

# University of Alberta

A Phenomenological Approach to Canoe Tripping: Applicability of the Dwelling  
Perspective

by

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## Dwelling, Skill, and Place in Canoe Tripping

### Abstract

In 2005, a group of seven canoeists completed a 100-day canoe trip called *Paddling the Big Sky: From the Mountains to the Arctic*. The expedition was designed as a commonplace journey through which participants and the researcher questioned and reinterpreted their experience using Ingold's dwelling perspective. The trip was used to explore ways to move from a dominant wilderness paradigm towards an emerging sustainability paradigm in adventure travel. This dissertation examined observations and participant narratives from journal entries and group discussions to explore engagement with place and issues of sustainability. The literature review established the need to examine skill as contributing to an ecological approach to adventure travel. The commonplace journey, a hermeneutic phenomenological method, was developed to place theory in dialogue with practice. The analysis was presented as three interrelated chapters presented as stand-alone units. Each chapter reviewed specific literature, the methodology, and elements of the theoretical approach before adding to the analysis. Adventure travel was interpreted as (a) reproducing older stories and creating new stories, (b) as a choreographed exercise in place-making for participants to "be-on-trip," and (c) as part of a path of personal and collective growth for participants. A participatory ecological approach to adventure travel was described based on embodied interactions within one's active socio-ecological environment. Canoe tripping emerged as a way of being in relation to surrounding elements (i.e., landscape features, environmental flows, and other human and non-human beings) that was enabled by traditions and communities of

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practice, and which could be modified to engage environments, landscapes, places, and people in pursuit of sustainability.

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## Introduction

Adventure recreation is one of few ways that members of a predominantly urban Western society come to know non-urban landscapes and ways of life (Williams & Soutar, 2005). The growing adventure travel industry presents opportunities for learning, development, and socio-ecological impact in geographically remote, ecologically diverse, and culturally sensitive parts of the world (Buckley, 2004).

Scholars have advocated for social and environmental sustainability, but have struggled with making it a reality (Fox, 2000; Hull, 2000; Nicol, 2002a, 2003; O'Connell, Potter, Curthoys, Dymont, Cuthbertson, 2005; Stokowski, 2002). Commercialization, for example, has reduced consumers' long-term involvement and skill development in activities, factors that were positively associated with place attachment and environmentally sustainable attitudes and behaviours (Halpenny, 2006; Kane & Zink, 2004; Oh & Ditton, 2006). Primarily concerned with participants' risk-taking and social development (Brookes, 2003a; Brown & Fraser, 2009; Ewert & Jamieson, 2003; Nicol, 2002a), most adventure recreation and education research has taken for granted basic adventure travel activities and skills like canoeing and navigation (Brymer & Gray, 2009; Buckley, 2006; Kane & Tucker, 2004). More and Averill (2003) called for recreation activities to be understood as a compilation of biological, social, and psychological systems and suggested that:

The most neglected part of recreation research may be the actual composition of an activity. When studying a particular activity we tend to examine correlates: Who does it? How often? What outcomes are produced? et cetera, without giving much thought to what "it" is. (p. 373)

Scholarship from outside the field, however, has suggested that skills, activities, and associated technologies structure how travellers perceive, identify with, and alter their surroundings (Gibson, 1986; Urry, 2000). Studies and theories linking recreationists' skill development and environmental relationships are needed in outdoor recreation and education research and practice.

This project contributed to the development of theory by investigating and reinterpreting recreation and leisure phenomena in the tradition of exploratory research described by Stebbins (2001). As Stebbins suggested, narratives by individuals have been presented in this report to illustrate concepts and patterns found in the data; these “generalizations” (p. 43) anchored and were the focus of the research and writing. Stebbins stressed that authors should resist over-qualifying these generalizations and thus losing the thrust or “big picture” of their work. I followed Stebbins’s advice, while also acknowledging the nuance and contrary evidence that exposed the limits of any one perspective. The critiques, findings, and generalizations offered in this report should not be taken as fact, a complete description of participants’ experiences, or representative of a population. Rather, the findings, critiques, and theoretical propositions were based on evidence from a unique research setting and process; they were plausible reinterpretations intended to inform thinking, broaden understandings, and prompt future research.

This project was guided by Ingold’s (2000) *dwelling perspective*, an anthropological paradigm in which an individual’s skills contextualize the meanings of objects and processes within his or her environment, drawing these features into the social realm. Therefore, I use the term *socio-environmental* to indicate the entanglement of “social” and “environmental” that Ingold theorised, and which global realities like climate change have made clear (Urry, 2000). Using this perspective to interpret performances and experiences of canoe travel allowed alternative accounts of the meaningful ways in which participants related to and shaped their environments. As such, each paper in the main body of the dissertation presents both critiques and possibilities for theory and practice that emerged through reinterpretation, and coalesced into a “participatory ecological approach” to adventure travel.

In Chapter One: *A Case for Skill and Environmental Understanding (An Environmental Case for Skill)*, the literature review, I have made a case for studying links between outdoor skills and human-environmental relationships. Globalized issues of sustainability have presented a socio-environmental

challenge for adventure travel. Rather than maintaining the dichotomy between participants' focus on "activity" or "environment" seen in the literature, this research revisited conceptions of adventure travel centred on risk in order to understand the importance of skill as a form of embodied environmental engagement and knowledge. To support this position, I investigated literature addressing human-environment relations from various research traditions in adventure recreation, tourism, and education including recreation ecology; measures of pro-environmental attitudes, values, and behaviours; place attachment, and recreation specialization. I focused on qualitative and phenomenological studies of place and travel to demonstrate that skilled activity involved a type of embodied engagement and experience of one's surroundings that challenged the nature-culture dichotomy. Together, these studies suggested interrelational or ecological approaches to adventure travel. Many authors have suggested these approaches were necessary to address the socio-environmental challenge. Ingold's dwelling perspective provided a theoretical approach to lived ecological relations, and served as the theoretical basis for this research. I have presented further explication of the theoretical approach and more specific reviews of literature in the chapters that address each research question.

In Chapter Two: *An Activity-Embedded Commonplace Journey* (*Commonplace Journey Methodology*) I have described the methodology that was conceived for this research by integrating Sumara's (2001, 2002) commonplace literary methods for education and research with Ingold's (2000) notion of a trip or journey as a shared story. The *commonplace journey* was used in the spirit of reflexive anthropology (Clifford, 1986; Tedlock, 2003) to embed, through praxis, exploratory research (Stebbins, 2001) and Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective within an extended canoe expedition. The commonplace journey drew on hermeneutic phenomenology, a philosophical and methodological approach to interpreting and describing the creation and communication of meaning through people's everyday lives (Heidegger, 1954/1993; van Manen, 1997). As such, practical experience was both an object of study and a method of inquiry that required fieldwork.

In the summer of 2005 I worked with six individuals: four highly trained and experienced adventure guides and educators, and two novice paddlers. All six were scholars of outdoor recreation and physical education. Together, the seven of us undertook an expedition from the Rocky Mountains, across the boreal forest and barren lands, to the Arctic Ocean at Kugluktuk, Nunavut. The 100-day expedition was called Paddling the Big Sky: From the Mountains to the Arctic (*Big Sky*). Along the way, we travelled rivers with complex historic, social, and ecological significance. The Athabasca River, for example, is a Canadian Heritage River flowing from Jasper National Park and through the controversial oil sands development; its delta is located in Wood Buffalo National Park and is of key social and ecological significance for the local First Nations (Schindler, Donahue, & Thompson, 2007). I have further described the setting and route in the methodology. Together the participants and I critically examined our lived experiences and practices in situ; doing so required that we merge scholarly knowledge with expertise as canoeists, expedition members, and outdoor leaders. Data collection involved journaling, semi-structured group discussions, and participant observation during the full extent of the expedition. Analysis drew on participant narratives, was informed by my observations, and was guided by van Manen's (1997) approach to interpreting lived experience and Palmer's (2005) approach to examining narratives to gain insight into speakers' relationships to place and their activities.

### **Research Questions**

Researchers and practitioners striving to create and sustain healthy social, ecological, and economic environments through and for outdoor recreation and education have repeatedly called for theoretical approaches to participation as a relationship *with* the land and environment that shapes places and their meanings (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000; Lugg, 2007; Nicol, 2002a; Nicol & Higgins, 2008; O'Connell et al., 2005; Stokowski, 2002). Seriously pursuing and understanding such a relationship, which I have referred to as an *ecological approach*, was no small task; it has required challenging the "single, underlying fault upon which the entire edifice of Western thought and science has been built—namely that

which separates the ‘two worlds’ of humanity and nature” (Ingold, 2000, p. 1). In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* Ingold described the *dwelling perspective* as a way to integrate these two worlds.<sup>1</sup> Given that issues of sustainability entangle both humanity and nature, the overriding question that guided this exploratory study was this: *Using Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective as a theoretical approach, how does the practice of an outdoor activity influence the meaning of landscapes and/or environments through which the participant travels?* Three sub-questions arose and formed the subject of each of the three chapters in the main body of this dissertation.

The first sub-question asked: “*how does practicing an outdoor activity contribute to the meaning that participants find in their surroundings?*” and is taken up in Chapter Three: *Living Stories of the Landscape: Perception of Place through Canoeing in Canada’s North (Living Stories)*. In this paper, I have examined how meaningful experiences arose within and were contextualized by the activities and environments of canoe tripping. Participants’ travel by canoe was interpreted as occurring within and being shaped by particular environmental features, rhythms, and processes of the ecozones through which the group paddled. For the more experienced participants, the daily round of canoe travel resulted in familiar and biographically significant patterns and senses of movement. Stories of past trips, such as Hearne’s (1990) *Coppermine Journey* (which recounts the explorer’s expedition in 1770-1772) inspired participants to undertake *Big Sky* and, to a limited extent, informed our understandings of places along the way. Other more-recent and ephemeral narratives of movement, such as the passing of other expeditions, were still evident in the landscape. Participants recognised and felt kinship with these stories. *Living Stories* drew two central concepts from the dwelling perspective. Ingold’s (2000) notion of *temporality of landscape* described landscapes as continually changing because they embody socio-ecological processes, including human activity that progresses along

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<sup>1</sup> Ingold (2005, p. 503) has since written that he laments using the term *dwelling* as it tends to be misinterpreted as romantic, cozy, and solitary. To dwell in the world is to *inhabit* it, a term Ingold now uses more often. To be at home in the world does not necessarily make it comfortable, pleasant, or solitary.

*narratives of movement*. Rather than cloaking a static landscape with meaning, Ingold suggested that stories open up and express meanings found in one's surroundings, and weave meaning into the landscape along narratives of movement. The paper makes two unique contributions: First, it shows that landscapes actively influenced participant experiences, and secondly, it calls attention to senses of movement, as different from but related to senses of place, that were meaningful within a community of paddlers and the lives of individual participants.

In my second sub-question, I asked: *how the skills used in adventure travel relate to the (re)generation of places and the sharing of landscape and environmental meanings?* This question was taken up in Chapter Four: *Architectures of Adventure Travel: Making Nature and Opening Spaces for Sustainability (Archi-textures)*. In the monograph, I extended the theme of participants' travel actively shaping landscapes and experiences of the surroundings. Practices employed during phases of the *Big Sky* expedition, such as planning and travel, were compared and contrasted with an archetypal wilderness approach and pattern used to structure a canoe trip. I examined *Big Sky* within broad socio-environmental contexts to show how practices structured participants' interactions with environments, landscapes, and people. Using Ingold's (2000) conception of *architecture*—taking pause to consider how to build places and open spaces through dwelling—participant narratives showed socio-environmental learning and place-making occurring along *paths of observation* (Gibson, 1986; Ingold, 2000). Narratives also showed planning, travel, and social practices within archetypal trips combined to structure, build, and normalize experiences of landscapes as “pristine” wilderness and nature disconnected from the lives of participants. As a way of opening spaces to engage issues of sustainability that interconnect diverse landscapes I have outlined a participatory ecological approach to human-environment relations in the theory and practice of adventure travel. I have also discussed implications for different types of environmental knowledge and praxis-based ethics, informed by Heidegger's (1954/1993) notion of *sparing* or care-full engagement. The point of

the monograph was to show that types and patterns of practices within adventure travel not only expose participants to places, but also structure places and participants' experiences of them, involving travellers as active participants in making places from within their environment.

The third sub-question was: "*How might the practice of outdoor skills shape environmental perception of participants through an 'education of attention'?*" and has been taken up in Chapter Five: *An Ecology of Outdoor Skill (Ecology of Skill)*. Returning to the theme of environments shaping participants' travel on the river, in *Ecology of Skill* I took an experience-near approach to the socio-ecological relations lived through participants' technical outdoor travel and living skills. Route finding, paddling, as well as water and food collection skills and equipment shaped participants' attention to and entanglement with particular elements of their surroundings, both near and far. The notions of narratives of movement and of paths of observation were further informed by data showing that paddlers came to embody socio-ecological relationships embedded in the skilled practices they used to produce the expedition. Furthermore, narratives showed that skills and the socio-environmental interrelationships they enact were shared and cultivated among group members and in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). I interpreted the trip as a *line of becoming* (Ingold, 2008) along which participants grew in relation to one another and their surroundings. Rather than distracting from the environment, I concluded that skills enabled and were demonstrative of participants' particular and complex interrelationships with their surroundings as a way of being. As such, skilled canoe travel during *Big Sky* contributed to the long-term development of a type of understanding among participants that Anderson (2000) and Ingold (2000) have called a *sentient ecology*, which "rests in perceptual skills that emerge, for each and every being, through a process of development in a historically specific environment" (Ingold, 2000, p. 25). This interpretation raises the importance of accounting for the socio-ecological relationships embedded in the skills and equipment used for outdoor travel. I also discussed limitations, implications, and opportunities for fostering deeper understandings of place and sustainability among participants.

In the conclusion, Chapter Six: *Examining the Connective Tissue* (*Connective Tissue*), I have revisited the overall research question by drawing together themes that run throughout the preceding chapters while highlighting theoretical, practical, and methodological implications and further research. I have conclude with a sketch of adventure travel, reinterpreted through on Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, as a learned way of inhabiting a particular socio-ecological milieu. Skills and practices, I have suggested, can be valued and developed as different ways through which participants *are* in relation to their surroundings and engaged with socio-ecological issues. In his dwelling perspective, Ingold's has described the entanglement of human social and ecological life through a process of enskilment. In so doing, the perspective has provided an alternative to the Western nature-culture dichotomy and romantic ideal of nature that have served as organizing principles around which human-environmental relations have been predominantly theorized, valued, and practiced in outdoor recreation and education (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000). As I have tried to show using the participatory ecological approach to adventure travel, dwelling opens opportunities to consider how travellers relate to their surroundings within and among various landscapes, environments, and populations through skilled practices. Perhaps most significantly, I have tried to show that Ingold's dwelling perspective broadens "environmental" concerns in outdoor adventure travel beyond landscape protection to include various ways of inhabiting environments as well as the socio-ecological implications of these ways of being, precisely the realm in which sustainability is negotiated. Negotiating sustainability and integrating issues of justice and power within a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel remain goals for further study.

### **Literature Review: A Case for Skill and Environmental Understanding**

In this chapter, I established the pragmatic and scholarly contexts of this research project within the literature from adventure recreation, education, and tourism; I have also outlined Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective as the theoretical approach used during research and analysis. Scholars and practitioners of adventure travel have acknowledged the need to face the challenges of developing sustainable approaches to a growing industry, adapting to global environmental changes (Buckley, 2000, 2005; Keller, 2000; Nicholls, 2006; Williams & Soutar, 2005), reducing significant socio-environmental impacts (Hunter & Shaw, 2007; Leung & Marion, 2000), and promoting connections to the natural world among participants (Halpenny, 2006, 2010; Nicol, 2002a; Vaske & Korbin, 2001). Scholars and practitioners have come to understand adventure travel as situated within larger global contexts of complex human-environment interrelations, a reality that presents a significant shift for conceptions and rationales of adventure travel based on risk, challenge, and wilderness settings. This project, therefore, explored how recreationists related to their surroundings through adventure travel practices, interpreted implications for sustainability and place making, and suggested possibilities for the theory and practice of adventure travel focused on sustainability.

Once I have outlined the socio-environmental challenge facing adventure travel, I turn to definitions and understandings of adventure travel. Shifting away from the centrality risk, I paid particular attention to skill, learning, and environment. Like Humberstone (2000) and Weber (2001) I examined adventure travel as bridging adventure recreation, adventure tourism, and adventure education. I have proposed an understanding of adventure travel based on a person or group learning and practicing skilled movement through a challenging and active environment in a process that shapes the travellers and the surroundings, and which has an uncertain outcome.

The debated role of adventure activities in promoting or detracting from participants' awareness of place and nature refined the direction I took in this research project: Namely, that scholars and practitioners of adventure travel

carefully think about what recreationists *do* in relation to where they are, and that the basic conceptions of *skill* and *environment* within adventure travel required critical examination. Scholars of adventure travel have exposed a dichotomy and tension between practicing technical skill and learning about the environment that has given rise to proposals for deskilling adventure travel; recognizing skilled and embodied ways of knowing and inhabiting the surroundings may provide a resolution to this tension. My purpose was not to outline which skills are needed in outdoor adventure travel, nor was it to do the important work of critiquing various skills (as technical or interpersonal, for example, or as “green” or gendered). My purpose was to contribute to a conversation about what skill *is* and why outdoor adventure travel needs skill given pressing socio-environmental challenges. In the spirit of Ingold’s (2000) notion of a story, I have offered descriptions of adventure travel as a way of opening up meaning in the world rather than a way of pinning down and defining concepts. Re-thinking skill, I have suggested, provides an opportunity to resolve the activity-environment tension.

The literature on ecological impacts, recreationists’ environmental values, and connections to place has responded to the socio-environmental challenge facing adventure travel and supports exploring skill as a viable way of resolving the activity-environment tension in pursuit of sustainability. The notion of place brings together social and ecological worlds as well as global and local perspectives and therefore is particularly relevant to issues and ethics of sustainability in outdoor adventure travel (Cameron, 2003; Harrison, 2010; Schlottmann, 2005). Importantly, a group of studies have shown a correlation between place attachment and pro-environmental behaviours among outdoor recreation participants. Moreover, the body of research on recreation specialization has shown that place attachment and positive environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour increased with commitment, experience, and skill in adventure recreation activities (Dyck, Schneider, Thompson, & Virden, 2003; McFarlane, 2004; Oh & Ditton, 2006).

Based on the connections among recreation specialization, place, and pro-environmental knowledge and behaviours, I suggest that skill may support alternative epistemological and ontological approaches to human-environment relations within adventure travel that authors have called for in support of sustainability (Beringer, 2004; Nicol, 2003; O'Connell et al. 2005). If practical skill and experience are important ways of engaging environments, philosophical and theoretical rationales that connect skill with environmental learning and sustainability remain lacking (Brymer & Gray, 2009; Lugg, 2007; P. Martin, 2004; Nicol, 2003; Thomas, 2005). I have turned to studies on the phenomenology of human-place relationships in adventure travel to support skill as a form of environmental connection. I have also taken up this body of literature in search of theoretical underpinnings for a "lived-with" (Hull, 2000, p. 55) or ecological approach that challenges the Western nature-culture dichotomy that underpins the crisis of unsustainability as well as the dominant theories of adventure travel (Beringer, 2004; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Nicol & Higgins, 2008).

Following Fox's (2000) recommendation, I pursued studies into dynamic, personal, and embodied interconnections with the environment through adventure travel. Studies on participants' lived experience of canoe tripping and mountaineering, among other adventure travel activities, suggested participants interact with and understand their surroundings in corporeal, organic, and embodied ways that foster personal change and identities in relation to certain aspects of their environments. Such engagement, however, is mediated by social and institutional norms, traditions of practice, tools and technologies, and participants' willingness to attend to the multiple stories and histories in the landscape, including those written through adventure travel.

I have further examined specific elements of the theoretical approach in each of the three main sections of this dissertation. I have provided a description of pertinent elements of Heidegger's (1927/1962; 1954/1993) philosophy and Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective that were applied to the theory and practice of adventure travel using the commonplace journey methodology during *Big Sky*, and which were also used to interpret the findings.

### **The Socio-Environmental Challenge Facing Adventure Travel**

Adventure travel has been predominantly theorized around risk-taking activities in wilderness settings; participants are thought to “escape” their increasingly urban everyday lives for challenging and uncertain environments in a quest for self-efficacy, self-actualization, and improved quality of life (Ewert, 1989; Ewert & Jamieson, 2003; Hall, 1992; Kane & Zink, 2004; Lloyd & Little, 2005). In the cross-cultural and global context of tourism, researchers and practitioners must tread carefully: Such theorizing has invited a torrent of critique citing the ethnocentric, romantic, anti-modern, and colonial perspectives bound up in ideas of wilderness that have damaged cross-cultural interactions and participants’ understanding of, and care for, their surroundings (Cruikshank, 2005; Fletcher, 2009; Fox, 2000; Guha, 1998; Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Mullins, 2005; Stokowski, 2002). Arguments that wilderness and “wilderness experiences” are social constructs connected to colonialism and romanticism have brought into question the personal, social, and environmental value of these dominant rationales (Cronon, 1996; Fletcher, 2009; Fox, 2000; Guha, 1998; Haun-Moss, 2002; Hull, 2000). Many authors have been disillusioned with the inability of adventure travel to encourage a socially and environmentally active citizenry (Beringer, 2004; Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Nicol, 2002a; Raffan, 1991; Ryan, 2002; Shogan, 1990; Stokowski, 2000, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Beringer (2004), Higgins (2009), Nicol (2002a, 2003), and O’Connell et al. (2005) have explicitly called for a crucial transition in outdoor adventure recreation and education towards a paradigm focused on sustainability and situated within broader social and ecological contexts.

According to Urry (2000), the international networks and flows of good, services, and knowledge, which comprise globalization, have exposed as untenable the notion of society as being separate from the natural world.

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<sup>2</sup> The goal of fostering participants’ environmental awareness through outdoor recreation emerged from the traditions and writings of transcendentalist philosophers and nature lovers, such as Henry D. Thoreau (1981) and John Muir (1988) during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition has been used as a rationale for creating protected areas and allowing the presence of certain types of recreation activities in parks. See Cronon (1996) for a social history of this environmental movement and its implications.

Humanity and human agency, Urry argued, must be understood as interconnected and integrated with objects, technologies, and environments. Given this altered context, the field of adventure travel—traditionally based on distinctions between “nature” and “civilization”—must re-think and re-frame its socio-environmental role. Indeed, Wattchow and Brown (2011) argued for a place-based approach to outdoor education devoted to understanding how local conditions are connected to “global phenomena like climate change, shifting populations, economic disruption and so on” (p. xv). Hull (2000) exposed and argued against a romantic bias in outdoor recreation research and practice, and suggested that the field focus on lived-with notions of our environment to promote acts of stewardship, management, and care. “We should embrace an ideal,” Hull (2000) argued, “that allows us to consider our relationship as a dance and celebration rather than as rape and degradation” (p. 55). Nicol (2003) argued that unless outdoor and environmental education challenge normative thinking about the relationship between nature and society, these activities are likely to reinforce rather than overcome the separation of humans and the natural world.

Scholars of adventure travel as a form of tourism, recreation, and education have debated an environmental commitment to sustainability akin to the ideals of ecotourism, and the issue remains contentious (Björk, 2000; Keller, 2000; Sung, Morrison, & O’Leary, 1996; Williams & Soutar, 2005; Wurdinger & Potter, 1999). Encompassing a suite of activities, ecotourism itself has been hotly debated but, ideally, focuses on the natural environment and local cultures, strives to be culturally and ecologically sustainable, and emphasizes education (Björk, 2000; Orams, 1995; Sirakaya, Sasidharan, & Sönmez, 1999; Williams & Soutar, 2005). Adventure travel, according to Buckley (2000, 2009), can and should be done in ways that support socially and environmentally sustainable development. Adventure travel activities are powerful attractions, some of which serve as “low impact” modes of travel through ecologically diverse areas, and as a source of income that can make environmental protection a viable alternative to resource extractive activities (Sung et al., 1996). Concerning educational expeditions, Beames and Allison (2010) noted that “when air travel is widely accepted as a

contributor to global climate change, it seems surprising that so many operators and participants are convinced that they must visit lands far away, despite knowing little of their home land” (p. 115). Buckley (2000) as well as Williams and Soutar (2005) emphasized environmental impact, learning, and management as critical issues for adventure tourism: They stated that the ideal characteristics of ecotourism—minimum-impact management, cultural and environmental education, and a contribution to conservation—are becoming increasingly significant for the nature, eco- and adventure tourism (NEAT) sector as a whole. Williams and Soutar (2005) stated that “the dependence of adventure tourism on the natural environment has not been fully acknowledged” (p. 252).

My research took up a type of adventure travel that would aspire to the standards of eco-tourism. Adventure travel provides operators and participants with opportunities to experience, explore, and establish relationships with various environments and cultures. Leisure has been shown to contribute to travellers’ identification with, and claims on, places of recreation and travel (Williams, 2002). How outdoor activities encourage and structure participants’ understandings of, and influences on, visited cultures and environments has remained unclear. Investigating integral aspects of adventure other than risk, such as skill development and environmental engagement, adds theoretical breadth to the relatively young academic field (Kane & Tucker, 2004; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). The growth in scope and socio-environmental impact of adventure travel has demanded alternative research approaches that can address sustainability beyond the context of wilderness. Doing so required an initial examination of why, at a fundamental level, adventure travel has neglected ecological relations.

### **Adventure Travel: Valuing Risk or Skill, Action or Environment?**

Ewert (1989) provided a foundational definition of *adventure recreation* that has been the basis for descriptions of both adventure education (Gilbertson, Bastes, McLaughlin, & Ewert, 2006) and adventure tourism (Hall, 1992). Ewert’s (1989) definition focused on physical activities and risk while implying a skilled participant; he defined adventure recreation as:

A variety of self-initiated activities utilizing an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance. (p. 6)

Adventure recreation has been described as primarily initiated and managed by individuals as well as less commercial and occurring closer to home than adventure tourism (Williams & Soutar, 2005). While there has been some debate regarding a definition of adventure tourism, Hall's definition (1992, p. 143) has been well accepted according to Williams and Soutar (2005).<sup>3</sup> Based on Ewert's definition of adventure recreation, Hall defined adventure tourism as:

A broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialised and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience. (p. 143)

Activities that have traditionally fallen under this rubric include rock climbing, canoe tripping, kayaking, and sky diving, among others. In this early literature, skill was framed obliquely as a way of controlling risk and overcoming challenges in the environment. A focus on "risk and danger as the *raison d'être* [sic] for adventure recreation" (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1997, p. 25) has overshadowed skill development as a motivation and central component of adventure travel.

Research has shown that participants are in fact highly concerned with safety and minimizing risk: they develop skills to assess environmental conditions, for example, and they attend to and rely on specialized equipment to this end (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993; Ewert, 1994). Ewert (1994) concluded that, contrary to his expectations, participants were not motivated by risk taking but by accomplishment and skill development, helping others, creativity, and self-expression; these motivations gained prominence and complexity with

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<sup>3</sup> Brookes (2003b) made the point that *adventure* is not equivalent to risk or a way of travelling, as is assumed in many definitions, but is in fact a way of construing experiences, the prototypes of which in Western culture tend to be mythical and heroic and thus the term introduce a bias towards interpreting participants' learning, development, and experience as "building character."

participants' skill and experience levels. Rather than activity, learning, and accomplishment, risk and danger have continued to occupy a central role in adventure travel and education theory and practice (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Kane & Tucker, 2004). Indeed, in Sung, Morrison, and O'Leary's (1996) ranking of definitional components of adventure travel subsumed skill under *activity* and *performance*: *Activity* was deemed by far the most important, with *risk* being fifth and *performance* being sixth.<sup>4</sup>

"In the past," Buckley (2006) noted, "people interested in outdoor recreation would commonly buy their own equipment and learn relevant skills gradually, either from friends or through clubs" (p. 4). Increasingly, outdoor activities have been commercialized and treated as thrilling holiday experiences rather than as skills developed over a lifetime (Buckley, 2006; Johnson & Edwards, 1994; Kane & Zink, 2004; Palmer, 2002). Buckley's (2006) definition of adventure tourism reflects this position:

Guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients. (p. 1)

Palmer (2002) explained that the commercialization of outdoor adventure and the marketing of risk has led to neophyte participants lacking necessary skills and understandings of the settings and dangers they may encounter during participation. "Hard" and "soft" types of adventure have been differentiated based on levels of objective risk, required skill, and participant independence from commercial outfits (Buckley, 2006). Buckley explained that soft adventure tends not to teach skills but focuses on the thrill or uniqueness of the activity, whereas hard adventure relies on participants' already-acquired skill. These types of adventure and these changes in the industry begged questions related to skill:

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<sup>4</sup> The six components—all of which orbit skill—included activity, performance, motivation, risk, experience, and environment. These elements were ranked through a survey at an adventure tourism trade show by a sample (n = 178) that was made up predominantly of tour operators and wholesalers (n=114) and other tourism industry professionals, guide services were a small proportion (n=10). The commercial setting, sample, and tourism context would likely skew responses away from risk and performance as core elements, which I suspect would be given more importance among people who *do* rather than *sell* adventure travel.

