh Boyer

Backcountry living can be very strenuous and tiring. There are many opportunities to perspire because of all the extra work you do just to get around in the backcountry than in the front country. That’s why dehydration is a very important topic to get across. It is much easier to get dehydrated in the backcountry, and everyone who is in the backcountry should be drinking a lot of water. There are a lot of people out there who are always spectacle on how much water they should even drink in a day. Studies have shown that in a day a person should be drinking from two to four quarts of water in backcountry living.

Is there a difference between the water you should drink when in the summertime versus in the wintertime while in backcountry? The answer is yes. With some surprising results as well. Just like the amount of water you should drink that was stated earlier you should drink in hot warm weather. So during the summertime one should be drink an average of two to four quarts in a day. And in the wintertime one should be drinking an average of three to five quarts in a day. People should be drinking a lot more to stay hydrated in the wintertime because there is respiration and perspiration while you are doing activities.

Are there other ways to receive your water intake rather than it just be from your water bottles? There are definitely many other ways to get water in your body other than straight pure water. Many foods that you eat have water in them. Tons of fruits have water that is naturally in them. The best fruit to eat that has the most water in it is the watermelon. Easy to remember from the name, eating watermelon is a great way to stay hydrated during backcountry activities.

Interpretation
By: Jake Boyer

All along our ECOEE journey one of our assignments is to teach on three different topics: Interpretation, Outdoor Education, and WEA. We also need lesson plans to go along with the teachings. We have to teach these topics in all the four ecosystems were traveling through, (Ontario Northwood’s, Rocky Mountains, Desert Southwest, and Baja, Mexico). Our Interpretation lesson should demonstrate our skills in describing, relating, displaying, and revealing natural, environmental, and/or cultural resources related to the chosen topic to your audience through interpretation. One topic that was taught was Settlement. The student who was teaching this talked about; who settled in Ontario (mainly the Missinaibi River), the history behind the settlers and their land, and also the resources they used in this ecosystem to sustain life among themselves. While teaching this the student had the group walk on a beach they were camping at, and in the background was the great wonders of Thunder House Falls. Thunder House Falls was a demarcation line between the Ojibway Indians, and the Selkirk Indians. The Ojibway settled from Lake Superior up to Thunder House Falls, and the Selkirk settled from Thunder House Falls up to James Bay. The teacher was lively and interested in what they were teaching, and also tried to connect the topic to the lives of the group receiving this lesson. He also had different resources he picked up along the way to use as visual aids. Some of these resources were: berries, birch bark, and an arrowhead; which the Ojibway Indians used to trade with other Indians in return for other resources not indigenous to their land. Another Interpretation Lesson that was taught was on migrating birds. The student had the group form a flying V, to show the shape birds make while migrating. He explained the purpose for the flying V, what habitats birds live in, where birds migrate to and how they know when to migrate, etc. Both these teachings were interesting, but as we keep learning more and more how to be interpretive and get more experience, it is going to be enlightening to see even more Interpretations being taught along the way.
Travel Workshop 450
By: Grant Fleetwood