- Where and how are participants learning skills, and why are these not better represented or prominent in adventure travel theory?
- What roles do guides, instructors, communities, and clubs play in skill development?
- What rewards are gained from skill development in an outdoor activity?
- What aptitudes and responsibilities are cultivated, and what learning occurs over time?
- What are the consequences of neglecting or circumventing the learning of technical skill?

Darst and Armstrong (1980, as cited in Sung et al., 1996, p. 57)

highlighted the importance of particular environment and landscape attributes when they defined adventure recreation as “all pursuits that provide an inherently meaningful human experience that is related directly to a particular outdoor environment – air, water, hills, mountains...” While Progen (1979, as cited in Sung et al., 1996, p. 57) defined adventure travel as “activities which involve human participation as a response to the challenge offered primarily by the physical, natural world such as hills, air current, and waves (Progen, 1979).” These particular environmental attributes are relevant to skilled practice but have been downplayed in risk-centric definitions focused more on the uncertainty of adventure. “Central to most definitions of adventure recreation,” Ewert and Hollenhorst (1994) stated, “is the deliberate seeking of recreation situations that contain elements of risk or danger in a natural setting and have an outcome that is uncertain but influenced by the actions of the participant” (p. 177). From these definitions, I took the significance of engaging a challenging environment. The environment, however, not only presents risk but also, because it is dynamic, influences the activity, situation, and outcome. The uncertainty and outcome arise not just from the abilities of participants but also, and in combination with, the dynamic, supportive, and forceful environments.

Using overland travellers as a case, Weber (2001) showed that by framing adventure recreation as occurring close to home and adventure tourism as being essentially commercial, the majority of definitions of adventure tourism (see Hall,

1992, p. 143) have ignored the *transit route* between home and destination. For activities such as mountaineering, canoe tripping, and river running—whether recreational, educational, or touristic—adventure is often found along the way and not at a destination, if even there is a destination. Weber also argued that adventure travel is not defined by particular outdoor activities or wilderness settings. Rather, adventure takes shape, she argued, as participants learn to move along a route fraught with difficulties, challenges, and risk through regions that are peripheral, beyond the bounds of their normal everyday routine and lives. Weber theorized that increased skill, commitment, and past experience in an adventure activity make participants' experiences of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and *communitas* (Turner, 1972)—individual and communal psychological states of transcendent engagement with surroundings and others—more likely and more profound, leading to changes in participants' previously held views of themselves and world. According to Weber (2001) learning and insight are not side effects of adventure travel; rather they are integral to it. From Weber's analysis, I drew the notion of learning, developing, and practicing skills to negotiate and experience dynamic surroundings, which could include urban and rural adventure travel and, therefore, does not rely on distinctions between society and nature.

**The activity-environment tension.** Weber (2001) argued that there are two distinct and very different types of adventure travellers, those who “foremost seek to gain knowledge about the external environment, and those who are concerned with the discovery of their own strengths and capabilities...” (p. 368). She equated overland tourists with the former, and the adventure recreationists with the latter. Describing adventure travel, Hall (1992) clearly associated skill with risk and subordinated the role of the environment:

In adventure travel the environmental setting is still important, but the setting only provides the backdrop for the activity. In adventure travel, by definition, the adventure experience derived from the product of the skill of the participant and the level of risk sought by engaging in a particular activity, is the focus of the activity and is one of the main outcomes

desired by participants. Nevertheless, although it is only the stage upon which the adventure activity is set, the environmental setting must still be maintained as it is the resource on which the experience is dependent. (p. 145)

According to Weber (2001), this distinction is “certainly valid” when the trip is focused on adventure recreation activities, but less valid for adventure tourists who “seek remote environments, possessing natural beauty and rich cultural traditions” (p. 368) and for whom adventure recreation activities are of a secondary importance. Haluza-DeLay (1999), Hanna (1995), and Priest (1986) also identified this split between environmentally-focused and adventure-focused education and argued that it led to a reduced efficacy in developing participants’ pro-environmental values, intentions, and behaviours. Ewert and Hollenhorst (1997) argued that whereas wilderness experiences depend on “pristine” natural environments, “such interactions are only accessory to many adventure experiences [which are] commonly pursued in relatively developed or urban settings” (p. 22), and that “the tendency of adventure seekers to disregard wilderness norms and etiquette (e.g.. using bolts on rock climbs) poses a tremendous challenge for wilderness managers charged with protecting those traditions” (p. 25). Investigating across this perceived divide, Palmberg and Kuru (2000) found that participation skilled outdoor activities did enhance pupils’ empathic relationships with the natural environment. Weber maintained this distinction and framed the focus of adventure travel as either oriented towards activities or the environment. Following Thomas (2005), I refer to this division between activities requiring technical skill and those centred on the environment as the *activity-environment tension*. Nicol (2002b, 2002c, 2003) traced the histories of outdoor adventure education in the United Kingdom and concluded that, despite significant potential and early interests in environmental education, environmental awareness has only resurfaced as a concern there since the 1990s and it has remained marginal to personal and social outcomes. Brookes (2003a) denounced the myth of character building through adventure travel programs and called for greater attention the situation and landscapes in which travel occurs.

As a mode of adventure travel, canoe tripping involves a mix of attention to both environment and challenge. Like Weber's overland travellers, canoe trippers often follow culturally and historically significant and naturally attractive routes that involve multi-day, week, or month-long commitments to a journey. Canoe tripping de-emphasizes the significance of a singular destination; the activity centres on travel and movement while affording a wide range of skill levels and abilities. Certain rivers, circuits, or regions are attractive because of the journey they afford in terms of history, ecology, cultural learning, challenge, and connection to the land (Asfeldt, Hvenegaard, & Urberg, 2010; Henderson, 2010; Potter & Henderson, 2004; Stewart, 2008). The journey is central to the activity, hence my emphasis on *travel*.

Throughout this dissertation I have used the term *adventure travel* as opposed to adventure *recreation, education, or tourism* in order to focus the common element of participants' experience of movement and engagement within environments through an outdoor activity (Buckley, 2006). Humberstone (2000) and Weber (2001) also blurred distinctions between recreation, education, and travel by focusing on their common activity, commercial, and experiential elements. I have downplayed educational, recreational, and commercial contexts as definitional in order to focus on the activities that are common among these various contexts. I recognize, however, that these contexts overlap and shape how the activity is learned or practiced and the environment engaged; comparing such issues and contexts provide directions for research, but were beyond the scope of this project.

Drawing together elements from various definitions of adventure travel and in an attempt to bridge the activity-environment tension, I conceived of *adventure travel* as practices of individuals or groups in developing and performing skills to actively negotiate a dynamic and challenging environment in the production of an experience that has an uncertain outcome and which changes both the environment and participant(s). This conception intentionally foregrounded skilled practice and learning; it shifted the focus away from risk but still involved risk and uncertainty; it also allowed travellers the ability to become

familiar with and relate to environments and people amongst whom they travel. Thus conceived, *adventure travel* can occur close to home or far away, in urban, rural, or wild settings; as recreation, education, or tourism; and with diverse objectives and outcomes related to personal, social, and environmental learning and relationships. Before offering a description of *skill*, at the end of this chapter, I need first to review how adventure travel literature has addressed the socio-environmental challenge.

### **Negotiating the Socio-Environmental Challenge**

Environmental engagement through adventure travel has been studied in numerous ways. Given the activity-environment tension within adventure travel, some scholars have responded to the socio-environmental challenge by suggesting the deskilling of adventure travel in order to focus on the environment. Such an approach, however, has not been supported by quantitative studies that showed participants' pro-environmental values, attitudes, and behaviours as well as place attachment and place identity increasing with recreation specialization. Some qualitative research on place has suggested that technical skills distract novice students in adventure education from the attending to their surroundings, but literature on place engagement in adventure recreation activities has supported a connection between skill and environmental understandings. Moreover, literature on place has suggested a turn towards embodied engagement as a way of integrating skill into the theory of human-environment relations in adventure travel.

**Deskilling.** One response to the socio-environmental challenge has been to advocate, based on the activity-environment tension, for deskilling outdoor adventure. Resisting the dominant assumptions in outdoor education, Haluza-DeLay (1999) acknowledged that the programs with which he had been working were not achieving wilderness experiences and connections with nature that—as Turner (2002) has shown—are central to justifying outdoor adventure as environmentally valuable and responsible. Seeking better ways to address environmental issues through adventure travel, Martin (1999) suggested a critical approach that used the liminal space of outdoor travel as a venue for socio-

cultural critique. Logically, Payne (2002) extended the socio-cultural critique to adventure activities themselves, showing how they were entangled in social and cultural processes such as consumption that are problematic for sustainability. Lugg (2004) strongly critiqued the unquestioning adoption of technical outdoor activities within programs intended to promote place responsiveness and sustainability. Like Haluza-DeLay, Wattachow (2007) showed that a focus on technical white water paddling skills can distract from place-responsiveness among participants who instead resort to dominant tropes of adventure and wilderness. These critiques have, together, suggested that technical skills treat landscapes as playgrounds and that deskilling adventure travel would re-focus on relationships with nature and place (P. Martin, 2004; Thomas, 2005).

From a theoretical perspective the literature on recreation ecology; values, attitudes, and behaviours; sense of place; and recreation specialization has suggested that participants in outdoor activities *do* engage, understand, value, connect with, and act to protect elements and places of landscapes and environments in which they travel. P. Martin (2004) argued that deskilling for educational purposes or through the commercialization of adventure may, in the long run, be counter-productive to formally and informally educating for sustainability through adventure travel activities that enable participants to enjoy and develop emotional bonds with nature. By sacrificing skill in favour of “the environment,” deskilling does little to challenge the activity-environment tension or adequately account for the research on recreation specialization and place as representing legitimate environmental relationships. Adventure activities incorporate aspects of the environment not only as subject matter, but also as inherent and integral factors in human activities.

**Managing impacts.** Once assumed to be environmentally benign, participation in outdoor recreation activities has been shown to incur significant ecological impact on landscapes visited by adventure travellers (Meletis & Campbell, 2007; Valentine, 1992). To increase social and ecological sustainability, recreation ecology has focused on managing visitors’ influence on and perception of the ecology and aesthetics of backcountry landscapes (Leung &

Marion, 2000; Nicholls, 2006; Priskin, 2003). Leung and Marion (2000) explained that the term *impact* “is used to denote any undesirable visitor-related biophysical change of the wilderness resource” (p. 23). Put differently, recreation ecology monitors and helps structure the landscapes encountered by travellers, thus contributing to the building and maintaining of places as supposedly pristine wilderness and shaping of recreation experiences. As Roggenbuck, Williams, and Watson (1993) described, “managers must decide what indicators of wilderness conditions best represent resource naturalness and high-quality visitor experiences and how much change from the pristine is acceptable...Visitor opinions on the aspects of the wilderness that have great impact on their experience can provide valuable input to selection of indicators” (p. 187). Recreation ecology, as Hull (2000) argued, has shown a romantic bias for pristine nature that frames recreation activity as a negative impact rather than a mode of engaging an environment. Numerous authors have argued that recreation ecology can play an important role in promoting sustainability, but doing so will require expanding its scope beyond local impacts and into broader regional or international travel networks as well as education and planning (Hunter & Shaw, 2007; Leung, Marion, & Farrell, 2008; Meletis & Campbell, 2007). Notions of skill in adventure travel need to recognize, as recreation ecology has made clear, that travel shapes landscapes and involves ecological impacts.

**Changing values, attitudes, and behaviours.** Studies using social psychological measures such as the New Environmental Paradigm or place attachment scales have found positive connections between participation in recreation programs and reported pro-environmental values, attitudes, and behaviours (Hughes & Estes, 2005; Mittelstaedt, Sanker, & VanderVeer, 1999; Yoshino, 2005). These studies linked broadly-conceived environmental attitudes to factors such as the duration of an outing or wilderness experience. These types of studies, however, paid little attention to participants’ biographies, the intricacies of activities, and the specific sites, landscapes, or environments encountered (Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2004). Cultural critique, commercialization, different social realities, and philosophical inconsistencies

have led many authors to express dismay that the outdoor industry, with its focus on wilderness and nature, has not been better able to foster socially and environmentally aware and active citizens (Beringer, 2004; Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Raffan, 1991; Ryan, 2002; Shogan, 1990; Stokowski, 2000, 2002).<sup>5</sup> Investigations of place have pursued alternative understandings and descriptions of participants' social and environmental relationships with various recreation settings, landscapes, and environments.

**Becoming attached to places.** Stokowski (2002) has argued that outdoor recreation research typically conceives of *place* as a physical setting to which meaning is applied and that forms the context for social action. *Sense of place* has been described as an overarching concept referring to the meaning, emotions, and sensual aspects associated with and attached to a location in space by a person or group based on use and attentiveness (Halpenny, 2006; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, Stokowski, 2002). Of note is the implied distinction between space and place, *space* being a setting devoid of or detached from human meaning and activity, and *place* being a location in space to which meaning is attached.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, Ingold's (2000) phenomenological approach to space and place, which was used in this research project, suggested that human movement cultivates places and opens spaces within landscapes and environments, and that meaning is not pinned onto space but arises out of people's interaction with surroundings.

Studies in outdoor recreation that take a quantitative approach to sense of place have tended to examine three constructs: *place identity*, *place dependence*, and *place attachment* (Walker & Chapman, 2003). *Place identity* refers to the degree to which a person identifies with a place, while *place dependence* refers to the extent to which a place facilitates a participant's particular activities (Walker & Chapman, 2003). Kyle et al. (2004) combined place identity and place

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<sup>5</sup> This goal, of course, is not necessarily shared by business or private individuals involved in outdoor adventure. Divergent goals and aspirations influence the choreography of activities and, therefore, the experience and learning of the participant (see Chapter Four: *Archi-textures*). Phenomenological approaches to place allow for such differences to be exposed and examined.

<sup>6</sup> These distinctions are debated in studies of the anthropology, geography, and philosophy of place, see, for example, Casey (1996) and Ingold (2000), Relph (1985), and Heidegger (1954/1993) respectively.

dependence when they defined place attachment as “the extent to which an individual values or identifies with a particular natural setting” (p. 124). Kyle et al.’s (2004) study of paddlers’ on the American River showed that involvement in a chosen paddle sport was accompanied by greater emotional attachment to and identification with the recreation setting. Findings regarding *place dependency* have highlighted that less-skilled paddlers are, naturally, more dependent than are high-skilled paddlers on rivers requiring novice to intermediate skill level (Brisker & Kerstetter, 2000; Kyle et al., 2004). The authors surmised that paddlers with low skill levels are limited in their choice to easy rivers, whereas paddlers with high skill levels can choose from a broad range of rivers and difficulty levels. Study of place dependence among paddlers, however, have not examined whether highly skilled paddlers exhibit greater place dependence on more-difficult rivers that provide them optimal experiences. Furthermore, place dependence is likely relative to the participants’ desired experiences that vary with time and physical and social milieu.

A limited number of quantitative studies have examined a connection between place attachment and pro-environmental behaviours. Vaske and Kobrin (2001), for example, showed that “encouraging an individual's connection to a natural setting facilitates the development of general environmentally responsible behaviour” (p. 16). Walker and Chapman (2003) found that senses of place influenced empathy for and pro-environmental intentions towards specific locales. Halpenny (2006, 2010) showed that park visitors’ place attachment relates directly to their likelihood of exhibiting pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours to specific parks but also more broadly in their communities and lives. Encouragingly, Halpenny (2006) stated that “the emotional, [behavioural] and cognitive bonds that individuals form with a place do appear to foster a sense of stewardship or desire to protect and care for that place” (p. 184). If skill can foster bonds to place, it should, then, encourage environmental stewardship.

**Specializing in activities.** Research into recreation specialization has shown such interconnections among outdoor adventure activities, skill development, recreation places, and environmental care and knowledge. First

proposed by Bryan (1977), recreation specialization describes a “continuum of behaviour from the general to the particular, reflected by the equipment and skills used in the sport and activity setting preferences” (p. 175); it includes a behavioural component measuring participation, a cognitive aspect measuring skill and knowledge, and a psychological element measuring commitment (Dyck et al., 2003; McFarlane, 2004; Oh & Ditton, 2006). A highly specialized participant is one who is deeply committed, participates regularly, and shows skill and knowledge in the activity.

A substantial body of literature on recreation specialization has covered multiple adventure activities including mountaineering, SCUBA diving, fly fishing, camping, white water kayaking and rafting, and canoe tripping. Increased specialization and enduring activity involvement has consistently been correlated with increased environmental understanding and adoption of low impact practices (Dyck et al. 2003); pro-environmental values, attitudes, and behaviours (Dyck et al., 2003; Thapa, Graefe, & Meyer, 2006); and support for general and activity-specific resource conservation (Dyck et al., 2003; McFarlane, 2004; Oh & Ditton, 2006). Thapa et al. as well as Oh and Ditton concluded that recreation specialization—especially the affective dimension that describes a participant’s emotional and vested interest in the activity—is a good predictor of pro-environmental behaviour. Because of this, Thapa et al. recommend that professionals encourage participants to stay involved, gain skill, increase experience, and develop personal identification with an activity as a way of encouraging environmental responsibility.

Whittaker and Shelby (2002) showed that paddling skill level in combination with activity-specific environmental conditions, specifically river flow, leads to niches of opportunity for optimal recreation experiences. Bricker and Kerstetter (2000) found that among rafters and kayakers, increased specialization—particularly their skill level rather than craft type—was strongly correlated with emotional bonds through place identity and lifestyle, but not with place dependence. Bricker and Kerstetter surmised that increased skill allows highly specialized paddlers to recreate on a wider variety of rivers. Unfortunately,

Bricker and Kerstetter did not compare place attachment or dependence based on river difficulty or flow rates, to which higher-skilled paddlers might show more dependence. The notion of increasing possible niches for optimal experiences through skill development is supported by McFarlane, Boxall, and Watson (1998) and McFarlane (2004) who found that highly specialized canoe trippers and vehicle campers in Alberta identified strongly and were more familiar with available recreation opportunities; these individuals also chose more remote, difficult, and less managed canoe routes and campsites for optimal recreation experiences that required self-reliance and skill.

Not only has recreation specialization been shown to lead to pro-environmental intentions and behaviours, but individuals who specialize have tended to be more familiar with a region, specific recreation opportunities, and variable environmental conditions. These participants, it would appear, attend to and select among particular settings and conditions that enable them to express themselves through skilled performance and in doing so integrate the activity into their lifestyle and develop strong place identity and attachment, which as Halpenny (2006) showed, encourages pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours. These findings have also been supported by qualitative studies concerning senses of and engagement with place through outdoor education, tourism, and recreation.

**Understanding people-and-places.** Relatively few studies in outdoor recreation have addressed the dynamics of how place relations and meanings develop (Brooks, Wallace, & Williams, 2006). The following studies used divergent qualitative methodologies to understand ways that places, their meanings, and people's relationships to them come about through recreation.

Fishwick and Vining (1992) used off-site responses to photographs to trace participant visitation choices and the meanings that places held for outdoor recreation. Certain landscape elements, such as water, influenced participants' senses of place through assessment of possible recreation activities and experiences based on recreation habits. Participants sought places that provided a measure of comfort but also something new or different from their daily routine.

The authors suggested that past experiences heavily influence place meanings and values as well as feelings of belonging or discomfort in built or wilderness environments. Beyond activity choices, the authors found that “places are sensed as a combination of setting, landscape, ritual, routine, people, personal experiences and in the context of other places” (Fishwick & Vining, 1992, p. 61). Fishwick and Vining contributed to understandings of place, and implied the importance of learned skill, by highlighting that ritual, routines, and past experience in outdoor activities created life-worlds of belonging that contextualized places, establish familiarity, and open leisure opportunities while reducing anxiety, fear, and vulnerability in natural settings.

Stokowski (2002) argued against a strong bias in outdoor recreation literature towards associating natural settings with place meanings that are consistently positive and individualistic. Focused on the diverse, subjective, affective, and communally-shared aspects of place, Stokowski showed the importance of language, rhetoric, and story in the construction and politics of making, expressing, and sharing places. Stokowski argued that the concept of place is inherently political and must be understood and examined in the broader urban, rural, and wilderness context of leisure, recreation, and travel. The shapes and meanings of places, Stokowski argued, are continually contested and emerge out of tensions between various parties’ differing practical and rhetorical aims and behaviours. Scholars and practitioners, therefore, are challenged to acknowledge and account for the rhetoric brought to bear on and by different communities in the pursuit of their intentions (such as financial profit, ecological diversity, or socio-environmental sustainability) that shape places through the practices of travel and recreation.

Stedman (2003) examined cottage country in Northern Wisconsin and directly addressed the tension in sense of place literature between social construction and the primacy of material environments. By examining models related place meaning and attachment to the physical attributes, Stedman concluded that physical characteristics form a basis for meanings that shift with a changing landscape, even as people maintain a certain level of attachment. Long-

term interaction, Stedman argued, allowed residents and visitors to observe activity, remember experiences, and be influenced by the character of the land. People can then work for or against changes to places as a way of creating congruence between setting attributes and the meanings they associate with places. However, “the physical landscape may change to such a degree,” Stedman described, “that preferred meanings become untenable or are maintained only through active effort” (p. 683). Short term visitors, on the other hand, were left to associate popular, mythic, and/or media-oriented meanings with landscapes they encountered: For these visitors, “‘up north’ is what you see when you get there” (p. 683). Stedman showed that particular attributes of dynamic landscapes create an ambiance, structure social life, and over time accrue meanings that depend not only on symbolism but also on individual and group experiences and agency in shaping places. That is, landscape attributes become symbolic through meaningful activity. The notion of enduring experience with a landscape or place has implications for canoe travel and likely informs the differing experiences of participants who visit for a ‘once in a lifetime’ experience, those who visit regularly, and guides who work and live on the river over long stretches of time.

Brooks et al. (2006) approached person-place interactions using a relationship metaphor. According to Brooks et al., a relational conception of place integrates “the self, the physical setting, other people (Gustafson, 2001), the interactions among these, and the subsequent meanings that accumulate at various stages in the relationship” (p. 333). Focusing on meanings of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, the authors characterized a relationship as a “reciprocal exchange between interdependent partners” that provides meaning and which may “have several dimensions and types that provide an array of benefits for the partners, and evolve and change over time” (Brooks et al., 2006, p. 333). The authors found various interrelated themes in participant-place relationships, which included that a) place relationships formed with greater contact time and experience, b) meanings accumulated through physical and social interaction with and in a place, and c) places affirmed participant self-identity through introspection, recognition of self-change, comparisons with others, and concern

for a place. The authors placed strong importance on story-telling as facilitating: a) the “working-out” of one’s position relative to others in a place; b) re-framing and generating new and different meanings from experiences; c) re-creating a sense of place, and d) maintaining a relationship with a place. Brooks et al.’s study is one of few that have attempted to understand *how* relationships to place form. Perhaps because Brooks et al. naturalized the wilderness landscape of Rocky Mountain National Park they did not extend their study to examine participants’ place-making as a component of their relationships as Stedman (2003) had done in a more built landscape. By assuming the park as a whole constituted a place of wilderness for visitors, the authors did not address the functioning of participants’ stories or the importance of their activities in making the park into a place of wilderness.

Wattchow’s (2007) findings drew together aspects of participant past experience from Fishwick and Vining’s (1992) study, the issues of rhetoric and ideology from Stokowski (2002), and the significance of agency and long-term involvement highlighted by Steadman (2003). Wattchow (2007) analysed participant narratives from journals to show that novice participants in short-term recreational river trips were not very responsive to particular river settings; they were more consumed with technical skill development, and reported place meanings that were dominated by generic and culturally over-determined expectations of a wild rivers and wilderness experiences.

In contrast, Wattchow’s (2008) findings supported Brooks et al.’s (2006) notion of place relationships developed over time. Wattchow suggested the importance of skill and experience in developing intimate, sensory, and embodied relationships with different parts of the river: novice participants were more attached to and comfortable in calm water settings, while more-experienced participants were open to more turbulent sections. Drawing on phenomenological philosophy, Wattchow stressed the intermingling of self and river in ways that open up participants to new experiences and understandings of place, but also comingle with dominant meta-narratives of wild rivers and wilderness.

Together, the studies by Brooks et al. (2006), Fishwick and Vining (1992), Steadman (2003), Stokowski (2002), and Wattchow (2007, 2008) suggest that people cultivate familiarity and meaningful relationships over time with places and aspects of the environments and landscapes in which they recreate. These relationships give rise and respond to stories of place in ways that have political implications. Moreover, these scholars all examined place from the perspective of participants' own complex lived experiences. The studies warranted an examination of how specific skills and tasks within an activity helped sustain participants' place relationships, involved them in landscapes, and shaped and created places through lived recreational experiences. Clearly, place relationships are cultivated through ongoing involvement in landscapes: Skill development and practice have appeared to be ways in which people participate in landscapes, and come to develop inclinations towards environmental protection and conservation.

### **Supporting Environmental Connections through Skill**

The notion that adventure travel is non-environmental because it uses wilderness areas as playgrounds has persisted; and there will probably always be participants for whom an adrenaline rush outweighs environmental concerns (Buckley, 2005; P. Martin, 2004). Granted, it is true that some people go outdoors with the explicit intention of learning about nature, and others are intent on learning technical outdoor living and travel skills. Besides the obvious point that many people do both, the literature reviewed so far suggested that the activity-environment tension presents false dichotomy: There may exist a middle ground in which skilled adventure builds strong relationships with landscapes and environments in ways that contribute to environmental values in participants' identities and ethics.

A combination of factors have contributed to the persistence of the activity-environment tension: a focus on risk and danger (Weber, 2001), predominance of attention to personal and social outcomes (Nicol, 2002a), uncritical adoption of activities (Lugg, 2004), and romantic culturally specific understandings of "the environment" as pristine and uninhabited wilderness (Fox, 2000; Hull, 2000). Like P. Martin (2004) and Thomas (2005), I fear that

arguments for deskilling as a way of promoting environmental objectives may have been a rush to judgement based on the activity-environment tension. I also suspect this move has been spurred on by bias and rhetoric favouring romantic, primitive, and anti-modern relationships with nature that have been shown in adventure recreation (Hull, 2000), tourism (Fletcher, 2009), and education (Fox, 2000; Wattchow, 2007), and which leave little room for human habitation of wilderness landscapes (Cronon, 1996) or technological intervention and mediation (Michael, 2000; Payne, 2002; Seaman, 2007). A likely third contributing factor may be a preponderance of adventure education programming and research focused on short-term “one-off” educational programs, with perhaps unrealistic expected outcomes (Brookes, 2003a; Thomas, 2005), rather than encouraging participant-centred approaches to long term development.<sup>7</sup> Finally, as P. Martin (2004) suggested, calls for deskilling may be quick reactions to strong and important socio-cultural critiques related to technical skills and wilderness settings in adventure travel (Haun-Moss, 2002; McDermott, 2004; Newbery, 2003). Rather than “throwing the baby out with the bathwater” by deskilling adventure travel, responses to these critiques should seek further clarity about skill (in addition to what they say about injustice through neo-colonialism, gender, and identity) in order to re-evaluate, re-think, and re-do the practice and theory of skilled performance (Lugg, 2004).

Thomas (2005) asserted that there is likely little threat of actually deskilling adventure; nevertheless, the debate has raised important questions about the nature and limits of skill, place, environment, and knowledge through adventure travel that should not be dismissed. The environment, for example, has often been taken as universal, unified, and singular rather than made up of diverse processes, flows, and strands (Fox, 2000). A number of questions regarding the skill-environment relationship arise, including the nature of and relationship between skill and activity. Surely, these concepts are more complex than simple modes or landscapes of travel, such as “canoeing” or “caving.” Are skills

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<sup>7</sup> Educational programs could follow participants through their skill development, perhaps over different courses or with alumni, and programs that deal repeatedly with participants of a similar skill level might also look to research in recreational contexts.

possessed by individuals or groups regardless of the environment, or is skill learned and performed in relation to particular settings? What environmental learning and relationships occur during mundane aspects of an activity? How do different travel activities such as canoe tripping, walking, and driving enable encounters with various environments? Perhaps the activity-environment tension is most useful because it begs two questions: First, how do activities influence participants' understandings of and relationships with their environment? Second, as Nicol (2002a) asked, how does a lived, technical understanding translate into action and change for sustainability?

Critiques that have advocated for deskilling highlight apparent paradoxes and inconsistencies in adventure travel theory and practice (P. Martin, 2004), but they do little to challenge the fundamental nature-society distinction that has, according to Beringer (2004), Nicol (2002a), and O'Connell et al. (2005), structured much of outdoor adventure practice and is at the core of un-sustainable human socio-ecologies. The activity-environment tension will not be resolved by deskilling, but by developing practical and theoretical approaches that challenge the nature-culture dichotomy in adventure travel (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000; McCarthy, 2002; Nicol, 2002a, Nicol & Higgins, 2008). Practitioners, participants, and researchers concerned with environmental engagement and sustainability need ways to making sense of, communicate, and foster lived-with human-environment relationships. Bunting and Townley (1999) called for a synthesis of environmental and adventure education as a professional responsibility. P. Martin (2004) questioned the "greening" of outdoor education through deskilling on account of socio-cultural critiques, an approach that risks "leaving out the very essence of what makes outdoor education so effective as a way of building profound relationships between people and nature" (p. 20). Fox (2000) argued that "given the rational, unitary, disembodied, autonomous and separate self within the 'wilderness experience' metanarrative, it is not surprising to find that the role of the 'body' has been left invisible in most Euro-North American philosophical discussions" (p. 53). Skilled practice is one way of re-inserting the lived body in adventure travel theory while challenging the nature-

culture dichotomy. Envisioning a shift in theory and practice for adventure travel, Fox (2000) continued:

What narratives would emerge if we could imagine a dynamic and personal interconnection with nature? What stories would we draw if we seriously respected ‘dancing the world into being’...? The body becomes the very means of entering into relation with all things and participating in the here-and-now of the fathomless and wondrous events of the wilderness. (p. 53)

What these environmental relationships look and feel like and how they are learned and developed in lived-practice remains under-theorised, undervalued, and thus open to critiques of deskilling. More importantly, the effectiveness of lived relations in promoting environmental engagement, understanding, and sustainability has remained diminished and unrealized as an avenue to overcome the activity-environment tension and promote sustainability through skilled adventure travel. Rather than suggest deskilling, this research explored the tough and necessary endeavour of understanding and explaining ecologies that include rather than exclude human participation. I turn now to a brief overview of various approaches to skill within adventure travel: I focus on phenomenological studies that suggest an ecological approach to human-environment relations that challenge the nature-culture dichotomy through embodied interactions of the type Fox (2000) has suggested.

**Adopting an ecological approach.** A number of traditions within adventure travel scholarship have taken up skill. Psychological approaches have focused on skill predominantly as a way of fostering optimal experiences and personal growth understood as social development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990; Jones, 2008). Within this tradition skills tend to be defined based on the mind-body duality which suggests skills are either “technical” or “interpersonal” competencies that are used to cope with risk, lead groups, and achieve “peak adventure” (Martin & Priest, 1986; Priest & Gass, 2005).

Feminist approaches have shown that outdoor skills and activities are not transparent, neutral, individual, or divided along the mind-body split nor should

approaches to skill be valued and described as such (Michelson, 1996). Social and physical contexts as well as power relations contribute to shaping skilled practices, identities, and experiences along lines of gender and class, for example, which participants' actively engage, express, and resist through their own social and physical performances (Fox, 2008; Humberstone, 2000; McDermott, 2000a; 2004; Newbery, 2003;). Warren and Loeffler (2006) described a suite of social and biological factors influencing technical development among women. Boniface (2006) described meanings of adventure activities that diverged from masculine notions of risk and physical challenge. The women in Boniface's study, who were long-term outdoor adventure participants, described outdoor activities as strongly influencing their lives, as a way of experiencing wellbeing and their bodies in relation to environments, resulting in feelings of fear and freedom, and as being part of a communal effort and community of "insiders."

A tradition concerned with craftsmanship has been more practical than theoretical, and has often run into anti-modernist assumptions concerning the relationship between nature and technology. MacEachren's (2004) work stands out for clearly addressing the importance of craftsmanship as a way of interrelating with the natural environment in pragmatic and expressive ways. Seaman (2007) and Seaman and Coppens (2006) presented a sociocultural approach to the ways that objects, rules, and spatial relationships in adventure mediate skilled practice as a creative and collaborative process.

O'Connell et al. (2005) advocated for a shift towards sustainability in adventure recreation studies and education, citing, among other factors, the exclusivity of outdoor recreation and the predominant Euro-North American conception of the out-of-doors. Fox (2000) has critiqued the exclusivity of the "wilderness experience" and called for diverse environmental relationships to move from marginal to central positions in outdoor recreation theory and practice. Deep ecology has also been advocated as providing a theoretical and philosophical foundation for adventure travel as essentially relational (Nicol, 2002a, 2003), and as a set of activities that brings "us closer toward our organic reality of living on this earth" (Henderson, 1999, p. 443). Seeking a way to make

such direct experiences relevant to sustainability, Nicol (2002a, 2003) offered a conceptual framework through which deep ecological awareness can be attained through Reason's (1998) epistemological model of practical knowing that is supported and grounded in experiential, presentational, and propositional knowing. Nicol (2003) described how a learner directly engages their environment, works with other to understand ways of representing that experience, is able to connect their own experiences and representations with abstract concepts and theories in order to guide future actions, hopefully towards sustainability. Nicol's conceptual framework is valuable because it focused on the interrelationship of human and non-human worlds, values embodied knowledge, and bridges it with other ways of knowing and learning. Nicol and Higgins (2008) also critically questioned notions of "the environment" and advocated for an ecological ontology "where the actions of humans are seen in direct relation to the environment they inhabit" (p. 238).

Beringer (2004) has explicitly called for a paradigm shift in adventure programming to ecological approaches to adventure travel that challenge the fundamental principles of thought and culture in western society post-Enlightenment that she interprets as the root causes of the crisis of unsustainability. "Given that the individualistic, atomistic conceptualization of the self is one probable cause of the environmental crisis," Beringer (2004) argued, "the relational or ecological self—the self embedded in, and defined by, human and nature relationships—is a more viable conceptualization for our time" (p. 63). Understanding "those challenge activities which can detract from the environment/setting, and those which focus attention on participants' surroundings," according to Beringer (2004), "are issues which can become central to adventure programming practice" (p. 62). Such an approach, Beringer (2004) suggests will be grounded in lived experience and informed by qualitative research approaches.

In light of a preponderance of *place*-based approaches to adventure *travel* (Baker, 2005; Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Harrison, 2010; Preston, 2004; Schlottmann, 2005; Wattchow & Brown, 2011), I was reminded that Fox and

McAvoy (1998) encouraged scholars to acknowledge the bias in Western environmental thought and ethics for place-centered and local metaphors and, as they suggest, to also value transience and wayfaring as ways of relating with environments within an ecological approach. Movement-based approaches to environmental engagement seem intuitively appealing for adventure activities, but have until recently received little attention (see Beedie, 2003; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Lewis, 2000; Payne & Wattchow, 2009; Stewart, 2008). To address sustainability, Higgins (2009) argued that experiential education must move beyond the provision of relatively small “experiences” and help participants engage and take responsibility for “big issues” in real and complex ways, even through their mundane everyday routines. Following on these studies, this research project perused a phenomenological lived-with approach to and understanding of adventure travel as corporeal engagement through skilled travel, related to place, and as a way of finding and making meaning within immediate (local) and extended (global) socio-environmental contexts related to sustainability.

**Moving through an organic body.** Payne and Wattchow (2009) outlined a “slow pedagogy of place” (p. 15) based on a turn towards corporeal and sensual engagements aimed at fostering embodied understandings of self in relation to the environment. This slow pedagogy challenged many Western dualisms, such as mind and body, and—significantly—recognized that corporeal engagement with an environment is the precondition in which meaning, identity, and culture form. Even though Payne and Wattchow (2009) intentionally engaged landscapes that “blended” nature and culture, they did not, as far as I could tell, explicitly challenge the nature-culture dichotomy or explore how *nature*—like identity and culture—is formed through corporeal engagement with environments and landscapes.<sup>8</sup> Wattchow and Brown (2011) noted the importance, from the

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<sup>8</sup> Challenging the nature-culture dichotomy is a crucial step in reimagining a human-environment relationship and encouraging sustainability in a field such as outdoor recreation and education that is replete with romantic conceptions of nature and wilderness. I try to show in Chapter Four: *Archi-textures* that the choreography of educational programs and recreational expedition contribute to creating and affirming regions of “culture” and “nature” in participants’ experience and in the landscape itself.

standpoint of outdoor education, of “a renewed belief in the value of embodied ways of knowing” rather than “time-worn ideas about adventure, novelty and risk” (pp. 74-75).

Lewis (2000) showed that having to cope with the possibility of death through the intensely physical and especially tactile activity of adventure climbing (a style of rock climbing) was meaningful for climbers as an organic experience of their bodies that they used to resist their metropolitan experiences of their bodies as passive, groundless, ocular, and inorganic. Lewis emphasized that climbers experienced and knew their world through touch, and accepted this as a valid form of knowledge and ability. Moreover, “the frequent sometimes distinctive way the climber utilizes her body,” through practice in situ, “begins to take on an embodied form” (p. 74) that better enables a climber to climb. In this way, climbers come to interact with share an embodied knowledge, ability, and experience of their world.

McDermott (2000a) examined the dual experience of body consciousness as both appearance and lived. In comparison with aerobics, the physical challenge of canoe tripping provided women with more intense lived experience rather than appearance-related understanding of their bodies that positively influenced their physical confidence, desire, and ability to be more physically active. Female-only canoe tripping provided women a positive, enjoyable, and engaged understanding of their bodies in ways that were not framed by dominant ideologies of femininity or the objectification that occurs with concerns of appearance. Skilled practice and learning allow for developing senses of self in relation to particular landscapes and environments, but within a structured activity and social context that shapes the experience and outcome.

**Choreographing organic adventure.** Groups of participants have been shown to create and shape social spaces and choreograph physical spaces in which they learn, experience, and practice physical skills; if present, guides play an essential role as mentors and educators within such groups and experiences (Beedie, 2003; McDermott, 2004). McDermott as well as Newbery (2003) showed how social spaces for canoe tripping occur within and perpetuate or resist

Canadian society's valorisation of technical competence, skill, and physical activity generally—and adventure travel particularly—as masculine. McDermott and Newbery provided strong examples of paddlers producing and resisting identities through technical canoe skills in relation to their socio-environmental settings. Women's experience of their physicality as fully valued and engaged in canoe tripping was shaped by both women and men who enact, abstain, or resist judging inequality of ability or performance (such as differences in skill, strength, or technique), naturalizing stereotypical qualities or values (competition, cooperation), and perpetuating self-doubt (McDermott, 2004). Clearly, social expectations and skilled practice need to be actively managed and choreographed as they contribute to developing participant identities in relation to others and their shared surroundings.

Beedie (2003) showed that mountain guides choreograph physical engagement with the mountain environment by providing standards of practice that clients emulate and replicate in order to identify as a mountaineer. Institutions that train guides and set standards of professional practice establish and perpetuate mountaineering traditions and set the intent (getting to the top, getting home safely, being in the mountains), acceptable styles, rituals, techniques, and ethics of the activity. Faced with risks and dangers, and holding a position of authority, guides “educate” participants in “appropriate” preparation, planning, and performance that continue to be re-enacted through clients' own independent mountaineering activity. McDermott's (2004) and Beedie's studies showed that norms of practice and patterns of activity are established, perpetuated, and resisted through institutions and social relations embedded within the learning and practice of adventure activities.

In contrast to McDermott's (2004) and Beedie's (2003) cases, Kane and Tucker (2004) showed how the narratives offered by white water kayakers actively ignored institutional influences in order to make their adventure travel experiences meaningful and consistent with broader social expectations. In Kane and Tucker's study, kayak tours allowed skilled (but not professional) white water kayakers to differentiate themselves from non-adventurers and imagine

themselves as professional adventurers while ignoring the facilitation provided by the tour company. Participants selectively included and excluded portions or aspects of the trip from their attention and stories as ways of building narratives that supported identities valued within their community of kayakers.

**Cultivating meaningful landscapes and people.** McCarthy (2002) showed that mountaineers do experience places as picturesque and mountains as available for conquest; but sense of self and place also coincide in the physicality of mountaineering and are expressed through narratives that “climb towards the recognition that people are not discrete and separate from the environment, but are intermingled units of a natural environment that includes storms and plants and glaciers” (p. 190). McCarthy insisted that the reality of such human-environment relations hint at an eco-consciousness that is obscured by dominant Western epistemologies that separate subject and object, humans and nature. Brymer, Downey, and Gray (2009) and Brymer and Gray (2009) showed that high-level participants in “extreme sports” such as waterfall kayaking, extreme skiing, and mountaineering develop connections to their natural world through experiences they perceive as dissolving boundaries between themselves and their surroundings, a narrative that runs contrary to interpreting such activities as “battles against nature” (Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009, p. 200). Expert veteran adventure travellers’ described their relationship as a humble and intimate dance and flow with dynamic and powerful environmental conditions they come to identify with over time (Brymer & Gray, 2009). Brymer and Gray suggested that these participants were not seeking environmental awareness but found it through sports that may, contrary to popular perception, support sustainability.

Meanings and stories that arise in places through the interrelation of travellers’ bodies and their surroundings are, Michael (2000) showed, mediated by tools and technologies used for travel, including mundane products like hiking boots. Drawing on Ingold’s (2000) notion of taskscape, Michael rejected the notion that technology is a societal intrusion on “pure” or “direct” experience of nature, as has often been argued. Rather, according to Michael, tools and technologies mediate human-environment interactions by a) shaping travellers’

pragmatic interactions (where and how they travel), b) holding symbolism for social status and identity; c) incurring meaningful experiences by, for example, causing pain for the user; d) being both the product and means of environmental damage via globalized resource extraction and product development; and e) facilitating experiences that encourage environmental protection. Thus, the various tools and technologies used in adventure travel shape skill, travel, place meanings, and resulting understandings of self and environment in relation.

Communities of adventure travellers and educators, Stewart (2008) argued, have neglected the various cultural and ecological histories and activities, including adventure travel, which story landscapes. Stewart (2008) advocated that travellers reflect on their position within colonial histories and encouraged their writing new cultural and ecological stories during their own journeys as a way of connecting with place. As just one historic example, Jasen (1995) has shown that the history of canoe tripping and adventure wilderness tourism in Ontario perpetuated gendered, radicalised, and classed meanings and narratives of wilderness and nature as a feminine, fickle, soothing mother and dangerous lover or savage to be courted, conquered, and probed in response to urbanization and industrialization. Theories and narratives of human-environment relations within adventure travel should recognize such roots and resist perpetuating these stereotypes. Scholars, educators, and participants must commit to finding alternative ways of understanding, describing, and enacting human-environmental relations. Embodied skilful interactions seem to point in a useful direction, but as Nicol (2002a) noted, how practical and embodied knowledge connects to or promotes sustainability, environmental issues, or local realities remains unclear.

### **Dwelling: an Ecological Ontology**

This research project was concerned with human experience and was approached through Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, which is based on Heidegger's (1927/1962; 1954/1993) hermeneutic phenomenology, among others' works. Heidegger (1927/1962) took being-in-the-world as foundational to the creation of knowledge and meaning. Being-in-the-world is inescapable and enfolds two fundamental attitudes towards the world: things are *ready-to-hand*

when they are engaged and brought into use for some purpose; they are *present-at-hand* when they become the subject of critical, distanced, self-conscious reflection. Both of these attitudes depend on having a world in which to be, and which people shape as they go about their lives. As Richardson (2003) described “we create so that we may be, in our creations” (p. 74). Being-in-the-world has a fundamentally temporal quality: each person is born into a world with which they interact, shaping both themselves and their world over time (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger (1954/1993) described that only by being-in-the-world and dwelling with our surroundings ready-to-hand can humans imagine, think, and build a world or, crucially, approach that world as present-at-hand. “We do not dwell because we have built,” Heidegger argued (1954/1993), “but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*” (p. 350). The shared world in which humans live is shaped by their acts of building through construction, craftsmanship, and—as Ingold (2000) has shown—the everyday patterns of their lives. Arguing against conceiving of *space* as universally measurable and meaning-neutral, in a Cartesian sense, Heidegger asserted that the buildings and things that constitute a place open up, give character to, and contain the *spaces* in which humans dwell.

**Meaning.** From Heidegger’s (1927/1962) epistemological and ontological position meaning is neither objective nor subjective; rather it is born out of the interplay between humans in their environment and is understood as an interpretation from a particular perspective of an object or phenomena that limits possible interpretations. “Far from being inscribed upon the bedrock of physical reality,” Ingold (2000) stated, “meaning is immanent in the relational contexts of people’s practical engagement with their lived-in environments” (p. 168). Hence, people’s skills are keys to understanding the structures and meanings of their life-worlds.

**Ingold’s Dwelling Perspective.** Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective drew significantly on Heidegger’s philosophy and provided the theoretical thrust of this dissertation. By ecologically situating human sociality and foregrounding

the role of skill development in dwelling and building, Ingold (2000) extended Heidegger's (1954/1993) notion of dwelling and challenged assumed distinctions between 'social' and 'biological' worlds. Ingold framed an ecological approach by arguing that humans are "brought into existence as organism-persons within a world that is inhabited by beings of manifold kinds, both human and non-human," and the relations among humans, he stated, "which we are accustomed to calling 'social', are but a sub-set of ecological relations" (p. 5). Following Heidegger, Ingold (2000) described the organism-person and his or her environment as mutually emergent. I have used the term socio-environmental to indicate this intertwining of social and environmental relations. "Fundamental to the dwelling perspective," Ingold (2005) wrote:

is the thesis that the production of life involves the unfolding of a field of relations that *crosscuts* the boundary between human and non-human. No-one, has made the crossing from nature to society, or vice versa, and no-one ever will. There is no such boundary to be crossed. (p. 508)

Yet, theories in adventure travel often rely on precisely such distinctions to frame environmental value and function as "getting back to nature" or having an "authentic wilderness experience" (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1996; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). The dwelling perspective anchors notions of experience in the skills and activities that structure people's perception and frame the meanings they find. I have taken up Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective as a theoretical way of (re)positioning humans as participating at the centre of *their* environment.

***Environment and landscape.*** Ingold (2000, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) described the *environment* not as a globe, the surface of which is to be occupied or *attached to*, but rather as a dynamic set of interlocking and entangled cycles, patterns, lines and flows of energy and matter, including human activity, that sustain life and which humans inhabit. Life "in the open" occurs in what Ingold (2007a, 2008) has called the "whether world" (2007a, p. S19) and proceeds along entangled lines of growth immersed within dynamic flows and mixtures of the medium and substances of air, water, soil, and concrete among so many others. The environment must not be confused with "nature;" humans cannot be

separated from their environment as some people imagine they can from nature. The *environment* surrounds each and all humans [and other animals] and provides both the context and processes that sustain their activities and lives. Ingold (2000) argued that *landscape* changes over time to embody the various forces and activities (human and non-human) within the *environment*. For Ingold, landscape embodies environmental processes and inhabitants' activities; it is the shifting form of what people and animals see and negotiate when they move about outside.<sup>9</sup>

***Place and space.*** From the dwelling perspective the character and meanings of a *place* are not applied to *space* through a distanced culture that “gives meaning,” but, rather, emerge through the ways in which humans live with and build in their world through the activity and processes of their lives. Elucidating this point, Ingold (2000) argued that “whereas with space, meanings are *attached* to the world, with landscape they are *gathered from* it” (p. 192). A *place*, then, is a meaningful centre of activity in a landscape, occurring where paths meet and routines occur. A place comes into being and gains character from the “experiences it affords to those who spend time there” (Ingold, 2000, p. 192) in relation to other places in the patterns of activity of one’s life-world. Places and the actions that create them, therefore, are political because they occur within a social, ecological, and economic environment shared by many human and non-human inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> I use Ingold’s (2000) conception of landscape, which contrasts sharply with other prominent notions of landscape as picturesque or as an objective reality interpreted and read as text. For example, “landscapes in academic geography,” Relph (1985) explained, are “seen more as objects for interpretation than as contexts of experience.... Landscapes cannot be embraced, nor touched, nor walked around. As we move so the landscape moves, always there, in sight but out of reach” (p. 23). Like Relph, Urry (2000) associated *landscape* with the idealized aesthetic notion of scenery distanced from, and objectified by, a supposedly independent observer.

<sup>10</sup> Ingold (2005, p. 503) admits a conspicuous lack of attention to power relations within his dwelling perspective, which has focused primarily on the material relations of life. In a brief initial attempt to provide some direction, Ingold based power relations in the diverse actions and intentions that occur within a shared socio-ecological environment as beings (both human and non-human) go about trying to dwell and prosper in “relative peace and prosperity” while avoiding “pain and suffering” (p. 506) at the hands, claws, or teeth of other beings. Like Ingold, I have focused on the material aspects of adventure travel; I have dealt with ethics and politics only as they relate to socio-environmental relations for travellers and local inhabitants in terms of sustainability and knowledge of place. However, greater attention to the interpersonal and socio-

*Skill.* Understanding place meanings, from Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, requires a familiarity with the context of people's pragmatic engagements with landscapes. Skills are learned through practical "hands on" experience, they involve care, judgement, and dexterity in attuning abilities to perceive and cultivating abilities to act relative to elements within ever-changing environmental conditions so as to accomplish something (Ingold, 2000, 2001). According to Ingold (2000), skills mediate the relationship between humans [or other animals] and their environments. Landscapes and environments impose limits and open opportunities for action. Thus, each person shapes and understands their world through the skills they learn and use to go about their lives (Ingold, 2000). Conversely, as seen in Lewis' (2000) account of rock climbers, skills are developmentally incorporated into the functioning of a body through practice and experience in particular environments and with particular equipment. A skill, then, is an embodied knowledge of specific environments and landscapes. Thus, skilled learning and practice are processes through which people are shaped by their environment and come to know it intimately. In this way, skills allow people to shape and be shaped by their surroundings. Moreover, human and non-human beings' actions—skilled or otherwise—intentionally, unintentionally, reciprocally, and powerfully shape "the conditions for each other's growth and development" (Ingold, 2005, p. 506) and are thus socially, ecologically, and politically connected to issues of justice and sustainability.

Ingold (2000) used skill and enskilment (the cultivation of skill) as a way of dismantling the nature-culture dichotomy. His approach resonated with my own experiences of adventure travel as well as with calls for ecological approaches to socio-environmental issues in the adventure travel literature.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Ingold (2000) highlighted for me that skill has been neglected in discussions about human-environment relations and therefore provided a way to understand how adventure travellers interact with and come to know their

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political implications of adventure travel is certainly needed and possible from the dwelling perspective.

<sup>11</sup> By challenging the nature-culture dichotomy, Ingold's position fundamentally draws into question "ecological" approaches to adventure travel that assume humans are separate from and need to connect with "nature."

surroundings, and potentially resolving the tension between activity and environment (Thomas, 2005). The understanding of skill I used in this research was based strongly on Ingold (2000, 2001, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) and informed by adventure travel literature along with my experience reading about, working, and travelling outdoors with participants. I have tried to account for important elements in adventure travel that have been less of a focus for Ingold, namely: collective performance, interpersonal skills (though this is not my present focus), the leisure context (with the inclusion of spirit), and the political nature of skill and place.

I understand *skill*, based on Ingold (2000, 2001, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008), as an intentional ability of an individual or group to create and/or maintain an outcome, product, experience, or relationship that is imagined in advance but can only be realized through performance of embodied capabilities of perception and action that involve the whole organic being(s) (indissolubly body, mind, and spirit) within a web of particular socio-ecological relations extending throughout and shaping an active environment and dynamic landscape that includes other beings. Skilled performance can be (but is not necessarily) enabled, shaped, and limited in various ways through tools, technologies, and equipment. Individuals and groups incorporate and cultivate skill through training and experience in situ with direct guidance from others and indirect guidance through stories of various types. Conceived in this way, enskilment results in familiarity with elements of the environment that are salient to performance, but not necessarily an understanding of all the relations that contribute to or are impacted by practice. Finally, skilled performance is potentially powerful: Skill is a form of self-expression but it also acts upon various beings, their surroundings, and their ways of dwelling. I understand an *activity* to be a choreographed suite of one or more tasks and skills situated within multiple traditions with various typical and atypical patterns of practice.

What members of modern Western societies are accustomed to calling “culture,” Ingold (2000) called a suite of learned practices and skills cultivated among multi-generational communities through the activity of living. Ingold

(2000) argued that “the continuity of tradition in skilled practice is a function not of the transmission of rules and representations but of the coordination of perception and action” (p. 351). Exploring how the skills and tasks of canoe tripping related to participants’ surroundings during *Big Sky* provided ways of interpreting how relationships with environments, landscapes, and places were sustained and experienced personally, collectively, and through traditions of practice. The interactions among persons, landscapes, and environments that can occur through skilled activity may help to address calls within adventure travel to move beyond notions of the setting as a static backdrop and to recognize the vitality of the surroundings within participant experiences. Thus, Ingold’s dwelling perspective (2000) potentially contributes an ecological approach to the theory of adventure travel. The application and implications of Ingold’s theory for adventure travel practice was the focus of this research.

### **Summary**

Adventure travel is one of few ways that many people experience, shape, and are shaped by non-urban landscapes, peoples, and environments in an age of globalization that has also forced scholars and practitioners of adventure travel to reconcile their theory and practice with issues of (un)sustainability (Buckley, 2000; Keller, 2000; Williams & Soutar, 2005). The dominant understandings of risk, wilderness, nature, society, and culture that have long structured the theories and practices of adventure travel now impede, to a significant extent, transitions towards a sustainability paradigm in which humanity can be understood as belonging to and participating in the environment. Calls for adventure travel to develop approaches to sustainability that move past the nature-culture dichotomy and overcome the activity-environment tension (Berlinger, 2004; Fletcher, 2009; Hull, 2000; Nicol, 2002a; O’Connell et al., 2005) have come out of, and played into, the debate on technical skill, environmental learning, and deskilling (P. Martin, 2004; Thomas, 2005). There has not, however, been adequate explanation of the necessity of teaching and educating for technical skill (Buckley, 2006; Lugg, 2004; Payne, 2002). Examined together, research on place, recreation specialization, and skilled movement suggested that skill can provide a starting

point from which to negotiate sustainability by using an ecological approach to adventure travel that focuses on embodied human-environment interrelations and that challenges the nature-culture dichotomy underpinning both the crisis of unsustainability and the dominant theories of adventure travel. Moreover, a focus on enacted connections to landscape, places, and environments potentially provides communities, practitioners, participants, and scholars with ways of approaching socio-environmental influences and sustainability through the activities, tasks, tools, and skills that depend on landscapes, lend them character, and shape participants.