On approximately day fifteen, I was paddling down the Missinabi River with twelve other people, thinking about when we would get to camp that night. I knew there were two Class II rapids coming up that we might run, and several Class I rapids as well that stood between us and camp. Dinner might be late. My thoughts dwelled on the dysfunctional stove and how much food my tent group of four had left. Pepperoni, noodles, rice, peas, Spam, pepper jack cheese, and cracked wheat all mixed together in a pot... it sounded great! I started getting hungry, and with a can of tuna being the only food I had not packed away in someone else’s boat, I knew I needed to focus on something else. How many lessons would we cover before dinner? Would we learn more about group development? Would our argument at last night’s debrief mean we would talk about conflict? Not focusing on what was doing was making my canoe veer a bit to the left. Instead I began to think about the stroke of the paddle. Forward stroke, forward, forward, J-stroke to keep the boat in line with the others in the convoy. The first Class I rapid came up and without stopping to see the best path or line through the rocks and waves, confident in our skills we took it head on, making decisions and moves in the moment. There was a rock ahead, it was time for a Draw stroke on the right side. We narrowly missed it. Then came another; Sweep left. Then another and another and another. We swept and drew our way through it, picking our way through the rock garden. Coming out the other end with a little water in the boat, we bailed with one of the remaining sponges, the others eaten by the ravenous river. It was time to continue on the long day’s journey to camp. I wondered what the campsite would look like, if it was more established or primitive, we had experienced both. With boats clear of water for the moment, it was back to the forward stroke. The next was a Class II. We would have to get out and scout for the best line, looking for the indicators of a safe path to travel, looking for downstream V’s, avoiding the upstream V’s, the rocks that created them, the haystacks (large waves) that lay behind them, and pillows, the large rocks that had water forced up and over them. Hopefully we wouldn’t tip, but with personal gear in waterproof Bill’s Bags, I knew that if we did tip, it would be a learning experience, an adventure, and something to write in my journal that night. I looked to the challenge, confident and nervous, with twelve others sharing emotions, the fear, the thrill. It is in reflection that I begin to realize the magnitude of the thoughts on that day and every day. Fifteen days, two weeks into a three and a half week expedition, that time is incredible. It is an achievement that is difficult to comprehend when actually doing it, and easier in reflection. I relearned how to live in a way that cannot be fully explained by someone who has experienced it, and a way that cannot be fully understood by someone who has not experienced it.

Travel Workshop 450
By: Jake Boyer

The Unknown- As we started our front country planning at Horn Field Campus in August, we got the first chance to see how detailed and task oriented planning was actually going to be. Jeff Tindall (our instructor) delegated the foods committee, (Josh and Ron) to come up with a list chores set up for ten days. The list consisted of; three Cleaners, one Chef, one Sou Chef, one Deserter, one person on Water, one person on Vans and Trailers, group journal person, and finally the most important jobs were: one A.F.O.D. (Assistant Facilitator of the Day), and one F.O.D. (Facilitator of the Day). The reason for a F.O.D. was primarily because our goal as ECOEE is to become Outdoor Certified Leaders through the WEA (Wilderness Education Association), and this would cultivate their leadership decision-making skills while taking on this role. An A.F.O.D.’s job is just as it seems; the F.O.D. plans out the day, they use their A.F.O.D. to communicate with, about their plan and the A.F.O.D. puts in their input as well as helps the F.O.D. anyway they can, or anyway the F.O.D. wants them to. Basically if anything goes wrong during the day it is all on the F.O.D. It is a heavy responsibility, and really builds character quick. Our ECOEE crew had eleven students going through this chore list; so one person always got a day off (usually after F.O.D.). When it came for the day to be managing vans and trailers, the object was to keep the vans and trailers clean; making sure the group has nothing on the floor or all over the place, sweep the trash out, and check the oil and air pressure. The water person’s objective is to make sure all of the water jugs are filled, so we can use water to fill buckets for washing dishes, and also to drink. As deserter the goal was to have deserts for breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals. The sou-chef is the chef who doesn’t make the main meals, but has to come up with different sides to go with the main course. And finally the chef is head of what the group is going to eat for the day, planning for three entrees’, breakfast lunch and dinner. Even know the chef, sou chef, and deserter have different jobs, they all are working together to complete the meal, and so it is a combined effort. As the group journal person, that person has to write two pages on a certain day. Their goal was to summarize the day and talk about what is happening within the group, saying; how the day went, what problem or hiccups occurred, what went great, etc. They can also add creative writings such as: poems, story line, haiku, letter to a friend or family member, etc. The group journals’ responsibility is to read the journal in the morning during chow circle. They also have to have a quote ready for chow circle to share with fellow ECOEE peers.
Outdoor Education 444
By: Grant Fleetwood