Adventure travel scholarship has been heavily focused on benefits and outcomes of participation for individuals and has paid little attention to the lived-body experiences of physicality (McDermott, 2004). The various scholarly traditions that I have reviewed—and there are others besides—approach and use skill in different ways but converge in the actual practice and learning of adventure travel. Despite this, relatively little attention has been given to the complexity of participants' lived experience of learning and performing skills or to developing theoretical approaches, concepts, and methodologies centred on skill and practice as important processes in and of themselves (McDermott, 2004; Seaman & Coppens, 2006).<sup>12</sup> Better understanding of skill will lead to understandings of what and how activities function to alter people and places as well as how they can be used and limited as a tool in producing outcomes desired by scholars and practitioners (changed identities, connection to nature). So, rather than ask “does adventure travel produce relationships with nature?” I asked “how does adventure travel enact relationships with socio-ecological environments, and what are the results?” Conceptualizations of skill potentially provide useful loci

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<sup>12</sup> There is a vast body of literature in physical education concerning skill that was beyond the scope of this project but which should inform future research. Ingold's (2000) notion of skill extends a tradition of ecological approaches based on Gibson (1986). A different tradition, Wall, McClements, Bouffard, and Findlay (1985) provided the knowledge-based approach that brings together acquired knowledge of key concepts, essential skills, and basic values guided by self-regulation and self-awareness. Wall (2008) has applied the knowledge-based approach to the development of leadership expertise, and he intentionally uses the more-holistic term *expertise* rather than *skill*. This inclusive model helps bridge embodied knowledge, abilities for action, and the values that guide a person's behaviour, and so it could also be applied to educating for sustainability.

for integrating or interconnecting various theoretical approaches; for comparing and understanding practices within and across other types of difference (education, recreation, tourism, gender, geography, activities); connecting research with practitioners and participants; and describing participants' multiple rationales, experiences, and styles of participation.

A phenomenological approach to the ecology of skill provided a “ground-up” and enacted approach to dealing with socio-environmental issues in adventure travel. To explore how people shaped, were shaped by, and came to understand their environments, this research project focused on the skills and routines involved in canoe tripping, an activity that bridged distinctions between activity-centred and environment-focused adventure travel. Ingold's (2000, 2001, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) dwelling perspective served as the theoretical approach of this research project, which was applied to the practice of canoe tripping using the common place journey methodology.

### **Methodology: An Activity-Embedded Commonplace Journey**

To extend calls for movement towards a sustainability paradigm in the theory and practice of adventure travel (Beringer, 2004; Fox & McAvoy, 1998; Hull, 2000; O'Connell et al., 2005), this study intentionally engaged the researcher and participants in a process of practice and reflection over the course of a 100-day canoe expedition. This ethnographic research was structured to consider the promising possibilities and limitations of current practices related to an emerging sustainability paradigm as well as the more common archetypal wilderness paradigm of recreational canoe tripping. Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective was crucially important in bringing possibilities and limitations of practice forward.

### **Self in Research**

This research brought together my academic training in recreation, geography, and philosophy with field expertise in adventure travel to address my abiding concern for contemporary socio-environmental issues. I had grown up as an Anglophone Quebecer, a minority within my province, and came to identify with the dominant white Euro-Canadian traditional notions of wilderness and outdoor recreation. I largely reinforced these notions during my undergraduate studies in outdoor recreation. During this period I participated in and came to identify strongly with adventure travel activities, including white water kayaking, ice climbing, and telemark skiing. Through national and international travel, however, I found the dominant rationales and ideals of wilderness adventure to be very problematic within the context of communities struggling for socio-economic development and the effects of colonialism and globalization. These issues were brought home most acutely in East Africa and Canada's West Coast where wilderness-based adventure tourism appeared to avoid environmental issues and ignore or romanticize local rural and Indigenous communities and their struggles. Despite this shortcoming, I was not ready to discount adventure activities because I felt their educational potential was not being fully realized in theory and practice. Hence, I began a search for ways to understand adventure

travel based on a commitment to sustainable development that responds to contemporary socio-ecological issues.

To address this contemporary context and respect the lessons learned from my travel experiences, I felt a strong need to critically reflect on my own cultural traditions and practices. This process of self-reflection is ongoing, but it led me to Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, which provided a different way of understanding human-environment relations and challenged dominant Western approaches. Ingold's focus on skill resonated strongly with my experiences in adventure travel. Clearly, the pursuit of sustainability requires both careful critique as well as a commitment to change based on a deeper understanding of one's role in different environments. Therefore, my writing provides critique in so far as it clarifies and encourages innovative thinking and practice.

### **Setting**

The research occurred during an expedition called Paddling the Big Sky: From the Mountains to the Arctic (*Big Sky*), which lasted 100 days from May 9<sup>th</sup> to August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005. An undergraduate outdoor program was integrated into the first 29 days of the *Big Sky* expedition. By canoeing the lengths of the Athabasca, Slave, Yellowknife, Starvation, and Coppermine rivers, the group travelled from Hinton, AB to Kugluktuk, NU on the shores of the Coronation Gulf on the Arctic Ocean, paddling a total distance of 2,683 km (see Figure 2-1).

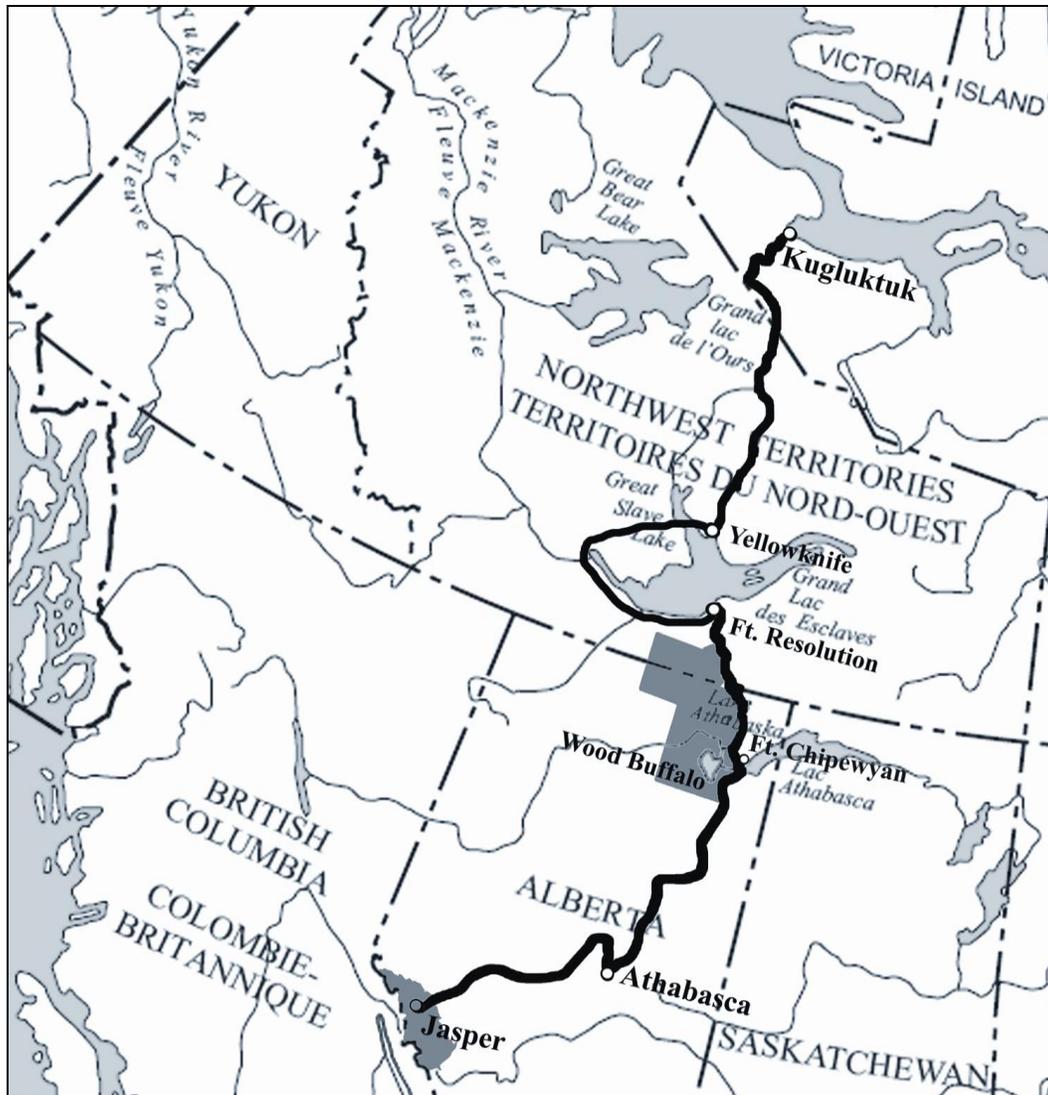


Figure 2-1. Route of Big Sky expedition on map of northwestern Canada with place names included for national parks and significant towns and cities along the way. Adapted from *Canada Outline - Lakes, Rivers and Names of Canada* with the permission of Natural Resources Canada 2011, courtesy of the Atlas of Canada.

For logistical purposes, the trip was divided into three legs, with food re-supply at Fort McMurray and Yellowknife (see Table 2-1). Prior to the trip, bulk food was purchased and acquired through sponsorships in Edmonton where it was weighed, measured, and re-packaged. The menu was created in consultation with a nutritionist to ensure a balanced and suitable diet. To save weight but ensure sufficient caloric intake, meal sizes were carefully calculated based on individual portions and adjusted for highly-active travel and outdoor living. Once packaged,

food re-supplies were brought by participants and friends via car to Fort McMurray and Yellowknife in advance of the group's arrival.

Table 2-1

*Route Details of Big Sky Expedition*

Leg	Distance (km)	Duration (days)	Mean km/day paddled	Group members	Rivers	Upstream or downstream travel
1. Hinton – Ft. McMurray Days 1-29	976	29 Inc. 3 rest	37.5	Phil, Robert, Liz, 12 Students <sup>a</sup>	Athabasca	Down
2. Ft. McMurray – Ft. Resolution Days 30-49	743	20 Inc. 3 rest	43.7	Phil, Robert, Liz, James, Steph, Chris <sup>b</sup>	Athabasca Slave	Down Down
2a. Ft. Resolution - City of Yellowknife Days 50-52	601 <sup>c</sup>	3	NA	Phil, Robert, Liz, James, Steph, Chris	NA	NA
3. City of Yellowknife – Kugluktuk Days 53-100 <sup>d</sup>	964	48 Inc. 3 rest	21.0	Phil, Robert, Liz, James, Dana, Chris	Yellowknife Winter Starvation Coppermine	Up Up Down Down

*Note.* Route details of the *Big Sky* expedition.

<sup>a</sup>Students were not research participants. <sup>b</sup>Met James, Steph, Chris and resupplied in Ft. McMurray. <sup>c</sup>For leg 2a we drove around Great Slave Lake in a pickup truck, the kilometres are not included in total distance paddled. <sup>d</sup>We resupplied in Yellowknife and reached the height of land portage on day 81.

Participants used cars, buses, and planes to travel from their homes to the canoe route and then back again once they had finished paddling. The “normal” daily routine involved making breakfast, breaking camp, paddling for four or five hours until the group was hungry for lunch, eating, and then paddling again for as long as we could before dinner was needed. We would always be on the lookout for sources of fresh water. While paddling on legs one and two we had few portages and rapids were relatively large but infrequent. Downstream travel was fast. Progress slowed dramatically at the outset of leg four during upstream travel on the Yellowknife River which involved many portages per day. We generally would run rapids up to class 3 or 3+ when travelling downstream. Once the group

found a suitable place, we made camp, cooked dinner, and baked bread for the following day before going to bed. Some campsites were already-established, other locations had not obviously been used for camping. The group practiced minimum impact camping. The daily routine was shifted by participants in response to daylight, travel and weather conditions as well as participant health. Cooking, cleaning, and camp chores were shared daily.

Camping and cooking equipment, such as tents and stoves, were used communally. Canoe packs and waterproof barrels were provided through a sponsorship loan program. Participants supplied their own clothing, sleeping pad and bag, and paddles. The canoes were shared, and paddling partnership changed daily. Sometimes particular pairings were decided on to keep the group close together and/or to distribute skills amongst the group. Leadership responsibility was shared and the group strove for consensus-based decision making while recognizing individual skills, experience, and knowledge. The team continually struggled to negotiate an appropriate decision-making process.

*Big Sky* is an appropriate case within the Canadian context as adventure travel activities are often initially learnt in summer camps, universities, and college programs (Henderson & Potter, 2001). Moreover, Henderson and Potter have described that wilderness expeditions that integrate risk and challenge with historical, cultural, and ecological learning tend to be the pinnacle of adventure travel and living skills education in Canada. *Big Sky* is congruent with the focus of this research on so-called hard adventure, and provides a glimpse of travelers with relatively high levels of performance, independence, and commitment. This case represents a predominate mode in which skills and activities of adventure travel are practiced and learnt.

The extended duration of the trip allowed participants to become familiar with each other and the day-to-day reality of travel by canoe, while also developing and improving their skills and knowledge by practicing activities together, sharing stories, and reflecting on their experiences. Canoe tripping provided an ideal research context because the activity and routes hold deep meanings associated with dominant Canadian identities, histories, landscapes, and

environments (Cameron, 1999; Francis, 1997; Henderson & Potter, 2001). The *Big Sky* route traversed and connected urban, rural, remote, industrial, and resource extractive landscapes as well as National Parks, National Historic Sites, and other protected areas. Moreover, the journey led participants through a diversity of ecozones (Boreal Plains, Taiga Shield, Southern Arctic), areas that contrast in geology, geomorphology, flora, and fauna.

### **Participants**

Situating the research fully within the reality of expedition canoeing meant working with original members of the group to select the party size and determine suitability of fellow travellers. For safety, the group decided upon three canoes carrying six expedition participants. The travel and research setting demanded participants who, at the most basic level, were physically fit, committed to completing the journey, and could work, live, and travel with other group members. Preferably, participants had already experienced at least a two-week canoe trip and ideally had worked as outdoor guides and educators. Participant experience levels were determined by a) assessing paddling skills through acquired certification as well as the types of rivers and class rapids they had run, b) the difficulty, duration, and location of their past expeditions, along with c) their work experience, professional certifications, and education within the outdoors industry. Like many non-commercial recreational expeditions, already-selected group members used their social and professional networks to identify other possible candidates.

The research component of the expedition demanded that participants be willing and able to critically reflect on their practices, surroundings, and learning throughout the trip. As a way of rethinking adventure travel from a sustainability paradigm, the research design required participants who could engage Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective and who were familiar with dominant theories of adventure travel. Familiarity with theory was determined through participants' formal education and experience working with outdoor programs. Prior to becoming a participant in the research (and member of the expedition), potential participants discussed the project with the researcher so that they could mutually

assess their willingness and ability to engage in the project. Fortunately, a group of willing participants came together to complete the canoe trip as well as the self and group reflection that was central to the study.

Participants were selected based on their availability, the best possible fit for the criteria, and contributions they could make to the skill set within the group (first aid or swift water rescue certification, for example). All participants in this research are referred to using pseudonyms. All members of the expedition were of Euro-Canadian heritage, aged between 20 and 35 years. Two participants were novices; they fulfilled the basic trip criteria but had very little or no canoe tripping experience or training at the outset of the journey. Five members of the expedition, including the researcher, were experienced in canoe tripping and other forms of adventure travel. In addition to the basic criteria, these participants had attended and worked in summer camps and other outdoor education programs. At a minimum, they fulfilled the preferred canoe tripping criteria, and been certified as proficient in paddling skill and instruction, technical rescue and/or first aid (see Table 2-2). All participants had received varying degrees of formal post-secondary education in leisure studies, physical education, and outdoor education and recreation and were capable of engaging the research process, theory, and self-reflection. Three research participants were female and three male.

Table 2-2

*Research Participants: Members of the Big Sky Expedition*

*James.* A white male in his mid 30s, James had attended and led trips for a summer camp canoe tripping program for youth in Manitoba and North-Western Ontario. At the time of this trip he had completed a master's degree concerning outdoor leadership in canoe tripping, and was a doctoral candidate performing a critical analysis on the ecological foundations of environmental ethics in outdoor recreation. James had logged hundreds of days of canoe tripping experience, including multiple extended lake and river trips lasting between 30 and 60 days through the boreal forest of the Canadian Shield. Previous to *Big Sky*, James' canoe trips had never occurred above the tree line in the Barren Lands of the Canadian sub arctic and arctic regions. James helped plan *Big Sky* and the undergraduate program and travelled the route from Fort McMurray to Kugluktuk.

*Liz.* A white female in her early 30s, Liz had attended and led trips of varying length for summer canoe tripping camps in Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta. She had also undertaken at least three previous extended expeditions (30 + days) though the barren lands of the Canadian sub arctic, documenting them through photography, film, and internet postings. Liz had an undergraduate degree in outdoor recreation and the natural sciences and a master's degree in physical education and recreation. Liz helped plan and lead the undergraduate program and travelled the entire route of *Big Sky*.

*Robert.* A white male in his late 20s, Robert had grown up canoe tripping with his family and attended and led trips at summer camps and outdoor centres. Robert had led extended canoe and winter travel programs for a professional adventure education school in Canada. Robert had undergraduate degrees in outdoor recreation and geography. At the time of this trip he was a doctoral candidate and lecturer specializing in polar tourism. Robert had logged hundreds of days of canoe tripping experience, including multiple extended trips lasting between 30 and 60 days. These included a 60 day trip through the Barren Lands of the Canadian sub arctic and arctic regions. Robert helped plan and lead the undergraduate program and travelled the entire route of *Big Sky*.

*Steph.* A white female in her late 20s, Steph was new to canoe tripping. She had an undergraduate degree in sport management, and a master's degree in sociology. At the time of *Big Sky*, Steph was beginning an interdisciplinary doctoral degree concerning the sociology of health and the body. She helped to plan *Big Sky* and travelled as member of the team between Fort McMurray to Yellowknife.

*Dana.* A white female in her early 20s, Dana was a canoe tripping novice. She was pursuing an undergraduate degree in recreation and leisure studies. As part of this degree, she excelled in an undergraduate canoe program that made up the first 29 days of *Big Sky* and which travelled from Hinton to Fort McMurray. Dana aspired to become a backcountry canoe guide. She re-joined *Big Sky* in Yellowknife and travelled to Kugluktuk, her first experience in the barren lands.

*Chris.* A white male in his early 30s, Chris was highly experienced in adventure travel and outdoor education, but had only intermediate experience with canoe tripping. He held undergraduate degrees in kinesiology and outdoor pursuits as well as psychology. He specialized in backcountry mountain travel including backpacking, winter and summer mountaineering, and rock climbing. Chris was a dedicated outdoor educator who had worked for adventure travel and outdoor programs in Canada as well as South America. Chris contributed to planning; he joined the trip in Fort McMurray and travelled the entire route to Kugluktuk.

*Phil.* A white male in his early 30s, Phil was the primary researcher. He had learned to canoe with his family and was an avid white water kayaker and back travel country enthusiast. At the time of *Big Sky*, and in addition to numerous shorter canoe trips, Phil's longest previous expedition had been a two-week canoe trip in North Western Ontario. Phil had worked with international environmental education and research programs in remote regions of East Africa, British Columbia, and the Caribbean. He held a bachelor's degree in outdoor recreation as well as one in geography and philosophy. Phil had recently completed a master's degree in leisure studies, and had begun the doctoral research described in this paper. Phil helped plan and lead the undergraduate program and travelled the entire route of *Big Sky*.

*Note.* Description of research participants on the *Big Sky* expedition including their experience level in canoeing, formal Western educational background, and the portion of the route they travelled. Pseudonyms are used for all except the researcher.

Clearly, the size and makeup of sample limit the generalizability of this study. However, the group members and their recruitment reflect the actual practices of expedition canoe tripping within the Euro-Canadian recreational tradition. Moreover, this group allowed for the structured collection of a deep and rich array of data over the course of a lengthy canoe trip. By using a small number of participants, the researcher was able to become more totally involved in the experiences and ongoing discussions during the journey. Embedding the

researcher gave access data and insights not available from a larger and less-intimate sample, or by using a survey post hoc.

### **Epistemology/Ontology**

The project adopted Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective as a theoretical approach to re-thinking place making and sustainability in canoe tripping. Ingold's dwelling perspective was strongly influenced by Heidegger's (1927/1962; 1954/1993) hermeneutic phenomenology, which grounds the epistemology and ontology of this research, and is reflected in the methods used to combine theory and practice.<sup>13</sup> As a methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology attends to and describes lived experience (phenomenology) but acknowledges that this always involves interpretation (hermeneutics) because the worlds of the participant and researcher are always-already experienced as meaningful, and because description and expression of experiences always involve language and text (van Manen, 2011).<sup>14</sup> Heidegger described a hermeneutic circle in which human being and knowledge achieved fullness through lived experience and critical reflection operating in dialogue to challenge and re-formulate received meaning systems.<sup>15</sup> Ingold (2007b) furthered this notion by arguing that life itself is lived along lines, through which humans learn about and shape their world. Finally, van Manen (1997) urged researchers to assume a critical approach within phenomenological research as an ongoing radically reflective process.

### **Research Design: A Commonplace Journey**

In an attempt to remain true to the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition that stresses the relationship between lived experience and generated knowledge, Sumara's (2001, 2002) commonplace techniques were adapted to collect the data throughout a canoe trip expedition. The use of these techniques allowed for individual and shared interpretation of common experiences. This was

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<sup>13</sup> Hermeneutic phenomenology interconnects epistemology and ontology because, for Heidegger (1927/1962; 1954/1993), knowledge flows from *being* and the lived-experience of reality. Thus, being, knowledge and inquiry are also historically and geographically situated.

<sup>14</sup> Crotty (1998) has described this as distinctly different from an American tradition in phenomenology as a descriptive practice lacking the interpretive and critical elements.

<sup>15</sup> In this case we were intentionally challenging received notions about landscape and wilderness.

accomplished through recurring cycles of practice, which involved ongoing reflection and discussion in situ. During the post-field analysis, van Manen's (1997) approach to hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation was used to guide the analysis of narratives from transcriptions.

According to Sumara (2001, 2002), commonplace research techniques are useful in understanding and interpreting shared events and narratives because they encourage self-reflection, clarification and understanding from multiple perspectives among participants and, most importantly, changes in these perspectives over time. Given the similarity between shared progress through a novel and shared travel along a route, Sumara's research technique was adapted to canoe tripping as a way of generating insight and accessing multiple shared perspectives during the trip. Sumara and Uptis (2004) explicitly recognize that understanding of self and surroundings "emerges from our concrete and situated experiences of the world" (p. V). Ingold (2000) also recognized a connection between travel and language:

Moving together along a trail or encamped at a particular place, companions draw each other's attention, through speech and gesture, to salient features of their shared environment. Every word, spoken in context, condenses a history of past usage into a focus that illuminates some aspect of the world. Words, in this sense, are instruments of perception much as tools are instruments of action. Both conduct a skilled and sensuous engagement with the environment that is sharpened and enriched through previous experience. (p. 146)

Participants engaged in recurring cycles of practice, reflection, and discussion. To do this, they kept journals and were prompted to record and reflect on their shared and individual experiences and practices. Participants then met regularly over the course of the expedition to discuss their observations and interpretations.

As suggested and exemplified by Boniface (2006), the provision of an alternative theoretical perspective supported a space for critical reflection and alternative interpretations within the lived experience of canoe tripping. To open such a space during *Big Sky*, the dwelling perspective was integrated into the

research design in two ways. First, participants discussed the theoretical perspective during the trip. Secondly, prompts used for observation, reflection, and discussion implicitly and explicitly referred to concepts from Ingold's (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, which we carried with us throughout the trip. By integrating the theoretical perspective into what I have called "commonplace cycles" of practice, reflection, and discussion participants were given an alternative to the taken-for-granted wilderness paradigm through which they could interpret their surroundings, experiences and practices.

**Commonplace cycles.** To make the commonplace journey operational, the researcher and participants engaged in a recurring cyclic process of practice, reflection, and discussion based on shared prompts. Ten of these commonplace cycles occurred during *Big Sky* (see Table 2-3). The cycles blended theory and practice in situ during the expedition in a way that approximated Heidegger's (1927/1962) hermeneutic circle and is consistent with van Manen's (1997) description of *praxis* as "thoughtful action: action full of thought and thought full of action" (p. 128). Praxis enables deep meaning to be found within isolated practices, and it further prepares the reflective practitioner to discern meanings in new life experiences. As such, praxis is a process of continual refinement and insight.

New and different understandings of our practices and surroundings emerged for the researcher and participants through commonplace cycles. So, while participants provided a source of data, they also engaged in a process of inquiry and critical interpretation of their own practices and surroundings. Though participants' interpretations were not of a rigorous scholarly type, their efforts in re-thinking their practices enriched both the research and their tripping experience.<sup>16</sup> For the participants, such inquiry is consistent with the longstanding

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<sup>16</sup> Involving participants in interpretation helps to negotiate the *crisis of representation* by allowing multiple voices to interpret reality and experiences of it. This approach also adds legitimacy by broadening the base upon which the researcher's own interpretations are built. Moreover, as Sparkes (2002, p. 5) argued, issues of representation and legitimacy are linked to a *crisis of praxis*: the ability of research to affect change in the world. The cyclic process used in this research adds participants' voices into the written text, and more importantly, allows

value in outdoor education of personal growth and learning *in, for, and about* the outdoors (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958). Most importantly, this process has also changed how these participants, who were themselves leaders in the field, approached praxis. This methodological approach will have broad reaching effects through participants' future involvement and practice within outdoor and adventure recreation and travel. For the researcher, for example, the commonplace cycles were crucial in bringing forth an understanding of the ways that planning, travel, and social norms structured the group's travel and experiences of the landscape (see Chapter Four: *Archi-textures*).

**Prompts.** Each commonplace cycle was supported by a set of between three and eight prompts that provided communal foci for participants during observation, journal writing and group discussions. Prompts were designed to encourage participants to reflect on their relationship to their surroundings through their practices, experiences, and language (see Table 2-3 and Appendix A). As can be seen in Appendix A, the prompts were structured around the broad topics of *skill, place, interrelationships, self* and *stories*. Prompts were written to explicitly and implicitly relate realities of the trip with salient concepts from Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective. As an example of an explicit connection, prompt #35 read: "*Ingold (2000, p. 37) describes an 'education of attention.' Do you see a similar process at work in outdoor recreation (as distinct from outdoor education)?*" Whereas prompt #11 exemplifies an implicit connection, it read: "*What roles does the human presence (cabins, ruins, hamlets, towns) play in your experience?*"

A variety of prompts were generated along the way to provide insight into the unfolding journey. The researcher observed participants and record practices, comments, and events relevant to the prompts as well as wilderness and sustainability paradigms. Participants recorded individual observations and

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participants to learn through the research process as a way of affecting chance. An "insiders' perspective" helps to negotiate issues of representation and legitimacy within an ethnographic account such as this, even while it presents unique challenges around recognizing difference and interpreting new possibilities. These challenges were negotiated by using Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective as a critical foil—another measure within the research design that further enhances interpretation and participant learning.

reflections on practices and experiences related to the prompts in field notebooks and journals. Roughly every ten days participants came together to discuss the prompts and shared journal entries as a group. After each group discussion the participants contributed suggestions for prompts, which the researcher wrote and provided the following day. Collaborating on prompts made use of and facilitated the refining of participants' ability to discern meaning within their experiences as a way to further our inquiry as a whole. This recurring process facilitated reflective practice and inquiry—praxis—among participants. Each cycle brought forth shared as well as conflicting understandings within the group about problems and possibilities of practice for sustainability and archetypal wilderness paradigms related to the dwelling perspective (Ingold, 2000).

Table 2-3

*Details of Commonplace Cycles*

<u>Cycle</u>	<u>Meeting Name, Date</u>	<u>Route Segment</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Shared Prompts</u>
1	SOC 1, Day 6 May 14	From Hinton (May 9 <sup>th</sup> ) to camp at UTM 783 021 map 83 J04	Liz, Robert, Phil	1-3
2	SOC 2, Day 16 May 24	to Athabasca & LaBiche confluence, 994 974 map 83 P02	Liz, Robert, Phil	4-7
3	BS 1, Day 39 June 16	From Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan, 092 070 map 74 L	Liz, Robert, Steph, James, Chris, Phil	8-10
4	BS 1a, Day 47 June 24	Cabin by Long Island 088 039 map 85A	Liz, Robert, Steph, James, Chris, Phil	11-18
5	BS 2, Day 54 July 1	to City of Yellowknife, 330 294 on map 85J8	Liz, Robert, Steph, James, Chris, Phil	19-23
6	BS 3, Day 63 July 10	to Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage 395 195 map 85 O8	Liz, Robert, Dana, James, Chris, Phil	24-28
7	BS 4, Day 75 July 22	to Greenstockings Lake, 945 235 map 86 A3	Liz, Robert, Dana, James, Chris, Phil	29-35
8	BS 5, Day 87 August 3	to Redrock Lake, 036 065 map 86 G	Liz, Robert, Dana, James, Chris, Phil	36-41
9	BS 6, Day 95 August 11	to Stony Creek & Coppermine Mountains, 036 058 map 86 N	Liz, Robert, Dana, James, Chris, Phil	42-45
10	BS 7, Day 101 August 16	to Town of Kugluktuk 081 024 on map 86 O	Liz, Robert, Dana, James, Chris, Phil	46, Assigned 47-52

*Note.* Commonplace Cycles of practice and reflection along the *Big Sky* route with dates and locations of group discussions that marked transitions from one cycle to the next. Listed prompt numbers refer to specific prompts used for each commonplace cycle and are provided in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection**

Two forms of data are used: first, the researcher's observations recorded in a field notebook and research journal throughout the expedition; and secondly, narratives provided by the six participants through dedicated field journals as well as field-recordings of semi-structured group discussions. A *narrative*, as Palmer (2005) explained, is used in language as part of a system of making sense that uses a sequence of words, written or spoken, to establish a state and then describe a shift in that state, and which contains social and referential meanings for the speaker(s) and, possibly, the interlocutor(s). Furthermore, Palmer showed that the temporal and spatial location of narratives can also be significant. As such, narratives can be understood as opening up the interlocutors' understanding of their life-world. This sharing and opening quality of narratives lent significance to group discussions as an essential aspect not only of data collection but also of interpretation and the creation of new meanings as the commonplace journey unfolded.

**Participant observation.** Participant observation was a crucial data collection technique that combined field-based knowledge with a researcher's critical perspective to record the way in which canoe tripping was actually practiced. Past experience as a skilled paddler and outdoor leader (though by no means the most skilled or experienced amongst participants) augmented the researcher's understanding of the complexity of the activity and socio-environmental context beyond this particular case. As van Manen (1997) explained, "close observation involves an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allows us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations;" in doing so the researcher becomes "a gatherer of anecdotes" (p. 69) that can contribute a rich perspective on the lived experience that is different from written or interview material. Most importantly, participant observation allowed the researcher to capture performances, events, and language as they occurred in the current of activity. Such situated data is different from written and oral accounts, which require participants reflect on events with some degree of distance.

As an active member of the expedition, the researcher structured observation within social, travel, and work responsibilities to the group of participants and the daily routine. This integration was accomplished in three ways: First, by watching participant activity and listening to conversations while paddling and around camp; secondly, through casual conversation with participants while travelling and living together; and thirdly, by reflecting on my role in events as a participant within the group. These approaches were facilitated by behavioural norms regarding journal writing and self-reflection that allowed group members to disengage socially while remaining in the presence of others. These norms result from travel and living conditions that provide little privacy and demand continual proximity of group members. Participants travelled in tandem canoes and kept close to one another; they shared tents (which have thin walls); and they cooked and ate communally.

Five guiding topics were used to focus participant observation and help the researcher recognize the relevance of events, both mundane and unexpected. The researcher based these guiding topics, which are also reflected in the prompts, on his knowledge of canoe travel and of Ingold's dwelling perspective (Mullins, 2005) within the context of the research questions. They were:

1. *Skill*: how attention to landscape and environmental features was shaped by travel activities, tasks, performances, equipment, and other group members.
2. *Place*: meanings, impressions, and knowledge of particular landscapes and places gained through travel, shared group experiences, individuals' past experiences, and encounters with other people and animals during the trip.
3. *Interrelationships*: the influences of individuals and group on surroundings and *vice versa*; how movement was shaped by environmental factors and landscape features.
4. *Self*: identity and roles related to particular skills, tasks, environments, and places. Actions, statements, and discussions relative to the role of outdoor activities and adventure travel in participants' lives and environments.

5. *Stories*: the role of stories within the group, as influencing travel, and as communicating landscape meanings within and beyond the group of participants.

Observation of participants provided insights and anecdotes regarding events on the trip, the skills and abilities of participants, and their comments and behaviours in relation to places, environments and landscapes. The researcher looked for behaviours, events, practices, and language that resonated with the dwelling perspective so as to enlighten both the emerging sustainability paradigm and the archetypal wilderness paradigm. For example, one participant's comment about witnessing down-stream flow of a town's effluent related to the guiding topics of *place* and *interrelationships*, and implied a sustainability paradigm. Another participant's description of our travel along the same portion of Athabasca and Slave rivers as a "road trip" also related to *place* and *interrelationships* but informed a wilderness paradigm.

Observations were recorded as soon as possible, often immediately, in a weatherproof field notebook and then transcribed more fully in a research journal during a break in activity or at the end of the day, once camp had been made and chores were complete. The research journal also provided a space for the researcher's own daily reflection on his role in events, practices, and conversations as they related to the guiding topics and research questions. These reflections were marked as personal rather than observed.

**Participant journals.** Each participant was given a hardbound notebook to keep as a journal in which to reflect on the prompts over the duration of the expedition; they were also given small waterproof notepads in which to record ideas and events as they happened. Journal writing is a familiar practice for outdoor leaders who often keep logbooks throughout their trips. Participants tended to write in their journals at the end of the day, before bed. Participants struggled to devote time and energy to journal writing when they faced difficult travel conditions. On occasion the researcher performed extra camp chores or the group delayed departure to provide more time for participants to write in their journals.

From the variety of prompts provided during each cycle, participants were asked to prioritise their writing by focusing on prompts that most resonated with their experience on *Big Sky*. The six participant journals ranged from approximately 80 to 200 hand-written 6" x 8" pages recorded over the duration of the trip. Participants' styles of journal writing ranged from sketches of ideas with bullet points and self-reminders for discussion, to concise and insightful reflections on the prompts, to fully formed individualized stories with accompanying photographs. All participants were able to address the prompts through their observation. Entries included honest assessments and personal reflections (e.g. Chris' description of wilderness as an important place for solitude, reflection, and education), in-depth and methodical observations (e.g. James' five stages of refining his attention to his surroundings), and deep personal narratives (e.g. Liz's reflections on learning from other travellers to see the land, changing perspectives on wilderness). Some of the participants wrote about rejecting a prompt or concepts, but they offered reasoned arguments, alternative interpretations, and examples (e.g. Robert's rejection of Ingold distinction between tools and technology). While some prompts were ignored, others inspired epiphanies (e.g. Chris' "Aha! Skill allowed me to feel more part of the group because we weren't slowing it down"). The journal entries show that the prompts served the purpose of challenging participants to think critically and position taken for granted practices within broader context and multiple possibilities. The journals were a successful and necessary collection method that provided rich data. Because participants varied in their use and devotion to their journals, this method of collecting data was complemented by semi-structured group discussions.

**Semi-structured group discussions.** Nine in-depth group discussions were recorded over the duration of the 100-day expedition (see Table 2-3 for dates and locations of discussions). The meetings punctuated the cycles of action, reflection and discussion. The series of semi-structured group discussions were essential to the commonplace journey. They provided the forum in which participants could discuss and learn from one another's experiences and

understandings of their shared canoe tripping practices and surroundings. As such, these meetings enabled new and shared insight by including individual reporting that was then extended through discussion amongst participants. These discussions repeatedly challenged participants to reflect more closely, clarify and understand their practices and surroundings in different ways. New understandings of ideas and practices were then carried forward into the next commonplace cycle.

Each meeting was based around the prompted journal entries and, more rarely, unforeseen but salient events along the river. One example is prompt #36 (see Appendix A) which concerned a bear encounter, and read: *“How did the gun alter or position you in relation to the bear? More generally, consider our interactions with animals and how they are mediated by technology.”* Each meeting was facilitated by the researcher and discussion followed the order of the prompts for that cycle (see Appendix A). Opportunity was given for each participant to share his or her thoughts and experiences regarding a prompt under discussion and to question and respond to others in the group. Discussions on prompts often moved beyond what was recorded in the journals. The researcher would ask probing or clarifying questions when participants used vague language, assumed their interlocutors understood their meanings, or alluded to common sense or common knowledge for paddlers, which would require explanation beyond the group. Such questioning was done to draw out implications for the dwelling perspective, sustainability, and wilderness paradigm; it also promoted clarity within the narratives. For example, I asked Robert for clarification when he referred to “a great day of paddling.” Opening up this generalization revealed much about Robert’s preference for group work, coordination with environmental rhythms, and sense of comfort as important elements of “paddling.” Once the prompts had all been discussed, participants were free to share observations, events, or ideas beyond the prompts. Finally, the researcher queried participants about possible prompt topics for the next commonplace cycle.

Meetings lasted between two and three hours and were tape recorded. As a backup to the tape recorder, the researcher also transcribed abridged versions of

participant comments into a notebook during the meetings. Discussions were held roughly every ten days to two weeks throughout the trip (see Table 2-3) to allow time for practice and reflection without over-burdening participants. The timing and location of discussions had to be negotiated relative to participants' daily round, their tolerance for research, the travel itinerary and weather. All meetings were held at camp and their timing often capitalized on poor paddling weather or short travel days. All but three were held in the group's bug shelter. After the trip, the tapes of the discussions were transcribed in full using a combination of techniques (see Appendix B) suggested by Gumperz and Berenz (1993), Palmer (2005) and Tedlock (1983).

### **Analysis and Writing**

**Analysis.** Analysis was guided by Palmer's (2005) assertion, supported by Sparkes (2002), that narratives examined in context can reveal facets of a speaker's experience in and relationship to landscapes and activities. This research added to Palmer's assertion by examining a person's activities in context in order to reveal facets of their narratives and relationship to place. How are aspects of practice, for example, represented in narratives? Which are ignored, and how does this frame the human-environment relationship? This analysis placed the researcher's observation of participants and knowledge of canoe tripping in dialogue with participant narratives. Participant narratives came out of the commonplace journey, itself a critical and self-reflective dialogue in situ between practice and its representation through concepts, speech, and writing. Informed by Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, these two processes of re-interpretive praxis within the analysis exposed critiques of current practices and rationales as well as promising possibilities for a sustainability paradigm within adventure travel theory and practice.

A phenomenological analysis and text is understood as an interpretation of interpretations (Crotty, 1998; van Manen, 1997). What results is not in a "presuppositionless description of phenomena, but with a reinterpretation" (Crotty, 1998, p. 82). To be clear, the analysis does not produce a picture of how

things “really are,” rather it provides a reinterpretation of the human-environment relationship lived through adventure travel by canoe.

Analysis in phenomenological research is thematic but can be performed as deep, attentive, and purposeful reflection while reading and writing rather than a mechanical counting and coding of terms or phrases (van Manen, 1997). The post-field analysis began with reading, re-reading, and checking the accuracy of transcripts and journals. The researcher used five interpretive stages or methods. Each of these methods occurred through a collection of readings. And, at the same time, each involved reflecting on the narratives and their implications while writing and representing them in texts. The analytical process is outlined here in a linear way; while performing it, however, the researcher used a reiterative process of analysis and writing. The five methods included:

1. *Identifying major themes from dwelling.* Using margin notes while transcribing, the researcher flagged the general themes within Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective that had emerged as significant through practice in the field. These included passages related to the influence of our environment on travel, how our activities contributed to place-making across a variety of landscapes, and participants’ education of attention. These broad topics correspond to the subjects of the three papers in which the findings are reported.

2. *Relating specific concepts and finding structural practices.* The researcher read for and collected passages related to specific concepts used by Ingold (2000) within the broad topics, such as wayfaring, subsistence, and the temporality of landscape.<sup>17</sup> This reading brought out the main themes within the papers (see Table 2-4). *Themes*, van Manen (1997) described, are the structures of lived experience, “metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (p. 90). Based on this description, I refer to

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<sup>17</sup> Ingold (2000) uses the term *wayfinding* in comparison to navigation and map use. In Chapter Three: *Living Stories* I use *wayfinding* because I was referencing Ingold (2000) when writing the published version. Moreover, some participant narratives make reference to *wayfinding* and I have not altered their words. Ingold (2007b) uses the term *wayfaring* to mean a much more fundamental way of inhabiting the environment. Except when directly quoting Ingold (2000), I use the term *wayfaring* throughout the rest of this document because it better expresses the meaning I intend, and it is consistent with use by other authors (Fox & McAvoy, 1998).

these themes as *structural practices* to retain the sense that they arise out of participant actions and shape participant experience.

Table 2-4

*Structural Practices Addressed in Each Chapter*

<b>Chapter Three: Living Stories of the Landscape</b>
Structural Practice: Living Stories through Movement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Re-placing Meaning in Landscapes and Along a Route.</li> <li>○ Skilled Movement Relative to Environmental Rhythms.</li> <li>○ Biographically Significant Senses of Movement.</li> <li>○ Shaping and Sharing Meaningful Places and Paths.</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter Four: Archi-textures of Adventure Travel</b>
Structural Practice: Planning: mobilizing and managing relations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suspension and management of social relations to open space to be-on-trip.</li> <li>○ Route and itinerary structured travel and knowledge of surroundings.</li> <li>○ Provisioning mobilized relationships in advance of travel.</li> </ul>
Structural Practice: Travel structured regions and routes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rapid transport separated regions in participants' experience.</li> <li>○ Engagement with an active environment was shaped by the itinerary.</li> <li>○ Routing challenged knowledge and experience of diverse landscapes.</li> </ul>
Structural Practice: Social interactions beyond the group and engaging realities of place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ambivalent relationships with towns.</li> <li>○ Social interactions enabled contextual knowledge.</li> <li>○ Diversifying the intersubjective experience of place.</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter Five: Ecology of Outdoor Skill</b>
Structural Practice: Trips as paths of becoming. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outdoor activity is comprised of multiple skills and tasks.</li> <li>○ Skills and equipment structure how participants <i>are</i> and <i>become</i> in relation to their surroundings.</li> <li>○ Individuals cultivate skills and sentient ecologies within communities of practice.</li> </ul>

*Note.* Structural practices with emerging understandings addressed in each of the three papers.

### 3. Interpreting “lived existentials” for emerging understandings.

Following van Manen’s (1997) approach, the narratives related to each structural practice were examined for portrayals of space and place, body, time, and relations. Reading in this way, the researcher came to understand the common and conflicting ways in which structural practices were actually lived by participants. These readings provided the *emerging understandings* that “fleshed out” each structural practice. The understandings are described as *emerging* because they arise out of a complex collective of narratives and field experiences, but also because they are understood to be incomplete and mutable. Following van Manen’s “sententious approach” (1997, p. 94) the researcher expressed in writing

the fundamental or overall meaning of each emerging understanding and connections among them.

4. *Refining emergent understandings with counter-narratives.* As the emerging understandings began to take shape in written descriptions, the researcher revisited the transcripts and searched out dissenting narratives that could further enrich and balance the description of the understandings and structural practice. Finding counter-narratives helped to bring out the complex and conflicted ways in which individuals and the group lived, practiced, and thought about their surroundings through canoe tripping. For example, participants struggled to reconcile their affinity for experiences of exploration with the value they saw in Indigenous history and inhabitation of the land. During this stage the “sententious” descriptions of emerging understandings were refined and particular representative narratives were selected (van Manen, 1997).

5. *Paradigmatic implications: critiques and promising possibilities.* The researcher noted connections to sustainability and wilderness paradigms throughout the analysis. In addition, the final element of the analytic process focused on prevalent critiques of wilderness-based tourism and also critical approaches to sustainable adventure travel in order to tease out paradigmatic implications of the narratives and emerging understandings. Various authors’ critiques of the wilderness paradigm and approaches to sustainability were used and are summarized in Table 2-5. This aspect of the analysis and writing also involved selecting narratives and anecdotes that evoked and exemplified the emerging understandings, their counter-narratives, and their implications for sustainability and the wilderness paradigm.

Table 2-5

*Critiques of Wilderness and Support for Sustainability*

<b>Wilderness Paradigm</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Ignorance of rural communities.	Cronon (1996) Cruikshank (2005)
Consumption of tourist places.	Braun (2002) Urry (2000)
Support primitivism and neo-colonialism.	Cruikshank (2005) Fletcher (2009) van Wyck (1997)
Manipulating human-landscapes relations, eviction of inhabitants in wilderness park creation.	Cruikshank (2005) MacLaren (2007)
Separating nature from home.	Cronon (1996) Haluza-DeLay (1999)
Ecological impact of transit.	Hunter & Shaw (2007) Weber (2001)
Gendered and racialized landscapes and activities; lack of social justice.	D. C. Martin (2004) McDermott (2000a, 2000b, 2004) Newbery (2003) Warren (2005)
<b>Sustainability Paradigm</b>	<b>Authors</b>
The need for an ecological approach.	Beringer (2004) Nicol & Higgins (2008)
Moving beyond introverted learning about self and group to engage bigger social and environmental issues.	Higgins (2009) Nicol (2003)
Engaging local communities and linking planning with outcomes.	McCool & Moisey (2008)
Exposure to different world-views and deep self-critique.	Lugg (2007)
Outdoor industry-specific hindrances to sustainability and a framework for further integration.	O'Connell et al. (2005)
Tracing flows of people and resources to and from places.	Urry (2000)
Embodied knowledge and physicality.	McDermott (2004) Newbery (2003) Nicol (2003) Lewis (2000)

*Note.* Critiques of the wilderness paradigm and critical approaches to an emerging sustainability paradigm used to interpret narratives and emerging understandings.

**Writing.** Throughout the research, representation and interpretation involved writing. Analysis and writing were deeply intertwined as they followed from and re-inform one another in the production of hermeneutic phenomenological texts. In phenomenological research, writing cannot be separated from the research process as an activity of reporting. Van Manen (1997) asserted that writing *is* the phenomenological method because authorship demands reflective consciousness that mediates reflection and action, theory and

practice. Phenomenological research tries to provide a linguistic representation of lived realities, some aspects of which go beyond the abilities of participants and researchers to put into words. Writing a phenomenological text, therefore, depended on the art of being sensitive and attentive to the language participants used to evoke the meaning of things (van Manen, 1997, p. 111-112). Van Manen's description of phenomenological writing reinforced the importance of examining language in context as a way of illuminating participant experiences. By extension, this description also reinforced the value of the researcher attending to and engaging in practices as a way towards understanding meanings and limits of participants' language in relation to an experience.

Both the narrative analysis and written text benefited from the researcher's knowledge and experience in the two worlds of theory and practice. The dwelling perspective and research design helped create an evocative text by illuminating facets of a common experience in unconventional ways. Consistent with the phenomenological tradition, this analysis and writing evoked meanings that participants seemed aware of, they assumed, or appeared in their practice, but for which they lacked descriptive language. Van Manen explained that "we may have knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency" (1997, p. 113). This aspect of phenomenological writing was particularly true when dealing with embodied knowledge. Liz, for example, once said that students learning to enter the current would eventually "just feel it" – her interlocutors understood: they also had experienced the feeling. During analysis and writing, the author's knowledge and reading from beyond the field was brought together with these narratives to better describe such experiences and realities. For example, Merleau-Ponty's (1964/1968) concept of *flesh* (physical immersion and self-knowledge through interaction) and Ingold's (2000) description of *kairos* (the precise moment in which action is required) provide language that can help describe the embodied experience of skilfully entering the river's current.

Writing and analysis were approached as *bricolage*: a critical and creative process of piecing-together multiple stories and sources in order to re-imagine a

new whole (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1966). Rather than following a prescriptive process, research as *bricolage* required the researcher to remain keenly attentive to the object of study, and use the variety of materials gathered, which had previous meaning, in the creation of some new or different form, thus reconceptualising a new whole (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1966). The researcher concentrated intently and creatively on re-interpreting environmental relations in recreational canoe tripping in a way that did not “remain straitjacketed by the conventional meanings” (Crotty, 1998, p. 51). Phenomenological texts weave together narratives, anecdotes, observations, and experiences into a single *possible interpretation* that illuminates and provides deep insight into core aspects of the lived experience (van Manen, 1997).

The author drew on themes identified within the data as well as salient anecdotes to create a thoughtful, evocative or poetic interpretation that plays in the tension between theory and action (van Manen, 1997). Following van Manen’s suggestion, the author used experience, time, memory, and reflection in the process and content of interpretation to improve the quality of the phenomenological text, an account that hopefully brings out truths within the lived experience. All of these aspects were used during writing and analysis; moreover, they were also integral to the research design. The written work strives to present a faithful interpretation of my own and others’ experiences, informed by narratives, stories, and events in ways that suggest promising possibilities for a sustainability paradigm. Nevertheless, I try to show restraint and recognise that to communicate clearly some things must inevitably go unsaid. I also try to respect the limits of my experience, the text, and readers and stop with room to tell a different story later.

### **Limitations**

This methodology had a number of limitations that frame the findings and can inform future uses and adaptations of the methodology. Some of the limitations stemmed from this being an initial investigation of the dwelling perspective as forwarding a sustainability paradigm within adventure travel and the need to draw out salient concepts and practices.

The methodology provided a unique perspective from within the performance of an activity. Being embedded, however, meant that research progressed within the reality and itinerary of the expedition. This placed the researcher in a difficult position of having to cope with group dynamics, the imperatives of travel, and the unpredictability of the environment as necessary in maintaining momentum and completing the research with full participation throughout the journey. Research was beholden to the journey, and the journey was out *in the open*.<sup>18</sup>

The theoretical approach provided by Ingold (2000) was essential to the critical perspective. However, with an improved understanding of how certain concepts apply to adventure travel, prompts could, in the future, be written without explicit reference to a complex theoretical perspective or particular concepts. That is, they could be written to more naturally suit the specific travel context. In addition, the emerging understandings and lines of inquiry presented should also facilitate deeper questioning and clarification with participants who may have less experience with reflective practice or theory. The learning process from one study to the next should allow the methodology to be used with less-experienced participants, and may help with application to diverse traditions of practice and populations, who may be more likely to report their experiences more directly.

Similarly, the prompts covered a wide array of topics, some of which received little attention from participants. In future studies, greater depth could be achieved by limiting the scope of inquiry to particular concepts or practices that have come to light in past research, such as this project. Narrowing the scope would facilitate more focused journaling and discussion on particularly relevant research interests while reducing the demands on participants.

The evolution of prompts along and in response to the trip (as opposed to a pre-determined set) embraced the reality that our changing surroundings influenced our experiences, and it supported deeply inquisitive *praxis* by

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<sup>18</sup> Ingold (2007) used the term *in the open* to describe life that is subject to the ever-changing weather and conditions of an environment.

recognizing that participants' ability to discern meanings within practices improved, and that *what* we looked for and found in the trip evolved with the trip itself. In these ways, evolving prompts highlighted new possibilities discovered in practice as well as shared emergent experiences that could not have been foreseen. This organic approach to prompts, however, removed any baseline (internal or external) against which to compare the development of skill and/or environmental perception among participants over the duration of a trip or season. While this research concentrated on inquiring deeply in the activity of canoe tripping and broadly into the dwelling perspective, research concerning individual or group change or differences between landscapes would need to adapt the commonplace journey design in order to better elicit answers that were comparable over time and place.

**Living Stories of the Landscape: Perception of Place through Canoeing in  
Canada's North<sup>19</sup>**

Abstract

The paper examines the role of canoe tripping in creating, perceiving, and sharing meanings of place and movement. Addressing concerns over the transitory nature of outdoor recreation activities, Ingold's dwelling perspective is used to draw connections between skill development and senses of place and movement. Narratives of place from an extended canoe expedition in northern Canada are presented and analyzed in the context of the author's changing understanding of theory and practice. Outdoor recreation research has been criticized for framing landscape as a static backdrop. In response, this paper shows landscape, environmental conditions, and social interactions to be co-influential and woven together through the practice of skilled activities. The importance of socially and ecologically situating human activity is highlighted. Implications are discussed for those researching, developing and providing adventure tourism and recreation.

*Keywords:* Place, movement, landscape, skill, environment, narrative, adventure

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<sup>19</sup> A version of this chapter has been published. Mullins 2009. *Tourism Geographies*. 11(2): 233-255. doi.: 10.1080/14616680902827191

Learning about unique places, and people's relationship to them, is at the heart of sustainable tourism (Meyer, 2001; Walsh, Jamrozy, & Burr, 2001). Palmer (2005) recalled learning Shuswap stories anchored to the land around Alkali Lake, BC, Canada. Travelling with locals in her old slow car provided passengers "time to notice the places, and to tell the stories" (Palmer, 2005, p. 169). She suggested that there was more time for these stories "in the years when people travelled at a slower pace, on horseback or foot" (2005, p. 169). Palmer observed that practical differences in modes of travel—which change over time—influence place meanings and their sustainability. This fits two emerging themes in leisure, recreation, and tourism research: first, the influence of recreation and tourism development on the shape and meaning of landscape and, secondly, the influence of mobility on visitor experience (Butler, 2004).<sup>20</sup>

This study is based on a canoe expedition called *Paddling the Big Sky: From the Mountains to the Arctic (Big Sky)*. Seven group members, myself included, paddled canoes from Hinton, AB, in the foothills of the Canadian Rocky Mountains to the Arctic Ocean, 2,683 km distant, and 100 days travel. Following the Athabasca, Slave, Yellowknife, Winter, Starvation and Coppermine rivers, we crossed the Boreal Plains, Taiga Shield, and Southern Arctic ecozones to arrive at Kugluktuk, NU (see Figure 3-1). We pitched camp where we could, carried our food with us, and re-supplied in towns.

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<sup>20</sup> The themes of place-making and mobility are more-fully explored in Chapter Four: *Architectures* which focuses on place making and meanings in terms of mobility along a route through different landscapes, and Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill* which focuses on outdoor living and travel skills that entangle participants in socio-ecological relationships.

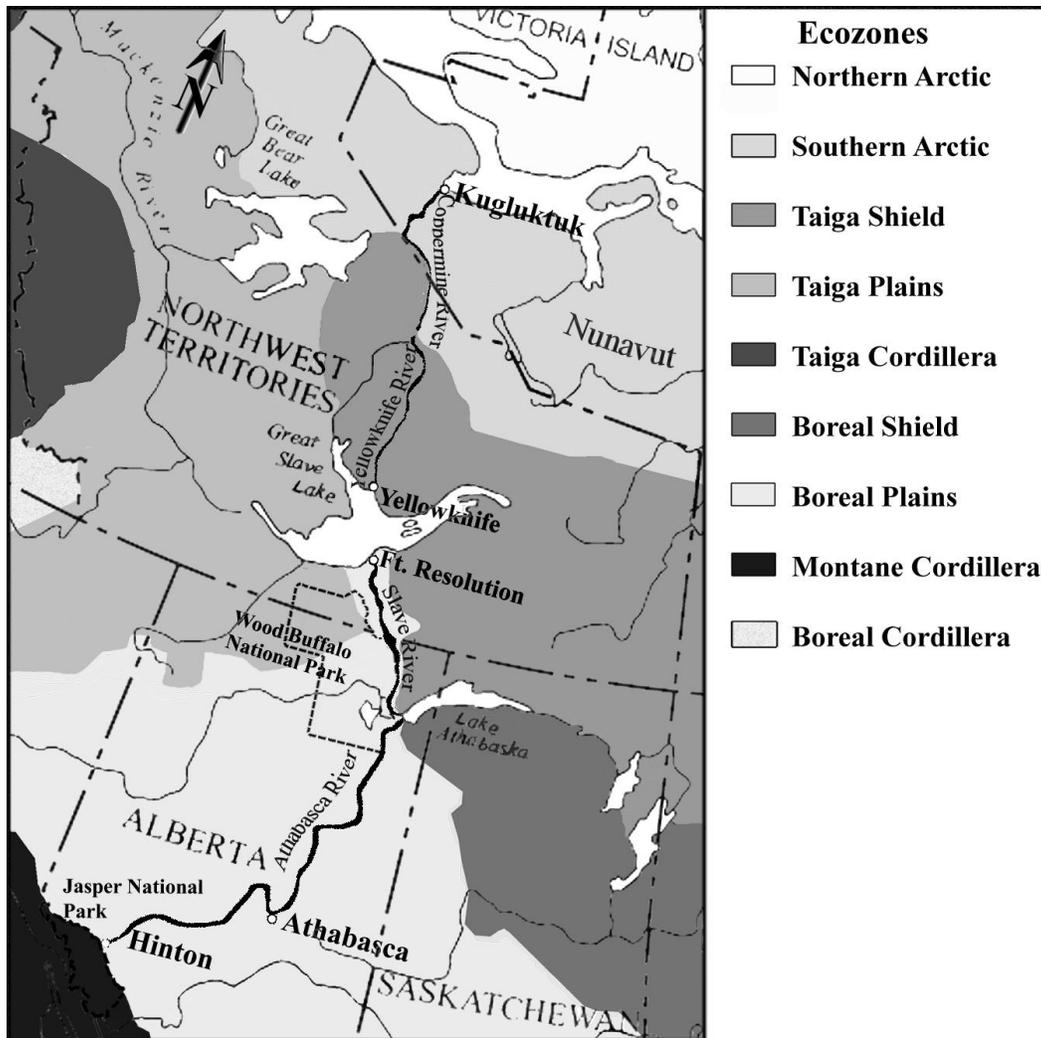


Figure 3-1. Map of terrestrial ecozones showing canoe route on Athabasca, Slave, Yellowknife and Coppermine rivers. Adapted from *Canada Outline - Lakes, Rivers and Names of Canada* with the permission of Natural Resources Canada 2011, courtesy of the Atlas of Canada.