During our time together on ECOEE, a major part of the journey is examining different programs around the country. The YMCA Storer Camps in Jackson, MI was a visit to examine outdoor education in the field. Having just come out of the backcountry, and with this as our only professional visit before returning to Macomb to drop off canoes, everyone was a little anxious about it. The communication was unclear, we knew that we would be spending the night and watching instructors teach, but that was about all we knew. Upon arriving, we met with Nancy Burger, the Director of Program Development, who gave us a rundown of what our day would be like. We ate lunch in the dining hall in the staff area, but with five hundred children from seven different schools eating all around us. After the silence and calm of the backcountry, it is fascinating how much noise five hundred children can make, and how the overload can give you anxiety, and even get you near to a panic attack. The leaders of the camp were excellent and after the children ate they played a game where one child was picked to go outside while everyone else picked an object in the room. After the child returned we sang the song John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt, singing louder when the guesser was warm, and softer when the guesser was cold. They went through two rounds, and we stood off to the side watching. For the third round, the leader of the game introduced ECOEE and asked if one of us wanted to be the guesser. I gladly volunteered. Of course, they picked a something hard, one of the counselors, and it took me a good seven minutes to realize that he was walking around. It was great to be able to be a part of the program like that.

The afternoon was full of lessons for the students, and each of us got to see two. There were lessons on all sorts of topics, from team building to shelter creation to microscopic life in the pond. We took notes on the lessons, the teachers and their teaching styles, and especially what we would liked to have seen. At the end of the night, during debrief we discussed each of the classes and our notes. There was a direct correlation between the enthusiasm of the teacher and the effectiveness of the lesson. Some of us got to be more hands on and even teach a little with the instructor. Ron and I built a poorly made shelter and asked the participants to critique it and tell us what we did wrong and how we could fix it. Christine gave ideas to a cabin leader on how to use teachable moments, and Cassi and Kim showed off their fire starting abilities.

Outdoor Education 444
Continued

After the lessons we met with the executive director Abimbola Fajobi, who explained the background and inner workings of the camp. He and Nancy were very generous and gave us a binder full of lesson plans! We will all be very appreciative of this gift in our future teaching endeavors. After dinner, the students split into groups to take part in a camp wide program on the Underground Railroad. As extra help and observers we joined traveling groups to go through the program. We played the part of runaway slaves with the false story of being a traveling choir. Our groups sang songs as we learned what the life would be like. It was a learning experience for us as well as the children, one that gives appreciation for the sacrifices people will give for freedom. Throughout the time we spent at the camp, I was most amazed by how the leaders were able to make everything fun. They played a game at the end of every meal to try to teach the kids not to waste food. I still catch myself chanting “Zero Waste! ZERO WASTE!” Also at the end of every meal they acted like a they were in a game show and the leader would yell “Do you know what time it is? It’s time to…” and all of the kids would yell “STACK THE CHAIRS!”. Part of ECOEE is seeing programs so that you can get a better idea of where you want a career, and I can say right now that I would love to work at YMCA Storer Camp.
Close Cut
By: Ron Wildermuth
How do you hide 9,000 acres of state park land? Leave 49 acres of some of the most majestic Old Growth Forest in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan within it. Yes, I know that it should be the remainder of the 9,000 that is hiding the heart of Hartwick Pines State Park. However, it is the Old Growth Trail is truly the crowd pleaser, with the crowning gem of the Monarch; that still radiates an aura nearly two decades after it died after a terrible wind storm. Now, before you believe this piece is a eulogy for a forest you must bear with my story and embrace that death has a lot to do with the life that still flows through this historically battered ecosystem. To understand the uniqueness of Hartwick Pines State Park and an Old Growth Forest I want you to step back into Michigan’s past, more than 10,000 years ago.

During the Ice Age, or Pleistocene Epoch, Michigan’s land surface was formed by a continental glacier that, at times, extended into the ancient Mississippi River watershed. Most geologists conclude that Michigan was overridden by two and perhaps three earlier ice advances, the Illinoian, Kansan and Nebraskan. However, it is the latest period of glaciations, the Wisconsinan that is responsible for Michigan’s surface features. The Wisconsinan left behind barren sand and gravel with shallow ponds, deep lakes and rivers. Over time, primitive plants, like mosses and lichens changed local ecosystems and improved soil nutrients and moisture and making the increasingly habitable for colonization by larger and more complex plants. This primary succession gradually resulted in the pine community and northern hardwood forest to become the dominant vegetative feature throughout the area that is Hartwick Pines State Park. The park is most famous and gets its namesake for the variety of pines including jack, red (Norway) and white that flourished in the sandy, nutrient poor soils along with frequent wildfires which perpetuated the fire-dependent species. On moister soils, beech and maple dominated. With constant environmental change from wind and fire, northern Michigan was forested by a mosaic of tree communities, which would later support the lumbering boom of the 1800’s.