Members of the expedition dedicated our efforts to rethinking how outdoor recreation engaged us in relationships with our environment. Specifically, we tried to see if and how Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective on skill and environmental perception "rang true" with our experience in the field. This paper interprets *Big Sky* as following, creating, and sharing stories of place that were embodied by participants and the landscapes we engaged. Canoe travel required negotiating an active environment, which produced meaningful senses of movement that were biographically significant for participants. Stories found in the landscape also allowed participants to identify with other travellers. These

understandings emerged through interpretation, based on Ingold's theoretical work, of participant narratives.

In this paper, I investigate how practicing an outdoor activity contributed to the meaning that participants found in their surroundings. Despite the tendency in outdoor recreation research to frame landscape and environment as detached from activities (Baker, 2005; Beringer, 2004), the mutability of land and the fluidity of wind and water are shown to be important factors that shape canoeing. The interweaving of humans and their environment resulted in narratives of places and paths, senses of biographically significant landscapes and landscapes storied over time. These living stories of the landscape were mediated by the skilled corporeal activity during movement. How and whether these stories are acknowledged, followed, and woven into the landscape through outdoor activities implies issues of socio-environmental sustainability, justice, and education.

Adventure tourism and outdoor recreation share a history in common activities, such as canoe tripping (Williams & Soutar, 2005). This paper takes up *adventure travel*, understood as individuals or groups developing and practicing skills to actively negotiate a dynamic and challenging environment in the production of an experience that has an uncertain outcome and which changes both the environment and participant(s) (see Chapter One: *An Environmental Case for Skill*, pp. 20-21). The term *socio-environmental* is used to indicate the intertwining of social and environmental relations. Following Ingold (2000), *environment* refers to the intertwining cycles, patterns and flows of energy and matter that sustain life, including human activity, and also give rise to weather. The embodiment of these processes, according to Ingold, is *landscape*, the shifting form of what we see when we look around outside.

### **Setting the Scene: Senses of Place and Movement in Outdoor Recreation**

Current international travel "constitutes by far the largest movement of people across boundaries that has occurred in the history of the world" (Urry, 2000, p. 50). High-speed global travel, communication and urbanization have provided a new context for recreation in which traditional "roots" are increasingly tenuous, home places contested, and travelers' identities linked to locales far and

wide (Williams, 2002). Places of leisure, therefore, have become increasingly influenced by, and important to, members of Western society (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, humans now wield unprecedented environmental influence, and travel for outdoor recreation and adventure is having serious socio-environmental impacts on tourist destinations (Addison, 1999; Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Williams, 2002). In response, practitioners and scholars of outdoor recreation have attempted to both understand participants' environmental attitudes and values, and promote responsible ecological management (Leung & Marion, 2000; Mittelstaedt, Sanker, & VanderVeer, 1999).

Shifts in the context and significance of outdoor activities have challenged dominant Western ideals related to wilderness and *the environment* (Bordo, 1992-3; Cronon, 1996). Moreover, many scholars have been critical of the ability of outdoor recreation and education based on concepts of wilderness to promote pro-environmental attitudes and social justice among participants and society at large (Cajete, 1999; Cronon, 1996; Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000). These critiques call for re-conceptualizing the predominant human-environment relationship as conceived in Western nature-based recreation (Beringer, 2004; Cajete, 1999; Fox, 2000; Godbey, 2000; Hull, 2000). This relationship is at the core of *sense of place*: how people use, understand and emotionally relate to aspects of their environment (McAvoy, 2002; Payton, Fulton, & Anderson, 2005; Stokowski, 2002).

The senses of place associated with a destination, Meyer (2001) emphasized, are maintained and articulated through particular tourist activities. Different activities, however, can lead to cross-cultural conflict over recreation resources based on differently expressed and valued place meanings (McAvoy, 2002). Struggles to shape place meanings are, in part, driven by differing language and ideologies (Stokowski, 2002). The physicality and meaning of a place, Stokowski argued, are not simply individual but are fluid, ever changing, and highly contestable social processes. Very little research in recreation and leisure studies, she stated, has addressed how place meanings come to be shared collectively within society. If skilled activities are learned and shared ways of acting in and comprehending one's surroundings, then they likely contribute to

sharing narratives of travel and place that arise from, contribute to and ignore certain socio-environmental histories.

Using Ingold's (2000) ideas of wayfinding and the temporality of landscape, Haldrup (2004) described the influence of modes of movement on how landscapes are sensed and made sense of during second-home holidays. He identified the pace and rhythms of activities, as well as codified cultural narratives constraining movement stylistically, as factors contributing to different understandings, senses and constructions of place. Further understanding of the social complexity of movement, he concluded, might be found in forms of tourism dominated by corporeal mobility. This article examines canoe tripping as one such activity.

For Bricker and Kerstetter (2002), meaningful experiences and places were entangled within a complex activity-social-environment relationship. The authors came to see the recreation and tourism destination as a "multifarious ecosystem that includes not only the natural environment, but also human relationships relative to the activities that take place within it" (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002, p. 421). Bricker and Kerstetter called for further investigation of the ways in which activities mediate participant experiences and understandings of their surroundings.

Outdoor adventure activities and experiences are characterized by skills and practices used to travel to, from and through particular landscapes. Canoe tripping, like other outdoor activities, is not particularly sedentary. Participants' presence in a landscape tends to be both transitory and fleeting, though repeatable. Research regarding outdoor skills has been predominantly concerned with individual and interpersonal development such as heightened self-efficacy and teamwork (McDermott, 2004; West & Crompton, 2001). That landscape is a backdrop against which activities happen, and to which meaning is applied, has been taken for granted (Baker, 2005; Beringer, 2004; Stokowski, 2002). The social construction of places has garnered attention in outdoor recreation research (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; MacLaren, 1999; Stokowski, 2002). Although foundational to urban and transportation geography, the influence of modes of

movement on the growth and perception of places has only recently been taken up, and remains inadequately theorized, in the outdoor recreation literature (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002). Dominated by corporeal movement, outdoor activities provide fertile ground for investigating connections between skill and environmental perception.

Research connecting specialization in recreational activities with environmental values and place attachment has suggested a link between skill and the salience of place attributes (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002; Dyck, Schneider, Thompson, & Virden, 2003). Bryan described *activity specialization* as a “continuum of behavior from the general to the particular, reflected by equipment and skills used in the sport and activity setting preferences” (as cited in Dyck et al., p. 45). Fishwick and Vining (1992) further highlighted the context-activity relationship by concluding that setting, rituals, routines, associated people and related locales influence the development of place meaning. Dann and Jacobsen (2003), Jacobsen (1997), and Urry (2000, 2007) emphasized the polysensual and spatial nature of tourism practices; these authors brought the recognition of context to the fore by arguing that activity, environmental context, and place meanings are intertwined.

Outdoor recreation and travel literature has not sufficiently accounted for the role of the actual activity in human-environment *interactions* and place perception. The issue lies at the confluence of two streams in outdoor recreation research: skill development, and environmental perception. I investigate how canoe tripping engages participants with particular environmental attributes to shape social interactions and place meanings within the context of our trip.

### **The Dwelling Perspective as a Theoretical Approach**

Ingold's (2000) *dwelling perspective* is prominent in the theoretical thrust of this article. Dissatisfied with the Western nature-culture dichotomy that separates human knowledge, society and culture from “the environment,” Ingold gleaned lessons about the human-environment relationship by comparing, contrasting, and finding commonalities between hunter-gatherer communities and Western societies. Landscape, Ingold argued, is a woven surface that changes

over time to embody the various forces at play within the environment, including human action and behaviour. Understanding place meanings, Ingold emphasized, requires a familiarity with the context of people's pragmatic engagements with a temporal landscape. "Human beings do not," Ingold wrote, "inscribe their life histories upon the surface of nature as do writers upon the page; rather, these histories are woven, along with the life-cycles of plants and animals, into the texture of the surface itself" (2000, p. 198). This weaving happens, according to Ingold, by learning and using skills to accomplish the activities of everyday life. "The world of our experience" and its meaning, Ingold (2000) argued, are "continually and endlessly coming into being around us as we weave" (p. 348). From the dwelling perspective, stories living in the landscape are not so much *written about* as they are *woven from* inhabitants' experiences following paths, leaving traces and building places through their skilled activities.<sup>21</sup>

Stories, according to Ingold (2000, p. 208), "help to open up the world, not to cloak it." Therefore, the meanings I examine are not understood as layers of significance with which participants cover a locale. Rather, I present stories that open up the world as it was perceived by our group of canoeists. To quote Ingold, "meaning is there to be *discovered* in the landscape, if only we know how to attend to it. Every feature, then, is a potential clue, a key to meaning rather than a vehicle for carrying it" (2000, p. 208). Stories and ways of travelling can be critically analysed for the ways in which they reveal and occlude various meanings within the landscape. What do narratives of *challenge*, for example, emphasize and ignore in tripping practices and along a canoe route? My analysis focused, therefore, on narratives that spoke to the way landscapes *became* meaningful in the context of canoeing. Canoeing, then, is understood not only as a mode of transport, but also as a mediated way of attending to and discovering meaning within the socio-environmental history and materiality of the traveller's world.

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<sup>21</sup> The resulting textures of this weave—how places and regions on a broad scale are made and become meaningful through adventure travel—are the topic of Chapter Four: *Archi-textures*. The sensual processes of interweaving through specific skilled travel practices are explored in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*.

## Methods

The expedition members ranged in age from early twenties to early thirties. As a group of knowledgeable participants, they were asked to take part in this research designed as a commonplace journey (see Chapter 2: *Commonplace Journey*). Participants had varying levels of experience with outdoor recreation and tourism as educators, guides, and students. Four participants had spent between five and ten years leading outdoor programs for a variety of clientele in Canada and abroad. The other two were relatively new to the field. All participants had a high level of education. Five were pursuing post-graduate studies into sociological, environmental, and psychological aspects of sport, recreation, and tourism. One participant, aspiring to a career in outdoor leadership, was completing an undergraduate degree in recreation and leisure studies. Many expedition members had grown up going to summer camp and/or being exposed to outdoor activities while at family cottages or in school clubs. Participants varied in the degree to which they took part in, and identified with, an outdoors subculture.

This “outdoors” subculture is predominantly urban or suburban, white, upper-middle class and financially stable (D. C. Martin, 2004). Membership is governed by particular shared ways of making sense of the world. Stories and their underlying assumptions affirm group membership, create coherence, and frame the value of activities, behaviours and the landscapes in which they occur (Cruikshank, 2005; Linde, 1993). Generally, members share a passion for landscapes that are seen as remote, rugged and wilderness in the Euro-North American tradition, and, in Canada, archetypal of the dominant national identity (Bordo, 1992-3; Francis, 1997; Loo, 2001; D. C. Martin, 2004). Human-powered, non-consumptive activities such as canoeing are given preference over motorized travel, technological equipment, and consumptive activities such as hunting. The former are valued as environmentally responsible, benign and “authentic” ways to experience “pristine nature,” the latter as anthropocentric, destructive, and debasing *the* environment (Cuthbertson, Socha, & Potter, 2004; Martin, 2004).

The preference for pristine landscapes in combination with non-consumptive activities has distanced the “outdoors” subculture and its attendant environmentalisms not only from other urban groups, as D. C. Martin (2004) explains, but also from establishing pragmatic relationships with the land, as experienced in some rural and First Nations communities (Cronon, 1996; Hull, 2000; Loo, 2001; Mullins, 2005). The educational and environmental inconsistencies as well as social injustices that can flow from fundamental conceptions of wilderness were familiar to some group members as a result of their education and field experience. We struggled with these issues together. For a variety of reasons, group members were questioning and negotiating if and how they wanted to belong to this subculture. The dwelling perspective served to challenge our assumptions and deeply held beliefs while offering different explanations, choices, and paths to follow.

Clifford (1986) described a “tectonic” shift in anthropological work that forced researchers to consider their place in an interconnected and ever-shifting world, not over it or isolated from it. Hence, the group used the cyclic nature of the commonplace journey to practice a form of reflective anthropology in the tradition of Clifford (1986) and Tedlock (2003), to critique and re-think travel practices, environmental perception, and related theory in adventure travel. Critique and interpretation occurred during and after the trip while working with other expedition members. My experience as a researcher was inextricable from my position as a participant in this extended expedition. Furthermore, my account is intended to “allow both self and other to appear together within a single narrative that carries a multiplicity of dialoguing voices” (Tedlock, 2003, pp. 190-191). Given my focus on skill and activity, this aspect of dialogue is important because, as Tedlock (2003) concluded, “experience is intersubjective and embodied, not individual and fixed, but social and processual” (p. 191). Given that the nature of experience is embodied and interrelated, and to build off of Ellis and Bochner (2003) who centred reflexive research on *social* relations, I argue that experience and reflexive research also involve *ecological* relations.

Data collection methods were multiple. The commonplace journey borrowed the ethnographic techniques of participant observation and investigating language-use in context (Tedlock, 2003). The researcher engaged in observation as a full participant throughout *Big Sky*. Expedition members kept journals in which to record their own observations and reflections, and they participated in nine semi-structured group discussions that were tape-recorded. Prompts were used to facilitate observation, reflection, and discussion; they were developed with the research participants and were based on occurrences, observations, and relevant concepts from Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective. This paper draws on observations, bug-splattered journal entries, and narratives culled from the transcriptions of the group discussions.

These methods allowed me to see, hear, and feel how experiences were enacted, categorized, and made meaningful. Expedition members explored applications of the dwelling perspective in the context of doing, learning and teaching canoe tripping. Being a member of the expedition familiar with possible applications of Ingold's (2000) work, I was well positioned to engage in observation of others, as well as critical self-reflection. Given the focus on corporeal movement, perception and meaning, participating in the expedition allowed me to access and better express experiential, evocative, and performative processes that contributed to the generation of meaning (Clifford, 1986). As Ellis and Bochner (2003) explained: stories, narratives, and language from discussions and journals can tell researchers about significant aspects of the participant's environment and experience. Participants' stories and interpretations were used by the researcher in situ and post hoc to explore the applicability of Ingold's (2000) theory.

Analysis occurred during and following the expedition. The level of professional expertise among four of the participants made analyzing, critiquing and re-conceptualizing notions of self, place and environment difficult, but also allowed new perspectives and depths of understanding to emerge (Clifford, 1986). All the while, Ingold's (2000) theories were explored as different ways to inform and make sense of day-to-day tasks. The two less-experienced expedition

members brought key critical perspectives to group discussions, often interrogating taken for granted concepts, explanations and language. The telling and re-contextualising of our stories and experiences during semi-structured group discussions allowed us to interpret common and divergent perspectives on ideas, experiences and places, resulting in altered and shared understandings that moved beyond basic self reporting and thus advanced analysis (Markula & Denison, 2005; Portelli, 1991; Sparkes, 2002). Reflection and writing, however, is always limited in its ability to access and express the embodied experience, in this case, of canoe tripping practices and landscapes. Nevertheless, oral narratives collected during the trip do provide a partial sense of the river, and life on it, as experienced by members of the expedition.

After the journey, recordings of group discussions were transcribed and analysed for emergent understandings of practices that structured the lived experience of canoe tripping for these participants. Analysis proceeded through five stages of readings: First, major themes from Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective were identified. Secondly, salient concepts from dwelling were used to understand practices that structured the trip. Thirdly, understandings of the structural practices emerged during interpretation of what van Manen (1997) has called *lived existentials* of corporeality, spatiality, temporality and relationality. Fourthly, seeking out counter narratives and conflicting opinions refined emergent understandings and gave them nuance. Finally, I generated critical implications and promising possibilities for adventure travel theory and practice.

During transcription, Gumperz and Berenz' (1993) notation methods were used to represent characteristics of speech and conversations. The narratives for this paper were selected to best represent the structural practice and they are presented here using standard punctuation for clarity and brevity. I explore socio-environmentally situated experiences, knowledge, and meanings produced through our journey using narratives that speak to the confluence of activity and place meaning for canoeists. The negotiations of experience, critiques, theories, and practices are reflected in the presentation of findings, which show the iterative process of analysis and writing, and entangle participants' narratives, the

author's interpretations, and relevant literature to clarify emergent critiques and promising possibilities for thought and practice.

### **Living Stories through Movement**

Canoe travel through an active environment produced meaningful senses of movement for travellers and wove traces of their journey into the landscape. In this way, Big Sky followed, created, and shared stories embodied both by participants and by their surroundings. Past stories were re-lived by participants through their current practice and their current experiences were reflected in the stories they told and traces they left in the land.

Four emergent understandings gave shape to the structural practice of the trip as *living stories through movement* and in context. First, landscapes contributed directly to meaningful experience of places, stretches of our route and the social relations within our group. Secondly, our travel involved skilled negotiation of environmental rhythms and produced senses of movement. Thirdly, senses of movement through different ecozones were biographically significant for participants. Finally, participants shaped and shared meaningful places and paths in the landscape with other travellers across time. Thus, participants lived stories of the landscape by encountering them in context, but were also living their own story and weaving it into the landscape as they travelled.

**Re-placing meaning in landscapes and along a route.** Place meanings can be contextualized within an activity and landscape by exploring daily life on the river. When asked about salient places along our route, Robert offered a response probably familiar to many researchers and participants in adventure recreation and education. He connected his story of the trip with moving through a series of lakes that detour a canyon in the Yellowknife River. This bypass is known as the Nine Lakes, and the challenge it presented to our travel contributed to the significance of the place within Robert's search for his physical limitations and self-positioning as a capable group member.

Robert: I think the portages of the Nine Lakes were meaningful to me in terms of a sense of accomplishment. Coming into this trip I thought I'd be somewhere at the bottom in physical fitness but {the Nine Lakes} was relatively easy for me. I felt the determination factor and physical fitness. And so I felt a sense of accomplishment.

Robert then drew a parallel between his accomplishment and the difficulties experienced by the group. He shaped the group's story by framing these difficulties, and the place, as having strengthened the group. He did this to build morale after a trying experience.

Robert: I think it was an accomplishment for the group, not necessarily for the physical side, but it brought up conflict and strife in the group. Well, what doesn't kill you can only make you stronger.  
[pp. 185-186 BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

The meaning of the Nine Lakes were derived, for Robert, from challenges to personal and group skill and ability, resulting in perceived levels of physical competence. The physical setting provided a context for narratives of self, identity, and social position. The way Robert made sense of the Nine Lakes is common for participants in adventure recreation. Matching proficiency with challenge has been described as peak adventure (Priest, 1992). More recently, McDermott (2000a, 2004) showed how masculinized narratives of physical capability in paddling and portaging can be restrictive for many women in mixed-gender groups but empowering in all-female groups, allowing for experiences of embodied female physical competence that resist dominant social pressures. Robert related his experience to a place, yet his focus on challenge and physical ability superseded any description of his surroundings. The place name became a placeholder for challenge and locale-specific attributes fell by the wayside.

To re-anchor narratives “cut adrift from their moorings,” scholars can attend to the physical context from which narratives arise so as to better “represent the poetics of lived space on the printed page” (Palmer, 2005, p. 22). Where, then, does the challenge of the Nine Lakes come from? Robert hints at the influence of landscape when he focuses on physical fitness, portaging and group strife. Portaging was a significant change in our daily activity. Compared to travelling 60 + km per day with the unobstructed flow of the Athabasca and Slave rivers, the portages of the Nine Lakes required us to carry numerous heavy loads in high heat on faint trails through the thick brush that separated small lakes. We struggled to travel 15 km per day against the current of the Yellowknife River.

Our mode of travel in combination with the landscape made the Nine Lakes challenging. To paraphrase Ingold (2000, pp. 192-193), no feature of the landscape is, of itself, a challenge; it only becomes a challenge, or symbolizes challenge, in relation to the activities of the people for whom it is recognized and experienced as such. The *challenge* arose from travelling by canoe with particular people in a particular place at a particular time. The combination of landscape and activity is evident in Dana's narrative on portaging, in which she described her discomfort and desire to escape her place and activity, but also attention to specifics in the surroundings. I had asked about places along the way that participants found significant:

Dana: Um, there was a rock on the two-kilometre portage that I rested on that was significant to me, because I had a heavy [fall] and I sat down and I closed my eyes and I totally left where I was. I was gone. And then I opened my eyes, it could have been five or ten minutes, I felt like I had a nap, and I [thought] "oh shit, I'm still here." [laughter]  
Then I tried to get up and I used the paddle, and the paddle slipped, and I fell on my knee.

ahhhhhhh

I just wanted to close my eyes again and go back to where I was.

Then, when I [arrived at] that rock again with the next load it was different because I was singing. I was by myself, the sun was hitting the rapids in a cool way, and I was just walking around the points [of land]. It's amazing what the singing did for me...I guess I just removed myself from that place and was able to keep walking and doing what I needed to do. But outside of the discomfort of it, so that was significant.  
[p. 205, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

For Dana the rock was significant as was the two-kilometre portage, but in Dana's narrative the place *becomes* physical discomfort and intertwines a state of mind, the activity of travel, and the landscape. Desiring removal from the "place" of discomfort, Dana used song to manage the pain, keep the activity going, and open herself to the sunlight, the rapids, and the shape of the land. Liz and James also both commented, at the time, that the Nine Lakes portages were the most physically difficult terrain through which they had travelled by canoe.

We distinguished between landscapes based on features that became salient through their influence on our daily tasks and progress along our route. “A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience,” Ingold (2000) reasoned, “and these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world... that each place draws its unique significance” (p. 192). This perspective is clearly evident in Dana’s narrative of portaging. But, in the context of our route as a whole, both Robert and Dana’s narratives suggest that movement through landscapes contributes to place meanings. Significant places occurred where landscapes and/or environmental conditions changed. We became acutely aware of this on the Yellowknife River after crossing from the Boreal Plains to the Taiga Shield ecozone (see Figures 3-2 and 3-3).



*Figure 3-2.* Paddling through the Boreal Plains ecozone on the Athabasca River. Photograph courtesy of the author.



*Figure 3-3.* The Taiga Shield ecozone along the Yellowknife River. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Changes in landscape along our route influenced perception of our surroundings. Our daily round responded to landscape and environmental features. Canoeing necessarily engaged dynamic lakes, rivers, and weather that demanded attention (listening, looking, feeling, and smelling) and responses from participants. The degree and type of knowledge about these features, however, varied with participants' level of skill, experience, and interest. Our goals, modes of movement, and capabilities determined the *affordances* in our surroundings. Gibson (1986) and Ingold (2000) described affordances as qualities of an environment that allow for action. The affordances provided by the river changed diametrically when the group transitioned from descending with the current of Slave River and began ascending against the current of the Yellowknife River. In addition to the reversal of the current relative to our travel, Robert explained that the Taiga Shield held other affordances:

Robert: the other thing that I noticed that switched a hundred-and-eighty-degrees is the campsites. It's no longer a dreaded search for a muddy crappy site. There's lots of exceptional sites, which gives that time of day

a new elation, like “ooo we’re going to find the best site yet,” not “we’re going to find a bloody site that’s somewhat acceptable or might do for the evening.”

[p. 150, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

As the environment and landscape changed along our route so did affordances and by extension the group’s pattern of activity. As seen in Robert’s and Dana’s narratives, moving through the Taiga Shield required negotiating the current, completing challenging portages, and finding suitable campsites. Thankfully, challenge is not the canoeist’s only experience. The change from Boreal Plains to Taiga Shield provided insight into how landscape and activity combined to shape social experiences and landscape meaning.

Dana’s narrative below focused on interdependence, while Liz’ highlighted a sense of belonging in a pattern of movement. The transcriptions are from a discussion held on Fishing Lake on the sixty-third day of the trip. We had paddled against the flow of the Yellowknife River for one week after leaving the city of Yellowknife, where Dana had re-joined the trip after spending some time in Edmonton. I had asked, “what makes you feel at home in a landscape?” Dana connected our social structures with the landscape by focusing on practical constraints imposed by the activity and environment. In Yellowknife Dana did not feel “part of the group” because we had all dispersed to “do our own things.” But

Dana: Once we started paddling a lot more conversation happens in the canoe. The bugs of this environment also force us to come in closer community because we spend our time sitting in the bug tarp or getting to bed because we can’t stand the bugs. And then you’re with someone in the tent.

I had this notion of wide open spaces, you know? You come to be free and all those ideas. Then when you’re here you’re forced to be in really tight community because you can’t do it yourself. That sort of builds a new culture that’s different from being in the city. The community of living and needing each other is comfortable and I really like it.

[143-144, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

Tenting in pairs, the use of tandem canoes and our ability to seek shelter from black flies and mosquitoes structured our social interactions, which for Dana elicited a comfortable sense of group interdependence unavailable to her in an urban environment given her own and others’ activities. This sense stood in

contrast to her pre-conceived notions of canoeing and her expectations of the landscape in terms of escape, freedom, and open spaces. The bugs forced our group to take actions enabled in part by our equipment, which structured our social relations.

The Boreal Plains ecozone is characterized by relatively flat rolling land with deep soil, few bedrock outcroppings, and few lakes (Bernhardt, 2008). Running through this zone, the Athabasca and Slave rivers are wide, silt laden and relatively unobstructed (see Figure 3-2). As Robert mentioned, good campsites had been few and far between on the soft mud riverbanks. Attaining clear water to disinfect, drink, and cook with was also difficult and only possible at smaller tributaries. Daily searches for water and campsites led to significant and often divisive debate. By comparison, the Taiga Shield rests on the Precambrian bedrock of the Canadian Shield, which has been repeatedly scoured by glaciations. This zone has shallow soil and complex water drainage involving thousands of lakes and rivers of varying size (see Figure 3-3) (Bernhardt, 2008). The Yellowknife is a “pool and drop” river that flows through the Taiga Shield and consists of short narrow rapids connecting relatively small lakes that are flanked by gentle sloping granite outcroppings. This landscape allows clear water to flow past abundant suitable campsites.

Changes in landscape profoundly altered how we travelled and related to one another. Like Dana, Liz highlighted a connection between landscape, our daily round and group dynamics and her sense of place. Moving from the Boreal Plains into the Taiga Shield increased the frequency of portages, and the challenges faced by the group, but improved our living conditions. This shift profoundly altered the mood and functionality of our group. Canoeing the Taiga Shield provided Liz with a sense of belonging:

Liz: My first experiences canoeing were in Quebec and Ontario and a lot of the landscape is like this. Once we got in this landscape I felt relaxed, that I was coming home again versus paddling on the Slave and Athabasca— it relates to identity. I noticed that this landscape, in terms of group dynamics, there’s been a change. People have commented on how nice it is to have clean water and campsites that are easier to find. It’s had a big effect on the group.