French and English laid claim to the area throughout the early years of European colonization. The United States government eventually gained title to the land through treaties in 1836. In 1852, 750,00 acres were granted to the State of Michigan as compensation to the Saint Mary’s Falls and Ship Canal Company for the construction of the Sault Saint Marie Locks. The potential for lumbering riches was soon realized and land was sold to logging companies and quickly rose in value from the original price of three cents an acre. When the Salling Hanson Company of Grayling made a land purchase in 1893, the price had risen to $110.95 an acre.

The Salling Hanson Company logged nearly all of what is the park today; taking nearly all of the “tall timber” and soon all that remained was about 86 acres of old growth white pine. Forest fires caused by deforestation compounded the problem and some historical accounts said that “there was always a fire burning some where during the logging era”. Forest conservation was not practiced and, the fire was even used as a tool to clear the cutover land for farming. When logging companies had cut all the trees in an area, the land was then marketed as prime farmland. Many settlers tried, unsuccessfully, to farm the very acidic and dry soil; bankruptcies occurred and many farms reverted to state ownership, which is reflected today in the abundance of public lands throughout northern Michigan.

The history of the park itself came into being by the most ironic of sources. Karen B. Hartwick (maiden name, Michelson), daughter of Salling Hanson partner Nels Michelson, purchased 8,236 acres of land in the area, including the remaining 86 acres of old growth white pine. On October 3, 1927 she officially gave the land to the State of Michigan as Edward E. Hartwick Pines Park with three requests:
1) The Department of Conservation (precursor to the Department of Natural Resources) would protect the land from logging and fire.
2) A memorial building would be built in honor of her husband, Major Edward Hartwick, whom died during World War One.
3) A roadway connecting highway M-27 (later US 27) to the park would be constructed

(Information provided by the Michigan Historical Center)

As I mentioned before hand, the crowning jewel of the park is the Monarch, which was measured at 155 feet tall with a circumference of 20 feet at its greatest size. The Monarch was a focal point for protestors in the early 1960’s to protect the land before having government protection of the land, as well as is infamous for attracting eco-friendly people to come and hug the gentle giant. Unfortunately in 1992 the Monarch was struck by lightning and four years later, died. The majority still stands but, who knows when the rest of the Monarch will come tumbling down.

Today, Hartwick Pines State Park contains 9,672 acres, making it the fifth largest State Park in Michigan, including the remaining 45 acres of old growth pine. The park came from an unsure past, out of dark past in the ecological world of the Unite States, survived through man’s transformation from trying to conquering the land to understanding the beauty in natural things. The variation in sheer physical size comparing the old growth to regenerated trees stands for the people of today and the future to respect the boundaries of things we can not and should not try to control.
Wilderness Leadership
By: Sean Stowell

When I first started this course I wondered how wilderness leadership would be different from the leadership that I have seen for most of my life. The leadership style I am used to is more from an athletic style of leadership. Once the Wilderness Education Association NSPOLC course begun I had a chance to understand that there is much more to wilderness leadership. Judgment and Decision Making are the umbrella topics of wilderness leadership as they affect all things we do.

There were several big decisions that we had to make in the field during our backcountry experience. One of the biggest came on Cassi’s Leader of the Day (LOD) experience. We were faced with Green Hill Rapids. This set of rapids ranged from Class III to Class I and was over a kilometer long. The name of the first set of the rapids is known as the Graveyard and the name of the second is Canoe cemetery. As her ALOD I know that we were not planning on running them. We briefly talked about scouting it the night before but our initial plan was to portage the whole thing. The portage trail was 1400 meters one way.

Once we got to Green Hill Rapids it was obvious that we could not scout the rapids as we normally had. When we got the first load of gear portaged to the other side Jeff asked us if we were frustrated because this was the wrong portage to the wrong river (Green Hill River). Some people appeared frustrated but I knew that this was the only portage. Jeff then had us think over what we wanted to do from here. We discussed lining the edge of the rapids versus portaging everything. After a good 15 minutes of everyone given his or her ideas we made a decision. I had said I wanted to portage but was in the minority, so we made one last run of gear to get the boats empty and then ate a quick small lunch or snack.

When we got to the beginning of the portage trail Jeff gave us our first lining lesson but then finished by saying something that we were unprepared for. He said if he does not give a sign to eddy out, we would run it. I do not think most people thought this would happen because we had portaged some class II’s. As it turns out we did run it. Jeff got stuck on a rock while he was going. The boat behind him had Matt and Shane in it and they were taking there time trying to be very technical with their maneuvering. Cassi and I were behind them and somehow we missed all of the rocks in this rock garden. We got to close to Matt/Shane and supposedly bumped them into eddy water. These made them go down the rapids backwards. As soon as they got the canoe going in the right direction they hit Jeff’s kayak and a rock and began taking in water. Soon their boat was completely full.

Matt was outside of it when the next boat came along and almost cut him in half. That canoe soon was full of water as well. Luckily Jeff was right there to assist and Matt got his swift water rescue certification this summer. After twenty or more minutes the canoes were ready to go. Luckily no one got hurt. After talking to Jeff we found out that he has run these rapids six times and every time at least two boats have been turned over. It makes me think that some risks are acceptable under certain circumstances.

NSPOLC Wilderness Leadership
By: Mathew McCabe

ECOEE has finally begun and now I think that no matter how much you try to prepare: you can never be fully prepared for this challenge. Aside from the five academic classes, the task/ objectives that are associated with backcountry expedition; one of the most daunting challenges of this semester stems from the WEA’s NSPOLC. This is the Wilderness Education Association’s National Standards Program of Outdoor Leadership Certification. It is the foundation of our 446 class called Wilderness Leadership. Essentially this certification is awarded to individuals who are qualified to lead a group of seven people into the backcountry for ten days. To be certifiable, we are evaluated by our peers and our instructor in eighteen core competencies. These are: Decision Making & Problem Solving, Leadership, Expedition Behavior & Group Dynamics, Environmental Ethics, Basic Camping Skills, Nutrition and Ration Planning, Equipment and Clothing, Weather, Health and Sanitation, Travel Techniques, Navigation, Safety and Risk Management, Wilderness Emergency Procedures & Treatment, Natural and Cultural History, Specialized Travel/Adventure Activities, Group Processing and Communication Skills, Trip Planning, and last but not least Teaching and Transference.
NSPOLC Wilderness Leadership Continued

Each of these eighteen points is broken down into dozens of subtopics that create eighteen individual rubrics that we are scored on a scale of one to five by our peers and our instructor. One on this scale means a student needs considerable work and is not certifiable. Two means although not certifiable, they are appropriate for this point in the course. Three means certifiable but still needs work. Four means the student is certifiable and demonstrated above average expertise. A five means that the student is at or nearly at the level of a WEA instructor.

During the last few days of our Missinaibi trip we split the students up into two groups of six. One group of six would evaluate the other group of six and vice versa, on each of these rubrics. Then we had to give each other the face to face feedback that we had establised within the groups. This process took well over fourteen hours in total. It was a tedious process, but everyone wanted to be fair and accurate when evaluating our peers. It was also quite difficult to sit quietly while everyone tells you exactly what you have been doing right and wrong throughout the last twenty plus days. One positive side of this process was the opportunity to sit down with Jeff Tindall (Instructor) for a face to face evaluation. He does not usually give much feedback except for occasionally during debriefs so it was very benificial to sit down and talk for an hour about individual performance.