[pp. 142-143, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

For Liz, the Taiga Shield, combined with our daily tasks and equipment, facilitated a pattern of movement that was familiar, but also influenced our social interactions in a positive way. For Robert, however, the change in landscape portended difficult social dynamics:

Robert: It feels like there's a split between injured [members of the group] and those who are compensating.... I could see forty days down the line it would create some conflict, so I can foresee a group change, and I'm not sure where that's all going but it's something I noticed. And THAT has to do with the trials and tribulations of going up stream and the portaging. For example, an injured knee means nothing when we're just canoeing all day, but an injured knee on portages means a lot.  
[p. 150, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

Taken together, these narratives show that our social relations and experiences of place responded to a complex context of activity structures, participant physical abilities, and landscape features. Choices of equipment, group members, and routing, it would seem, likely alter patterns of movement and senses of place.

Robert, Dana, and Liz's narratives raise questions regarding the significance of the route travelled. How does a groups' course influence the shared meanings of places encountered along their path? Canoeing in the Taiga Shield was vastly different from in the Boreal Plains. The meanings of the lower stretches of the Yellowknife River, for our group, came about in relation to the Athabasca and Slave rivers. Our earlier experiences on those rivers added to the salience of the clear water, rocky shores, and multiple portages on the Yellowknife River.

Participants' daily routine and route selection highlighted meaningful aspects of the landscape and environment in the context of activity, skill, and experience. Each paddler's attention was attuned to particular environmental features and processes through individual and group choices in daily routine, equipment and route. A necessary focus on river currents, for example, involved knowledge of local water levels and up-stream seasonal snowmelt. In addition to features of the landscape (such as riverbank morphology), practices and

experiences of canoeing also incorporated the rhythms of environmental processes, or flows, such as wind.<sup>22</sup>

**Skilled movement relative to environmental rhythms.** As I became wholly accustomed to attending to our world from a canoe, the name *Paddling the Big Sky* became increasingly relevant to me as a reality of our journey. Wind direction and strength were ever-present concerns when paddling, pitching tents, and seeking refuge from biting insects. Near the end of the summer, on our ninety-fourth day, while travelling north with the strong current on the Coppermine River, we met a powerful headwind. A set of rapids faced us, and the north wind stopped us “in our tracks.” We made camp to wait out the conditions. Upon waking the next morning, we were astonished by what was *not* there. There were no rapids, only smooth-flowing green water. The opposition of air and water currents the previous afternoon had resulted in three-foot-tall standing waves. Such an event educes Ingold’s proposition that environmental cycles are incorporated into the “rhythmic structure of [human] activities themselves” (Ingold, 2000, p. 200). We were paddling the big sky, negotiating our movements within those of the air and water, out in the open of what Ingold (2007a) has called the weather-world. For example, having switched from down-stream to up-stream travel, Dana commented that:

Dana: We use to look for the current or the “conveyor belt of life” so could get down the river quicker or easier. Now we’re looking for [the current] so that we can avoid it and hop to an eddy, “oh good we’re in an eddy now it’s easier.” And the rapids too have changed, when I see the rapids now I don’t get really excited about the potential of having to run it, I think “shit, I hope we can line it and not have to portage it,” and “great now we all slow down.”

[p. 145, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

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<sup>22</sup> The routines and senses of place held by local inhabitants might also change with tourism development. A focus on skills and activities provides an opening for knowledge sharing between locals, guides and participants regarding practices that shape the presence and significance of features of the environment. Identifying activities important to a community’s senses of place, such as harvesting and hunting at known places and times of year, might help inhabitants anticipate and negotiate place-based conflicts over land use and marketing (McAvoy, 2002; Walsh et al., 2001).

Dana highlighted the movement of our group and the river relative to one another, and particular features in the flow took on different significance: the “conveyor belt” of the main current, the reversal of flow in eddies and the change in meaning of a rapid. Our well-being as a group largely flowed from our ability to engage in dialogue that tended towards harmony with each other and ever-changing conditions. I came to see that we lived our lives shaping and responding to a web of physical, social, and environmental processes. When asked, near the trip’s end, how the weather affected the group, James replied:

James: There is a rhythm. Go when the land wants you to go; don’t go when the land doesn’t want you to go. But the more pressing your need to go is, the more you’ll go even when the wind is saying don’t go. So there’s kind of a rhythm there and it’s not so much the weather that affects my mood it’s going against that rhythm that affects my mood.  
[p. 189, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

Engaging this rhythm required vigilance and meant making productive use of affordances, profoundly influencing our daily round. Each paddle stroke responded to, and manipulated, the wind and water. Maximising efficiency and minimising fatigue, on a trip as long as ours, meant playing with technique in response to weather conditions and the weathered condition of our bodies. We had to attend to partner pairings and roles, boat trim and choices of paddle as well as positioning our canoes relative to wind and water currents, among other factors. These aspects influenced the cadence, actions and strokes used while paddling. Such fine adjustments were made, as best we could, in response to the currents upon which our progress depended. Further, we also tried to match sleeping, travelling, and eating schedules to the wind and water conditions. Portaging was safer with the light and heat of day, for example, while lake paddling could be easier at night, when the wind usually abated. Weather and portages were especially unpredictable and often foiled our attempts to establish a regular schedule. In response, we developed rituals, such as checking conditions throughout the night and packing before bed. These allowed us to travel on short notice when conditions were favourable.

James' narrative regarding rhythm emphasized the interaction between our travel, daily activities, group dynamics, and environmental conditions. James described flows in the environment as dynamic participants in the experience and activity. The web of significant processes was not haphazard, but, rather, governed by our chosen activity, skill levels and salient environmental factors. Together, these opened possibilities for movement relative to the morphology of the land and conditions of the environment. As I have shown, these factors influenced social interactions. Importantly, increased skill allowed for greater choice and safety in how and when we travelled, an element investigated further in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*. Canoeing, then, may not be so much about "getting back to nature" as it is about engaging with particular environments in certain ways that resonate with participants (Lewis, 2000; Urry, 2000).

There is no doubt that physical environmental constraints shaped our movement. However, James indicated that to an extent we chose our alignment with these rhythms. At times, factors such as the remaining distance, food and days as well as our commitments beyond the trip, took precedence and shaped responses to environmental conditions. Canoe tripping was, for this group, about movement, passing through; we clearly had neither the skills nor intention to take up residence. As such, the pace and rhythm of our movement was facilitated by our physical competence and negotiated on the river and relative to our lives at home.

**Biographically significant senses of movement.** As is clearly evident in Liz' narrative about the Taiga Shield, some senses of movement that resulted from travel in particular landscapes resonated with senses of self, life stories and formative canoeing experiences of the more-experienced participants. Similar to Liz, Robert and James both commented on the landscapes in which they learned to canoe. Liz, Robert, and James had never paddled the lower reaches of the Yellowknife River. All three identified with the Shield landscape because it allowed a familiar pattern of activity, similar to the landscapes in which they developed their canoe skills. Referring to these landscapes, James commented that:

James: So it's really hard for me to separate my past experiences from where we're at. I've never been here before but it feels like I have in a lot of ways. I'm reminded of all the things I did in North-Western Ontario for the ten years that I worked there. All the different camps that I've been at, all the people that I knew, all the things that we did, everything—from landing a canoe on a rocky shore—it's something that I've been doing since 1989 and you know, it just brings back all these memories. And it's very hard to separate those from my identity, my sense of who I am. So I don't know how much of it is THIS landscape in particular, but what this KIND of landscape requires me to do and my ability to do those things that it requires.... There isn't an identity that I can name, it's more of a feeling that I have from a pattern of movement and the set of experiences and skills that I have to engage with the kind of requirements that the land has....The feeling arises from DOING or MOVEMENT, how I feel as I move or because I move through this land. [pp. 148-149, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

Practices within canoe tripping, for James, were reminiscent of many past experiences that he had come to embody over years of tripping. For me learning canoe strokes, the feel of a canoe, and how to manoeuvre it was a process of skill development over many years that began with lessons from my grandfather, and continued on this trip with my paddling partners. Robert described a how outdoor recreation and canoe tripping are interwoven with his family history though stories that live within and entangle the equipment used, animals encountered and places visited:

Robert: It starts with my parents, my mum worked for nature centres and they were naturalists for Parks Canada. So as soon as I was born there was the outdoors, and outdoor recreation allowed me to appreciate it. We've got one of the original Eureka tents at home and it's got a great grizzly bear sew job on it because a grizzly bear ripped through the tent to get at our diapers. So it's just these stories that I have, since four months old being on the top of Mt. Washington and things like this. So it's hard to separate myself from what the outdoors and outdoor recreation has meant to my development.... I know that I've been canoeing since before I was five or six years old, there's the baby PFD that's still at home sitting in the basement that I used to wear, and there are the pictures in the photo album. ... and the expedition part just seems like an extension of that. [pp. 263-264, BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

Liz, James, and Robert all drew connections between our current travel by canoe in the Taiga Shield, their formative experiences canoeing and with family, and a

sense of belonging that they felt as we moved along a river we had never paddled before. Travel helped them re-live and recall familiar senses of movement, places, and people.

Learning paddling skills, gaining experience in the environment and the *Big Sky* trip as a whole were biographically significant for Dana as well. Dana was a less-experienced paddler, and an aspiring outdoor leader. For her the trip was not as a reminder of her past or expression of belonging, but, rather, the start of a path towards belonging and self-becoming. The trip was a formative experience for Dana:

Dana: I've been asking all of you guys about how you got where you are. I think I've got the history of most of you, of what you've been doing... I wonder when I'm allowed to call myself a paddler? I don't know. I don't know if it just happens and you feel it, or if [an outdoor guide is] something that I'll always want to be, and maybe I'll guide a few trips and still not feel like it or... I don't really know.

I think the difference is experience for sure. Like this is my first extended trip. I haven't done camping really at all; I haven't done a lot of backpacking at all. I haven't done a lot of anything, so it's a matter of just trying stuff.... I hear stories and I understand the culture of being in this environment and I like it, and I want to do that more. So, I'll take any opportunity I have to do what is going to get me to where I want to be.

[p. 209, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

For Dana, participants with more-experience provided stories and role-modeled paths towards integrating canoe tripping into her future life and identity as a guide and paddler.

**Shaping and sharing meaningful places and paths.** Skilled practices and movement shaped participant-environment interactions, and provided a context in which landscape and environmental features became meaningful. In addition to helping participants recall their past journeys, patterns of activity—according to Ingold (2000)—respond to and also, crucially, shape landscape features and environmental flows. Thus, activities weave and embed narratives of movement into the landscape. In this way, meaning is more than a symbolic attachment; it *inheres* in the landscape (Ingold, 2000). Canoeing allowed

participants to share and understand some of these narratives, which contributed to landscape meanings at places and along paths.

We carried the journal of explorer Samuel Hearne (1990) in which he recounts his journey along parts of the Coppermine River, including his naming of Bloody Falls after a massacre he witnessed at the cataract. Bloody Falls provides an example of a narrative of a *place* shared across time, which we encountered in the landscape when our trip intersected his route at that place. Some elements of Hearne's journal seemed foreign for Dana, but she connected with experiences of the surroundings that she had in common with Hearne.<sup>23</sup>

Dana: I do think about [Hearne's diary] a lot actually, because when I read it that seems like a very different place then the place I'm IN... until you read sections about the bugs in July and then it was like, "yeah, bugs in July. I get that, yeah, I was here." That's a connection, but other than that I don't really feel like that story is connected to the place we've been travelling. I'm interested to see what will happen at Bloody Falls because any time we mention Bloody Falls I can't not think of Hearne's diary. [pp. 293-294, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Robert echoed Dana's sentiment, he noted that:

Robert: Hearne doesn't affect our day-to-day lives, [but] I think Bloody Falls will be the key point, because it's the most accessible memory from... Hearne's diary.... So it will be interesting to see when we get to that PLACE how Hearne's diary affects me. [pp. 294-295, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Members of the expedition also followed the *path* of another story in the landscape, this one with less historical significance, but more much more personal resonance. We came to know the story as *Green Paint and Rubber Boot Man*, and we followed it for a stretch up the Yellowknife and Winter rivers. The term *green paint* refers to the colour scraped onto rocks by a passing canoe. These markings left a spotty trail. *Rubber boot man* refers to the relatively fresh boot prints we found along soft mud banks and portage trails. While the imprints on the landscape were slight, they were very meaningful to us as canoeists. Nearing the mouth of the Coppermine River, participants discussed the influence of stories on

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<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that our route did not follow that of Hearne's expedition, which occurred in the years 1770-1772. Hearne travelled much of his route overland, not along the river.

our perception of and behaviour on the river. James recalled *Green Paint and Rubber Boot Man*:

James: The most powerful stories for me have actually been the paint on the rocks. Not because it effected what I was going to do on the river but there was just that sense of someone else being here, even if we never catch them. We were commenting on how recent the tracks would be, and that was a time, for me at least, when the weather wasn't all that great, there was a lot of up-stream paddling, a lot of portaging, and I was thinking this is tough, who would do this? Oh, obviously a man in rubber boots!

And it made me laugh right? Obviously there was mystery, intrigue, but there was also a sense of solidarity. I wonder if he or she is slogging, head down, you know? And there were no cabins to speak of on most of that stretch. We see more people here; there is a sense of a river community here more than on the Yellowknife, Winter, or Starvation Rivers.

So those little signs, footprints— some of the old stuff didn't affect me as much as some of the new stuff. I don't know, I can't really explain except for saying there was a sense of comfort in seeing those. It's even funny when you know you could have gone ten different ways but the way we went there was green paint on the ONE rock that I'm standing on or you're on. Is that coincidental? But then you think well NO it's not really coincidental because either we both, that group and us, have picked the shitty way to go or you think well look at that... it's confirmation, we're going the right way. And there's no basis for that reasoning, the guy could have been a total wing nut, but at least we're going the same way. And that was comforting.

[pp. 292-293, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

The group did not choose our route by looking for rocks coloured green by canoe paint. The story emerged from signs that became meaningful over time and taken together. Participants connected with stories in the landscape that resonated with their own experience of travel through the landscape. Finding a common path with our predecessors resulted from shared skills and affordances while travelling by canoe through the same landscape. Our solidarity with *Green Paint and Rubber Boot Man* was much stronger than with Hearne's account. Nevertheless, James makes it clear that we did not fully trust Rubber Boot Man. As such, we also relied on the "bird's eye view" provided by our maps to help us navigate through territory we did not know.

Both navigation (using maps) and wayfinding (knowing as you go) are important skills in outdoor activities, yet they rely on and give rise to different

apprehensions of space, place, and narratives of past movement (Ingold, 2000). Ontologically, modern Western maps, like the topographic maps we used, frame and separate the observer and the landscape (Urry, 2000). These maps provide a supposedly objective view of a two-dimensional world “out there” on which places are frozen in space and time and over which events take place in an independent clock-time (Ingold, 2000; Urry, 2000). The map user imagines him or herself as independent from the surroundings, he or she *acts* on the surface of the land but the land does not act on him or her (Ingold, 2000; Urry, 2000).

Wayfinding (Ingold, 2000) is exploratory movement based on past experience that above all, Ingold notes, “depends upon the attunement of the traveller’s movements in response to the movements, in his or her surroundings, of other people, animals, the wind, celestial bodies, and so on” (p. 242). On this trip paddlers learned, for example, the subtle distinction between the sounds of a rapid and those made by the confluence of a creek. The river “spoke” in meaningful ways to participants, who could then respond. Understanding and recognizing the affordances of canoe travel allowed the group to find narratives of past movement and glean meaning from the landscape. Like the paddlers we followed, we could determine safe places to drag our canoes, for example.

Wayfinding helped us recognize our situation in the temporality of the landscape. Narratives of movement imbued the landscape with life. Traces such as the green paint and boot prints, as well as the “older stuff” (including the sun-bleached hulk of an old wooden boat, a grave and a rusted antique fry pan) wove human activity in the landscape and sustained, through generations, collective memory about deeply meaningful forms of dwelling (Urry, 2000). For some Canadians, canoe tripping may be one of those forms (Francis, 1997; Raffan, 1999). The paint and boot prints confirmed our place and route; they indicated others had, in the past, travelled the path. We were following a thread of human movement similar to our own, which provided participants a sense of solidarity and connection across time, not only to their own past travels but also to the journeys of others.

From the dwelling perspective, places exist as junctions of narratives of past movement, nodes shaped over time by various flows (human and non-human) that weave meaning into the land. Wayfinding enabled participants to place themselves in, and draw meaning from, narratives of past movement embodied in the landscape. James felt solidarity and found reassurance in travelling with another person or group and sharing the experience of harsh conditions. Indeed, the boot prints, even more than the green paint, brought that person into existence, creating, for James, a sense of a community of paddlers through time. In this way, the place gathered and allowed us to imagine the past and future (who passed this way, and who will follow us?). Landscape is always a work in progress and travellers have an influence on its development by sharing and shaping places and paths.

### **Implications**

Williams (2002) argued that an increasingly urban population has begun to identify with and influence places far and wide through leisure travel within a global economy. In the case of *Big Sky*, wayfinding along a canoe route engaged paddlers physically, biographically and communally in the temporality of a landscape, while connecting and creating places and paths through narratives of movement and activity. The physicality of travel by canoe meant that our own narratives of movement were also embodied in the prints we left and paths we used, which impressed upon our “muscular consciousness” (Ingold, 2000, p. 203). This can be seen in the group’s affinity for the pattern of movement allowed by the Canadian Shield and James’ discomfort when “going against the rhythm.” Perhaps putting aside maps, when feasible, and sharing wayfinding skills with less-experienced participants would help them attend and connect differently to their surroundings. The influences of map use are explored further in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*.

The notion that people and places embody their interaction through activities has implications for how researchers and practitioners understand broad concepts such as place identity and practical guidelines such as Leave No Trace (LNT) camping principles. Such a two-way relationship extends implications of

polysensual travel experiences as described by Dann and Jacobsen (2003) and Urry (2000, 2007). According to the dwelling perspective, learning and practicing activities implies a person-place interaction that changes both person and place. These changes, moreover, are person and place specific. Identification with a place might, then, occur when a person's activities are seen as important to the nature of a place and/or the place has contributed to a person's sense of self. The tenets of LNT are often the only "environmental" skills participants learn during adventure tourism and recreation experiences (Baker, 2005). While LNT is usually interpreted as behaving respectfully, as "walking softly," it may also hinder the need for participants to learn, recognize, and make decisions regarding their own and others' relationships, narratives and histories with various landscapes. Further research might address how Leave No Trace cultivates places of recreation informed by ethnocentric notions of wilderness. Supposedly timeless and pristine landscapes are good for those seeking "wilderness experiences," and frightening for those people uprooted and ignored (Cruikshank, 2005; MacLaren, 1999). The stories of LNT will certainly live in the land and people, and deserve further critical attention. If LNT discourages meaningful human-environment interactions, what sort of places are being made and how might participants relate to the landscapes they encounter? These questions are taken up in Chapter Four: *Archi-textures*.

Travellers find and leave narratives of movement, shape places and give priority to certain ways of relating to the land. Guides, educators, planners, and participants will be able to more-judiciously decide which travel practices they employ in different settings by recognizing how practices influence places and landscapes. The dwelling perspective can help explain the socio-environmental merits of various practices in a way that promotes constructive relationships located in place and time, further connecting people and their activities to the changing character of their environments.

Participants must learn skills in order to recognize and follow narratives of movement. Dwelling involves an education of attention (Gibson, 1986, p. 254). "Moving together along a trail or encamped at a particular place," Ingold wrote,

“companions draw each other’s attention, through speech and gesture, to salient features of their shared environment” (Ingold, 2000, p. 146). Those salient features, as I have argued, depend on one’s activity and mode of travel. Further research is needed into the notion of education of attention and embodied environmental relationships through adventure travel. Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill* further explores skilled learning and the embodiment of a journey.

In relation to living stories, education of attention implies that those who facilitate outdoor activities influence shared senses of place, movement, and solidarity through the stories participants see, hear, feel, and create in their surroundings. Practitioners, therefore, confront issues of knowledge, memory, belonging, responsibility, and control within the histories of the land. Furthermore, these stories may or may not be incorporated into biographically significant learning experiences of place and travel for participants. Participants, practitioners, and researchers can recognize and choose how they wish to respond to persons and communities (past, present, and future) who follow the same paths and visit the same places. This is a burden of critical self-reflection and an opportunity for informed choices. Each traveller, and their biography, is placed in the socio-environmental history of the landscape and the traditions of an activity. The places we live in, travel through, and draw our sustenance from will embody our socio-environmental relations. What stories shall we weave for our selves, and leave for others to find?

### **Summary**

Members came to *Big Sky* having experienced place attachment, cross-cultural interactions, and conflict through adventure travel. We were dismayed with romantic notions of escape and environmentalism in adventure travel. Received explanations were no longer satisfactory for our own experiences and aspirations. We engaged Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective as a source for new directions and language. Our understandings continue to shift and develop.

Movement and skill development are foundational to adventure travel. Practical aspects of canoe tripping influenced our experiences, senses, and attachments to places. Through canoeing, participants shaped and were shaped by

the environments through which we travelled. This research suggests that recreational activities play an important role in mediating place meanings and structuring participants' environmental perception. Focusing on skilled activity in ever-shifting landscapes, the dwelling perspective allows scholars and practitioners of outdoor recreation and tourism to grapple with human-environment interrelations in a way that does not rely on the nature-culture dichotomy. This perspective opens an avenue towards comprehending how place meanings might be influenced by practical aspects of adventure tourism such as routing, guiding, instruction, and modes of travel. Furthermore, tourist activities could incorporate places, routes, skills, and tasks that build on, protect, or accord with local place meanings and attachment, or with educational outcomes such as sustainability.

Adventure travel is often negotiated along landscape features and within environmental flows. The combination of activities and landscapes were shown to result in patterns of movement that influence travellers' group dynamics as well as knowledge and senses of landscapes. The trip gained biographical significance as an opportunity for less-experienced participants to learn skills and pursue a life path; while more-experienced participants identified with familiar patterns of movement facilitated by canoeing through the Taiga Shield ecozone. Further research into senses of movement within adventure travel could inform notions of place connection, identity, and meaning. The narratives examined herein indicate that movement within and between landscapes can influence place meanings. The shifting facility of daily tasks and progress along a route might lend particular significance to places, lines, and boundaries where landscape and environmental conditions change.

Through skill development, activities mediate place meanings by shaping participants' attention, enabling them to understand narratives of past movement, and engage dialogically with their environments. For practitioners, living stories of the landscape can integrate natural with cultural history during tourism experiences, encouraging senses of social, ecological, and temporal place. During our expedition, the group's dwelling in places and along paths could not be

clearly separated from our lives beyond the expedition and was negotiated in relation to work, family, and loved ones. This negotiation, as James' narrative on rhythm indicates, involved different notions of place, space, and time. While dwelling, we also engaged what Ingold (2000) might call a commodity perspective, within which we travelled measured kilometres over numbered days towards a point on a map. Our attention attuned to our location, end date, and food supplies. From this perspective, a place such as Kugluktuk, NU, our finish point, was assigned meaning in advance of our arrival. From the dwelling perspective, places and their meanings arose within the context of our moving through them. Further attention to this dynamic might inform how place meanings are framed, shared and re-enacted while moving through the broader geographic context incorporated through the phases of an outdoor recreation experience as situated within the participant's everyday life (Clawson & Knestch, 1966). It was in Kugluktuk, after all, that we ended 100 days of canoeing and began a three-hour flight home, drastically shifting our perspectives once again.

## **Archi-textures of Adventure Travel: Making Nature and Opening Spaces for Sustainability**

### Abstract

This extended chapter explores more fully the idea that patterns of movement shape how participants in adventure travel experience their surroundings and contribute to place making. Participants on *Big Sky* trained in a particular tradition of canoe tripping. I briefly trace a history of this tradition and suggest an archetypal pattern to these Euro-Canadian recreational wilderness canoe trips. This pattern relies on key practices that structure and enable participants' experience of wilderness landscapes as pristine and disconnected from their everyday lives. I show this by examining participants' planning, travel, and social interactions beyond the group. Drawing on narratives from participants on the *Big Sky* expedition, which deviated from the archetypal trip structure, I propose that a paradigm of sustainability will require alternative trip structures and patterns, or "archi-textures." Participant narratives further suggest a participatory ecological approach to human-environment relations extending across various landscapes.

*Keywords:* wilderness, canoe, place, movement, adventure, sustainability.

*I never had a clue where the camp actually was. In my mind, it was located in some Precambrian Narnia, some unmapped patch of Ontario forest, on a mysterious island that not everyone could see.*

Don Gillmor,  
Wilderness Trippers, 2009

Outdoor recreational activities hold social, environmental, and ethical value in their potential to encourage environmental understanding, connections to landscapes, and sustainable lifestyles (Garvey, 1999; McAvoy, 1990; Sasidharan, 2002). The realization of this potential has been difficult for researchers to identify and demonstrate (Fox, 2000; Haluza-DeLay, 1999). Participant transience poses a vexing problem for developing place attachments through outdoor adventure (Fox & McAvoy, 1998). According to Haluza-DeLay (1999), outdoor wilderness expeditions often promote understandings of nature as “out there” and distanced from the “real lives” of participants. As an alternative to dominant ethics within a *wilderness paradigm* that idealize wild and untrammelled environments, scholars have called for approaches that conceptually position humans within their environment (Beringer, 2004; Fox & McAvoy, 1998; Hull, 2000; Urry, 2000, 2007).

In response to calls for a sustainability paradigm, this critical examination of canoe tripping practices took up Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective as an alternative theoretical approach that recognized humans as inextricably positioned within lived environmental relationships. This paper explores *how the skills used in adventure travel relate to the (re)generation of places and the sharing of landscape and environmental meanings*. Through recreational canoe travel, participants enacted various interconnections and disconnections among urban, rural, and wild landscapes. Such practices provided tentative answers regarding place making and sharing through wilderness canoe tripping and suggested possibilities for alternative approaches to sustainability.

The researcher and seven participants implemented a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology by travelling together on a “commonplace journey” to interpret the environmental relationships they enacted during a 100-

day canoe expedition called *Paddling the Big Sky: From the Mountains to the Arctic (Big Sky)*. Collection of data occurred through participant observation, prompted individual journal writing, and tape-recorded semi-structured group discussions in situ during the expedition. Prompts that incorporated Ingold's dwelling perspective helped participants re-examine their taken-for-granted explanations, and enabled new insight into their individual and shared experiences throughout the trip. The discussions served as a commonplace for sharing ideas, observations, and experiences among participants. As such, participants contributed to the interpretation of their travels (Sumara, 2002; van Manen, 1997). As van Manen (1997) explained, "collaborative discussions of hermeneutic conversations on the themes...of phenomena ...are helpful in generating deeper insights and understandings" (p. 100). Participant journals and transcriptions of commonplace discussions were later analysed for emerging understandings.<sup>24</sup> Pseudonyms were used for all research participants and persons mentioned in transcriptions.

Critical reflection and experiences during the expedition highlighted the trip's position as part of, and yet extending, a particular wilderness tradition of canoe tripping practice and thought in Canada. The process of the commonplace journey revealed a core set of practices—I refer to them as *structural practices*—that shaped how and whether participants related to various people, landscapes, and environments.<sup>25</sup> Understandings of the structural practices of *planning*, *travel*, and *social interaction beyond the group* emerged over the course of the trip and, afterwards, through the analysis of participant narratives gathered from journals and discussions. Presented throughout this monograph, narratives allow participants to voice these emerging understandings. I conceive of *activity* broadly, as a set of practices and tasks choreographed to produce a desired experience.

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix B and Table B-1 for a description of the methods and symbols used in transcription.

<sup>25</sup> These ways of doing things responded to and re-enacted dominant discourses and desired experiences, such as the "wilderness experience" of solitude in nature, and the explorer standing in a place never-before trodden by humans.