Another unexpected challenge that NSPOLC brings to ECOEE is the expedition journal. Everyday we are to keep a journal that observes and analyzes: the days activities, leadership and decision making, problem solving, group dynamics, and many other aspects of daily life on expedition. These journals are time consuming, but in the end are well worth the effort. Each journal was collected and returned before we got off the river. This is a great way to keep track of the events of this expedition.

Outdoor Education
By: Sean Stowell

Outdoor Education has many definitions depending on whom you ask. For YMCA Storer Camps it is about improving the whole person through Christian programs in a natural setting. The camp is in Jackson, Michigan. This was our first stop after leaving the backcountry. After we arrived and got our lodge set up, we met up with Nancy Burger. When we came into the dining hall for lunch it was a sensory overload. There were 7 schools there and close to 500 kids.

The program is large with a budget of over 4 million dollars annually. It showed the excellent condition of all facilities. Getting inner city children out to camps to get them to experience things they have never experienced before, such as sledding, is one of the YMCA Storer camps main goals. The program, although Christian based is very open and accepting in terms of how they cater to the needs of their clientele. They teach the children many things during their stay at camp. The staff said it would be ideal if everyone was there for at least five days in order to get the full experience. Some of the programs they offer are on horses, climbing towers, biology, pioneer history, team building activities and many other topics.

In my eyes the camp is a great place for children to get away from the city and come learn in the great outdoors. I would like to see a better training program because some of the staff seemed uninterested and uninformed in certain areas. One could tell that the methods and strategies of outdoor education had not been implanted into their minds.
Blanford Nature Center
By: Cassi Lundeen
Our trip to Blandford for Outdoor Education began with a walk along their trails with many animals along the way to see. We enjoyed getting to see Turkey Vultures, Barn Owls, Great Horned Owls, Red Tail Hawks, Bobcats, Coopers Hawks, and a Rough Legged Hawk. All of their animals are here from an injury they have received and were no longer able to return to the wild, or at least until they recover. The Wildlife Trail walk was a great way to get introduced to their other programs, as we got to see a lot of their land and everything they have to offer. Blandford Nature Center and Mixed Greens unite to invite children and the community to connect to the land and also to the food. While on the walk we had an opportunity to check out their organic garden with many vegetables and fruits growing in it. Having a deep relationship with the land around us and embracing it throughout life, helps to have a sustainable life. Having personal experiences is the best way to learn, their motto is learning by doing. Many outdoor education topics are covered through their programs, many dealing with water ecology as well as planting in their organic garden. They also have a sugarhouse, and sell their own personal maple syrup from the maple trees we had a chance to see. They have a festival for people to come out and taste these samples, as well as their own pumpkin patch. With 4.2 miles broken up to eight parts is a great way to come out and get to hear and see some of the native birds in the area!

The Barred Owl is a permanent resident of the Blandford Nature Center in the Wildlife Education Center and gives many students a chance to get an up close look at the owl and is used for many educational programming with students.

Ministry of Natural Resources
By: Peter Collins
The Ministry of Natural Resources was created in the early 1930’s with one goal to manage and protect the natural resources in Ontario while contributing to the overall environmental, social, and economic well-being of Ontario. The Ministry works to promote healthy sustainable ecosystems, to conserve biodiversity, conduct scientific research and apply the findings, develop effective resource management policies, manage Ontario’s crown land, promote economic opportunities in the resource sector, and to enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation. To help them do this the Ministry of Natural Resources is always working with various types of researchers, environmental organizations, fish and game agencies as well as some governmental agencies.

The policies and standards that they set up helped to create seven sectors of the Ministry. The Scientific and Information Resources is in charge of conducting scientific and research activities to add new knowledge to the broader scientific community. They then use the information that they have collected to make decisions about how to manage all of the resources in Ontario. Another division is the Forest Management who team up with others in the forest industry to manage the forests all throughout the province by planning, legislation, policies and resource allocation. Fish and Wildlife is another management agency with in the Ministry that works with the public as well as other organizations to help conserve Ontario’s fish and wildlife. The ministry also is in charge of all of the Crown Lands of the province. The water, gas, oil, salt and aggregates resources are all managed through the Lands and Water management within the ministry. All of the Ontario parks and protected areas are managed by the Ministry as well as the aviation and forest fire management to help protect people, communities and property from forest fire, flood and drought. The last department of the Ministry of Natural Resources is a Geographical Information. They develop and apply geographical information to help manage the natural resources.

The land and water in Ontario is under public ownership referred to as the “Crown Lands,” and cover about 87% of the province. Some of the Crown Land including National Parks and Indian Reservations still fall under federal control. Provincial parks are largely funded by user fees that stay in the park. The parks will bring in close to 10 million dollars annually with about 7 million of that coming from hunting and fishing licenses.
A Well-Oiled Machine
By: Shane Johnson

Each and every machine that one may come across during their life time has one characteristic in common. This characteristic is that the machine must have several properly working parts on the same page doing the job their built to do in order for that machine to function in an effective manner. Much like in this example of machinery ECOEE 2009 could not function at all, let alone effectively, without each piece and part doing its job in the circle that is ECOEE. Whether it is each person doing their assigned chore of the day in the front country or each person working together in their cook group at the time divvying up different odd-jobs such as filtering water, breaking down tent, cooking dinner, and washing dishes each member of ECOEE has a role that keeps the machine working towards a common goal.

Some jobs may seem more important than others but each one is important in the functionality of the group. For instance the Chef may be responsible for one of the most important jobs of the day which is making sure that the food and nutrition each group member takes in is adequate but the person assigned to water duty makes it possible for that chef to have the water that they need in order to get those noodles ready and coffee percolating. ECOEE is a group of equals, each member has an equal status and takes turn being the one in the heavyweight position of facilitator of the day controlling each and every decision made and carried out through out their day of leadership or being the cleaner whose job of scrubbing the pans thoroughly leaves much to be desired. The point that is attempted to being made here is that a huge part of traveling on an expedition is the ability to keep things moving smoothly and as much as possible on time in terms of what the itinerary reads. If one cleaner slacks off and the next day for breakfast a chef pulls out a grimy and scummy pan caked with yesterday’s dinner then breakfast takes an hour longer to make, the facilitator of the day leaves an hour later and the group as a whole gets time to their self or goes to bed that much later than they would have. Perhaps the most interesting job required by the RPTA 450 Travel Workshop class is that of being responsible for the authoring of the group journal. As with all of the other jobs each member has an equal opportunity to write about one day and night each 12 member cycle. This journal is not only fun to listen to each morning, or whenever we get to it, but it is also enjoyable to write in. It gives the group extra insight into what other group members have gotten out of the day that preceded enabling people to compare and contrast their thoughts and analysis with that of the current group journal author. I for one look forward to the journal being read each and every day.

The opportunity to listen to the jokes, the emotions and the thoughts of our fellow group members is invaluable not to mention it can help jog your memory about what happened the day before. That is valuable in itself as I have come to find out nothing in ECOEE should be forgotten, after all yesterday, today, and tomorrow are all the best days of our lives!

Outdoor Education
By: Mathew McCabe

Outdoor Education is a very important concept on ECOEE. Last spring each of us were given a topic in the field of outdoor education. Over the summer we were supposed to become the “guru” on this topic, and then teach it to our fellow students throughout this semester. We have stopped at many locations throughout this journey in-order to teach one another these topics. These range from geology, birds, evasive and endangered species, biomes, astronomy, animals, and trees. The lesson I presented was on astronomy. To summarize this lesson: I waited for a very clear night with a open view of the night’s sky. I then gathered the students and we laid down on our backs. After taking a few minutes of silent stargazing, I introduced the students to Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Polaris, Cassiopeia, and the Milky Way. I had the students point each one out to me so that I could confirm they were able to locate and identify the stars and constellations. Then I told the students about Ojibway cosmology and shared the Ojibway names for these constellations. I felt that this was a very awe-inspiring moment for myself and the class. It was quite an amazing view, and also I wanted the students to think about how long human beings have been stargazing and also identifying and naming the constellations. Many other students have also had great lessons in outdoor education topics.