Taken together and used repeatedly, structural practices established an *archi-texture* of recreational canoe tripping that shaped the form of canoe travel and therefore how participants engaged and understood their surroundings. From the perspective of dwelling, people build places and spaces while they go about their lives along paths in an environment (Heidegger, 1954/1993; Ingold, 2000). Ingold described *architecture* as the activity of pausing to reflect on and imagine how one wants to build, make places, and open space while dwelling in the world (Ingold, 2000). The analysis presented in this monograph, then, is an attempt at architecture of adventure travel. To distinguish the analytical process from the object of study, I use the term *archi-texture* (Ingold, 2007b; Lefebvre, 1974/1991) to describe how participants integrate with, understand, and shape the texture of their surroundings (building spaces and places) through structured canoe tripping practices.

Throughout the monograph, a critical analysis of an archetypal wilderness canoe expedition provides a heuristic device for evaluating—relative to a *sustainability paradigm*—how participants' practices on *Big Sky* structured their experiences and contributed to place making. Many of practices used on *Big Sky* were consistent with the wilderness approach, while other practices were not, such as visiting towns and travelling through rural and industrial landscapes. Emerging understandings of the structural tripping practices show fundamental limitations of using a wilderness approach based on the nature-culture dichotomy to address sustainability. The three structural practices provide the central topics for findings presented in this monograph. Examined together, the three structural practices suggest that the archetypal wilderness approach frames nature as a destination to visit and know as an isolated region or space of wilderness. The basic notion of sustainability, however, requires understanding humans as inhabiting environments over generations. The analysis suggests, therefore, pursuing alternative archi-textures for adventure travel based on nine tenets of an integrated participatory ecological approach that are more responsive to place and consistent with an emerging sustainability paradigm.

### **Working from an Inherited Tradition**

Lugg (2007), O’Connell, Potter, Curthoys, Dymont, and Cuthbertson (2005), and Urry (2000, 2007) have all argued that sustainability fundamentally challenges Western conceptions of human-environment relationships that underpin the theory and practice of adventure travel. As an alternative theoretical perspective to the established wilderness paradigm, Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective highlights the interrelation of social and environmental realms. Fox and McAvoy’s (1998) wayfaring metaphor in environmental ethics, and Cuthbertson, Heine, and Whitson’s (1997) suggestion that outdoor leaders connect with places through movement inspire the focus on active travel as a way of knowing one’s surroundings that runs throughout this monograph. The established wilderness paradigm and archetypal structure of a recreational canoe trip in Canada have grown out of particular socio-environmental contexts and have changed over time. This approach to tripping must change again if it is to accommodate a global context of socio-environmental sustainability.

**An Established Wilderness Paradigm.** Personal engagement in a convergence of nature and culture are persistent themes in Canadian canoeing literature. These themes ran through *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture* (Raffan & Horwood, 1988): the very title *Canexus* was coined, the editors explain, “to muster images of the canoe as a connection linking people to each other, to culture, and to the land” (p. 1). Indeed Raffan (1999) described the canoe itself as uniquely from nature, suited to Canadian landscapes, and as a crucial vehicle and icon within Canadian history, culture, and society.

Benedickson (1982) showed that participants and promotional material from the 1880s to 1920s commonly linked canoeing to Canada’s natural and cultural landscapes. Like other forms of canoe-based recreation (including canoe-sailing, hunting and fishing, racing), wilderness canoe camping brought innovative equipment together with available infrastructure (such as railways) in responses to participant motivations and overarching concerns of the times. The form and purpose of recreational wilderness canoe tripping arose in response to broad socio-environmental concern over urbanization and the need to prepare

supposedly city-softened boys for military service in World War One. Today, however, sustainability is an overriding socio-environmental concern.

During the rise of the recreational form of wilderness canoe tripping, commercial dimensions occurred in a variety of landscapes and included the manufacture of canoes and the outfitting of various businesses, camps, and resorts as well as provision of railway transportation and information on routes, equipment, and provisions (Benedickson, 1982). Similar economic dimensions persist today. Benedickson (1982) described that for recreational canoe trips throughout the late 1890s the absence of reliable maps meant that “Indian [sic] guides were generally employed” (p. 330) when bound for James Bay. In contrast, present-day canoe trips use maps without question. In hindsight, this shift exemplifies how structural changes in tripping practices alter the social, environmental, and economic relationships among travellers, local Aboriginal inhabitants, and their surroundings in ways that significantly influence the participants’ experiences of, and impacts on the areas they visit.

During this formative period, the summer camps established a style of canoe trip that ranged in duration from multiple days to several weeks during which boys engaged in “portaging, tent pitching and outdoor cookery... ‘for his own instruction and the general good of the party’” so as to improve participants’ “physical health and the proper formation of character” (Benedickson, 1982, p. 326). These desired outcomes show the nascent foci of present-day adventure travel and education: individual learning by overcoming challenges through teamwork. Indeed, Benedickson argued that “it is perhaps possible to speak of a continuing canoeing tradition in [Canada] which links Indians [sic], fur traders and contemporary trippers” (1982, p. 337).

Just such a tradition persists in adventure education in Canada, according to Henderson and Potter (2001), who argued that this tradition of backcountry travel distinctly blends historical, cultural, and environmental learning. The intent of this Canadian adventure tradition, the authors explained, is to seek “no matter how illusory.... the ‘pristine’ ... uncorrupted, unnamed, uncultivated.... This unspoiled earth, in Canada has long been a peopled and storied place. It is not

‘wilderness’ but it is a wild nature” (Henderson & Potter, 2001, p. 240). According to Henderson and Potter the north is for southern Canadian outdoor educators more than a factual geographic region; it is an imaginary zone deeply connected to Canadian identity that serves as a counter-balance to predominantly urban lives. Programs offered by summer camps as well as colleges and universities, according to the authors, help maintain “the ‘traditional’ adventure offerings of canoeing...” by running multi-day and multi-week trips on Arctic waterways and by interconnecting various parks and reserves (Henderson & Potter, 2001, p. 234). Despite the involvement of institutions and curricula of higher education, Henderson and Potter (2001) noted that Canadian contributions to adventure education have “historically been more practical and less theoretical” (p. 238). Structurally, canoe tripping in the wilderness paradigm contrasts urban and “wild” landscapes.

*The archetypal wilderness trip.* Through reflection, both on and off the river, I came to see my own tripping and *Big Sky* as situated within a particular tradition of practice, with its own supporting instructional and academic literature. Canoe tripping primers and guidebooks show the basic structural practices of an archetypal wilderness canoe trip. These structures are consistent with the tradition described by Benedickson (1982) and Henderson and Potter (2001), as well as the “hard adventure” typology characterized by a high personal commitment to travel through remote regions and reliance on personal skills and experience while contending with substantial risk and challenge (Williams & Soutar, 2005). The archetypal trip follows a five-phase structure of assembling a suitable and available group, planning and preparing logistics, travelling to access the river, following the chosen route, and, finally returning home. This structure is similar to Clawson and Knestch’s (1966) ubiquitous five-phase trip cycle of anticipation, travel to a destination, participation in place, return home, and recollection of the activity. Usually considered to be elements of the industry’s economic structure or of participants’ psychological experience (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Walker, Hull, and Roggenbuck, 1998), the phases are interpreted here as a structured

pattern of movement incorporating various people, resources, and landscapes into the adventure activity and experience.

Assembling a team that is willing and able to free up time is often the first task in planning an expedition. Davidson and Ruge (1983) in *The Complete Wilderness Paddler* suggested that it might take three years to “free your calendar for the ultimate expedition” (p. 13). A number of factors dictate timelines: arrangements with family and work “back home,” park policy regarding the number of visitor allowed on a route, and seasons suitable for canoe travel. Mason (1988) in *Song of the Paddle: An Illustrated Guide to Wilderness Camping* advised putting together a group of canoeists with compatible skills and experiences and giving the skill level of each careful consideration.

Once assembled, the group plans, researches, and assembles the logistics of a route within their timeline (or adjusts their timeline to suit a chosen route). In *Expedition Canoeing*, for example, Jacobson (2005) suggested prospective paddlers...

Get *all* the facts before you wet your paddle. All the parts of the same river may not be equally appetizing. Failure to check out everything ahead of time is a sure recipe for running into a hydro dam, logging operation.... Research should begin at least six months before you make the trip! (p. 4)

Decisions about routing through landscapes and environments are made in this stage. Hydro dams and logging operations are not, apparently, part of the archetypal wilderness journey. Davidson and Ruge (1983) recommend beginning one’s search for wilderness in the library, reading explorer’s journals and accounts of expeditions for possible routes, and then “troubleshooting a river” by pouring over topographical maps. Much of this information is now available on-line through trip reports and digital maps.

The group purchases and prepares required food and equipment for the journey. Guidebooks provide advice on selection of tents, canoes, packs, and other gear as well as menus and methods for food planning, drying, packaging, and backcountry cooking. Mason (1988) noted that “the kind of food you take on

a canoe trip depends on the length of the trip, the number of portages and most importantly, the reason for taking the trip.... dehydrated foods make possible long, arduous trips into the wilderness” (p. 57). All the preparation occurs at home unless the group or individual is relying on a local outfitter for equipment closer to the start of their route.

The group begins to travel once they have assembled a plan, route, food, and equipment. “The ideal expedition” Davidson and Ruge (1983) opined, “builds gradually from the moment of conception on through the preparations, and proceeds to a preliminary climax at the time of departure from home base” (p. 79). Leaving home, the group travels by car, train, or plane (or some combination of these) to a “put-in” or access point at the start of the route. Between departure from home and putting boats in the water, participants likely have little interaction with rural communities except if they use a local shuttle or outfitting service or seek advice about the river. Davidson and Ruge (1983) advised would-be canoeists to evaluate critically the information provided by local informants who may be unfamiliar with canoeing and distant conditions. Jacobson (2005) cautioned travelers to heed the advice of locals, but to find numerous sources and be leery of information from non-canoeists.

While some mishaps may occur along the road, the real action happens on the river. At the put-in, participants transition from travel by car, train, or plain to travel by canoe. From the put-in to the take-out, participants make their way along the chosen route over the available timeline while coping with rapids, water levels, weather, navigation, and unforeseen obstacles and events.

Mason (1988) summarized travel on the river by noting “sometimes the joy comes from sharing places we all love. The most exciting trips are those on which we see a river for the first time, when every bend is a surprise” (p. 4). Along the way participants experience the thrills and fears of running rapids, the work of portaging, the relaxation of drifting along, and the daily tasks of breaking camp, paddling, eating, and making camp again. Mason cautioned that “an unforeseen hazard can materialize at any time” (p. 4). Indeed, it is precisely the unexpected eventualities and realities that Arnould and Price (1993) identified as

leading participants to evaluate their experiences on river trips as extraordinary. While travelling, paddlers are encouraged to “walk softly” and practice minimum impact camping. Jacobson (2005) argued that irresponsible backcountry living practices change “places that are special” into “an abomination, a trash heap, an insult to man and God” because of some travelers’ “ignorance of the simplest ecological relationships... the fragility of the land, its water, fish and wildlife” (p. 267). According to Jacobson, responsible travel belongs in and helps maintain wilderness.

Limited time and food supplies require that groups attend to their progress along the planned route and itinerary. Jacobson (2005) extolled the virtues of establishing and sticking to a detailed schedule by recording and tracking progress along the overall route and timeline in a logbook. Such logbooks are often rhetorically situated within the traditions of exploration that inspire wilderness trips. While encouraging paddlers to keep journals, Davidson and Ruge (1983) noted that “Hearne was remarkably matter-of-fact about his travels on the Barren Grounds, and Mackenzie often satisfied himself with notations about the number of Indians [sic] met and the progress in miles per day” (p. 160).<sup>26</sup> Logbooks have also become entrenched in professional practice as legal documents and logistical tools used by trip leaders to record, recall, and repeat routes.

Arriving at the take-out, a canoe route will have either looped back to the put-in (and one’s vehicle) or end at a distance and therefore require a shuttle (by plane, train, or car) back to the starting point. Davidson and Ruge (1983) suggested that “your expedition, if you run it according to the Ideal, should end with a final bursting out of the pristine wilderness back to the world of men and machines” (p. 239). After such bursting, participants make their way home with

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<sup>26</sup> One crucial difference in journals of explorers and present-day recreationalists lies in the fact that explorers did not have maps and strict timelines for their travels; they often relied on Indigenous guides as they ventured to create maps and engage in trade relations. This would likely have resulted in very different experience and skills in relating to the land and their position. Horne’s (2005) phenomenological analysis of Samuel Hearne’s journey to the Coppermine River (1795) showed that Hearne learned to be in the arctic from his Chipewyan companions. Hearne’s account, according to Horne, was a turning point in 18<sup>th</sup>-century arctic exploration literature that predominantly provided mercantile and imperialist accounts of conquest. Hearne’s account, in contrast, showed him learning to live in a foreign wilderness landscape that he saw as including the Chipewyan culture in which he was immersed.

stories to tell, photographs and video to share, and journals to remind them of their travels. In his closing, Jacobson (2005) promoted an environmental ethic, encouraging paddlers “get involved” in order to keep “hundreds of free-flowing unspoiled rivers in North America” from feeling the “darkening influence of humans” (p. 268). Clearly, a particular experience of place is orchestrated through the structure of these activities.

The archetypal trip is a style of canoeing relevant and accessible to a particular community: participants predominantly live in urban areas and have the means to set aside time and money for an extended expedition away from family and work (though family trips are common). In addition, archetypal practices contribute to situating canoe tripping in a romantic history of colonial exploration as well as particular geographies that avoid contact with others beyond the group and are free from resource extraction. These “down sides” of archetypal practices are rarely discussed in practical guides but are particularly problematic in the context of sustainability.

This archetypal wilderness trip provides a heuristic device for analysing emergent understandings of the structural practices and archi-textures of trips. *Big Sky* largely followed this archetype but also differed in ways that shed light on both the wilderness and sustainability paradigms. From the outset, expedition members were dedicated to re-thinking environmental learning beyond the archetypal wilderness experience and exploration narratives, of which the group was purposefully critical and self-reflective. Because of this, the route intentionally began relatively close to the homes of many participants and passed through rural and industrial landscapes and communities.

**Paradigmatic shortfalls and critiques of the tradition.** The history and tradition of recreational canoe tripping practices described above is replete with layers of conflict and hegemony that often go unacknowledged in adventure travel and education. Haun-Moss (2002) critically examined the history of recreational wilderness canoe tripping in Ontario. The imperial project of colonial exploration that inspired canoe trips, Haun-Moss argued, depended upon help of Aboriginal guides and the appropriation of the birch-bark canoe by “European

settler/invasers” in order to colonize and control the land we now call Canada. To point, “parsing down the land to manageable subsections was part of the effort to know it, name it, and lay claim upon it” (Haun-Moss, 2002, p. 40).<sup>27</sup> The maps resulting from historic exploration replaced Aboriginal guides and continue to facilitate present-day wilderness trips. The colonial use of the canoe as a utilitarian and economic tool for conquering and controlling the land, according to Haun-Moss, was further layered with romantic Victorian primitivism among wealthy urban Euro-Canadians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The canoe became an element of nature, and Euro-Canadians sought to master techniques for building and using canoes in the production of a recreational form of wilderness tripping. The twin ideals of colonial exploration and romantic engagements with primitive nature found a common denominator in supposedly untouched wilderness that enabled paddlers to simultaneously conquer and preserve primordial nature. Like the archetypal trip, Haun-Moss (2002) described:

A desire to master the land and to yield to it, combined with a desire to master the canoe itself, continue to inform much of the recreational canoeing behaviour of Canadians in the province of Ontario today; they also inform the pedagogical structures put in place to form and satisfy these multiple canoeing desires. (p. 40)

Haun-Moss asserted that the ideology and practices of archetypal wilderness trips have become so pervasive within dominant Euro-Canadian culture that they are considered common sense, as being *the* way wilderness trips are done, rather than being understood as structuring a particular experience of self and land in relation to each other. According to Haun-Moss embodied experiences of canoe travel provide an unexplored counter narrative of canoe tripping, which continues to provide paddlers with access to landscapes, excitement and skill in the experience, and an understanding of the body and spirituality through long-distance travel. Liberman (2007) critiqued wilderness experiences as perpetuating

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<sup>27</sup> The process of knowing, controlling, and mapping land was not only an “invasion” or abuse of aboriginal guides. Knowledge of canoes, canoeing, and the land was also passed among people who worked, travelled, traded, and lived together; people from Scotland, France, and various First Nations, for example, intermarried and gave rise to new cultural communities, including the Métis.

problematic American frontier ideology; he too suggested that embodied understandings and intercorporeality provide a potentially powerful basis for knowing and relating with the more-than-human world.

Through a feminist socio-historical analysis, McDermott (2000b) showed how dominant gender ideologies during the early decades of the twentieth century shaped traditions of adult recreational canoe tripping, children's summer camps, and wilderness tripping in Canada. According to McDermott, social forces framed canoe tripping and wilderness as masculine spaces of physical activity in which boys could achieve "manhood" and in which females were understood to be the physically inferior sex. Women were largely excluded, their participation emphasized "feminine" skills such as menu planning, and activities were modified (they were often relegated to the bow of the boat rather than the stern, which is a position of control). McDermott highlighted that a small group of women (such as Mina Hubbard and Florence Tasker) resisted and overcame ideological and material constraints to make important, but often ignored, contributions to northern travel. Finally, McDermott showed how more contemporary single-sex wilderness canoe tripping (particularly female-only trips) resist dominant gender dynamics by enabling participation, altering the traditional model of a recreational trip, and facilitating new and different experiences of physicality among participants. McDermott's (2000a, 2000b, 2004) work is particularly significant because it strongly critiques canoe tripping traditions in a way that shows how the activity can be altered to bring out different benefits and satisfy different values.

Jessup (2002) described how a supposed national Canadian identity linking culture and nature through the canoe has been, and remains, characteristic of Ontario regionalism, and is not geographically or experientially pan-Canadian. According to Jessup, the commodification of the "wilderness experience" in Canada arose at the intersection of commercial interests in middle-class tourism, the creation of national parks, and their combined marketing through the Group of Seven's landscape paintings. Canadian railway industrialists marketed parks and wilderness experiences as providing refuge from urban centres and, somewhat

ironically, from modern industrial capitalism (Jessup, 2002; Zezulka-Mailloux, 2007). According to Mackenzie (as cited in Jessup, 2002), wilderness landscapes and experiences were underpinned by a notion of landscape that demarcated separate living spaces for humans and for fauna to avoid their interaction except during the structured short-term adventures of urban tourists. The process of creating and protecting wilderness areas has involved the re-location of Indigenous peoples, rural livelihoods, and the appropriation of land and resources upon which they depend (Guha, 1998; MacLaren, 2007; Murphy, 2007; West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006). Parks are not “pristine” nature; they are products of socio-environmental processes.

Clearly, canoe tripping is deeply entangled in multiple historic and contemporary social, economic, and environmental realities including ecological awareness, Indigenous-Western relations, and higher education that have given rise to particular forms of recreational travel by canoe, such as the archetype presented. More recently, critiques of the wilderness paradigm have identified colonial expansion through European exploration (Cruikshank, 2005; Fletcher, 2009), the misappropriation of Indigenous practices by summer camps (Fox, 2007; Oles, 1995), gendered and embodied understandings of canoe tripping practices (McDermott, 2000b, 2004; Newbery, 2003) as well as the eviction of communities during establishment of wilderness parks (MacLaren, 2007).

Faced with such critiques, scholars struggle to provide theories of how adventure travel activities support sustainability, while taking seriously the claims of integrating culture, nature and the human body within the wilderness canoe tripping tradition (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000; Newbery, 2003; Urry, 2007). Exclusionary aspects relating to land, culture, and class persist in the archetypal wilderness tradition of practice. According to Fox (2000), dominant wilderness experiences tend to be exclusive, rather than plural, and have caused harm that must be addressed in practice and theory to make adventure travel more ethical. Fox contended that the metanarrative of the “wilderness experience” tends to privilege white, masculine, and Euro-North American perspectives and participation. Experiences of the land are assumed to be subjective,

individualistic, and occurring in a supposedly unmediated present. Fox argued that this privileged perspective within adventure travel has contributed to a lack of theoretical approaches that recognize the entanglement of diverse societies, economies, and ecologies.

**An emerging sustainability paradigm in adventure travel.** Numerous authors (Beringer, 2004; Lugg, 2007; O’Connell et al., 2005) have contributed to an emerging sustainability paradigm within adventure travel. O’Connell et al. (2005) called for outdoor recreation and education to embrace sustainability by focusing on participatory relationships. The authors noted barriers to educating for sustainability including, among others, “Western society’s psychosocial history and conceptualization of the out-of-doors” (p. 82) and, paraphrasing Warren (1998), “the hegemonic foundations of unsustainable outdoor recreation – such as the paradigms related to individuality, wilderness adventure, and physical risk” (O’Connell et al., 2005, p. 89). O’Connell et al. suggested that outdoor recreation practitioners and programs use Lefebvre’s (2000) framework to evaluate sustainability education based on attention to: (1) interconnections between societal, economic, and environmental issues, (2) interaction and learning with nature, (3) methodologies and strategies to develop skills, values, and attitudes while allowing for critical reflection and action, and (4) community involvement so as to ensure learning is contextually appropriate and relevant. O’Connell et al. (2005) concluded that “it has also become evident that the future of this field is untenable should teachers in post-secondary outdoor recreation programs not recognize and act on their responsibility to train sustainable leaders for tomorrow” (p. 91).

Extending the call for sustainability, Lugg (2007) stated that outdoor programs are in a unique position to facilitate important interactions with nature as a way for participants to improve their understandings of their own ecological position and sustainability. Lugg cautioned, however, that simple “add-ons” to traditional approaches would not suffice; outdoor recreation institutions require a paradigm shift that responds to and recognizes the broader context and crisis of unsustainability and opportunities for improvement.

Similarly, Higgins (2009) has argued that outdoor experiential education must become relevant to modern society by addressing issues of sustainability. In Higgins' view, outdoor educators have not addressed this imperative even though they are well equipped and positioned to do so. He suggested opening up learning to embrace the complexity of real-world problems, helping participants find personal connections through place-based learning, and having them focus on consequences of their actions while taking responsibility.

Fox and McAvoy's (1998) wayfaring metaphor inspired the archi-textural approach to re-thinking adventure travel vis-à-vis sustainability. The authors argued that Western environmental philosophy privileges bioregional and home metaphors that emphasize rootedness. Despite this, they argued, movement and wandering are essential to discovering new and different perspectives on one's own and others' environmental relationships. According to Fox and McAvoy, as well as Cuthbertson, Heine, and Whitson (1997), travel can broaden and interconnect the environmental knowledges and realities of diverse communities.

Jacobsen (1997) argued that the multi-sensual experiences of movement are essential to understanding differences among places and therefore key to fostering a sense of place, which is not necessarily romantic and positive. Tourism studies, Jacobsen argued, have tended to be highly oriented towards visual perception and neglectful of the polysensual experience of travel. Jacobsen argued that understanding place means attending to the sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes that surround and involve the traveller. Such experiences are particularly acute during adventure, according to Jacobsen, when the traveller is a stranger in an environment. Like the other authors, Jacobsen recognised the brief and ephemeral nature of transience as a limitation to knowing and understanding places through travel.

Fox and McAvoy (1998), Cuthbertson et al. (1997), and Jacobsen's (1997) ideas regarding travel and environmental understanding are extended by examining how movement is involved in making and structuring places and their diverse meanings. Taken together, the various authors reviewed suggest that engaging place and environmental interactions through movement is both possible

during adventure travel activities and necessary to foster sustainability. Given the archetype presented and the complexity of engaging a contemporary context, I ask how adventure travel can be restructured within a sustainability paradigm to better access the multiple realities and interconnections that occur in environments and landscapes used for canoe travel.

Critics of the wilderness paradigm, supporters of a sustainability paradigm, and participants and authors within the canoe tripping tradition under consideration here agree upon the value of a lived-with approach to human-environment relations in adventure travel (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000; O'Connell et al., 2005; Raffan, 1999). Striving for a lived-with theoretical and practical approach to adventure travel means challenging the nature-society, body-world, and theory-practice dualisms entrenched in Western thought. For example, Urry (2000) urged researchers in an age of globalization to understand human agency not as purely social but as:

An accomplishment... brought about through various objects, such as desks, papers, computer systems, aircraft seats and so on. This agency is achieved in the forming and reforming of chains or networks of humans and non-humans.... We should develop accounts that recognize the co-agency of the network... (p. 78)

Outdoor adventure travel provides opportunities to do this because, as Urry (2000) notes, it requires physical effort and multi-sensory engagement with one's surroundings as well as encounters with "disruptive elements" both human and non-human. In contrast with tourisms focused on rapid transit, Urry noted that in physically demanding adventure travel "slowness can be a highly valued way of moving across an environment and exerting the minimum of impact" (p. 55). Maintaining distinctions between explicitly social and physical realms is increasingly problematic and difficult when examining adventure travel activities within the context of sustainability (Urry, 2000).

Taking a phenomenological and anthropological approach showed how social structures and experiences of canoe tripping occur within patterns of movement mediated by the activity and landscapes in which it occurs, and that

these may shift with different travel conditions. Furthermore, the realities of canoe travel—the challenges of everyday life as well as Urry’s “disruptive elements”—can affirm as well as challenge dominant narratives of place, landscapes, and wilderness experiences (e.g. solitude, freedom) that often motivate participation (see Chapter Three: *living Stories*).

McDermott (2004) and Newbery (2003) showed that gendered experiences of canoeing entangled specific demands of the activity and environment that enabled gender roles, normative behaviours, and particular relationships to the land to be established. Newbery’s focus on portaging highlighted how specific tasks within the activity of canoe tripping can meaningfully speak to place relationships. She interpreted a masculine approach to portaging as framing the landscape as “crushing,” challenging, and needing to be overcome by “hard” bodies, rather than being lived-with and negotiated. Newbery’s use of narratives enabled her to address participants’ relationships to land and activity, but also to challenge normative approaches within adventure travel and education. Newbery stated that narratives of lived experience “provide more tangled accounts of living contradictions” (p. 208), which require theoretical alternatives to overly coherent and normalized perspectives that gloss over complexity. Newbery concluded that portaging is a way for participants to create themselves and their identity in relation to other participants. Her study also showed that the practice of portaging is a way of simultaneously making self and place in relation. An archi-textural analysis examines this relationship on the scale of the whole trip.

McDermott (2004) showed that female-only canoe trips freed participants from pre-conceived gender roles and behaviours. Moreover, the activity and terrain opened new opportunities for participants to explore and understand their own embodied physicality. McDermott strongly cautioned against naturalizing human-environment relations based on gender, as well as assuming that gender should be the organizing principle for examinations of human-environmental relations. McDermott’s study provided an example of how different approaches to

landscapes, objects, and skill development during a canoe trip can open new understandings of self in relation to landscape.

Wilderness traditions of canoeing face serious critiques. In response, authors have called for a focus on sustainability using an integrated approach to human-environment relations as they are lived through the embodied experience of adventure travellers. Participants on *Big Sky* were asked to interpret their lived experience and travel practices using concepts from the dwelling perspective in order to learn about human-environment relations lived through canoe tripping in ways that moved beyond the wilderness paradigm.

### **Approaching Theory as a Participant within the Environment**

Fundamental assumptions about human understandings and engagement with their surroundings are crucial to re-envisioning socio-ecological knowledge and place making through canoe tripping. Ingold (2000, 2008) described two ways in which humans understand the world and engage landscapes and environments: the modern *building perspective* and the *dwelling perspective*.<sup>28</sup> The building and dwelling perspectives are fundamentally different *conceptualizations* of human-environment relations but they also describe different ways to *actively engage* and understand one's surroundings. Neither approach should be equated wholly with either a wilderness or a sustainability paradigm. Building and dwelling do find different prominence within the wilderness and sustainability paradigms because these paradigms engage different aspects of human lived experience. Modern life for humans, according to Ingold, is caught up in "dialectic interplay between engagement and detachment" (Ingold, 2000, p. 216), between dwelling in a world of revelation and partial knowledge, on one hand, and separation from it and control over it, on the other. Ingold (2007b) argued that the dwelling perspective is "the most fundamental mode by

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<sup>28</sup> Ingold (2008) stated that he regrets using the term *dwelling* because it "carries a heavy connotation of snug, well-wrapped localism" (p. 1808). To overcome such misinterpretation and to emphasize movement across boundaries Ingold described life out in the open as a process of *inhabitation*. The term *dwelling* is retained throughout this work, however, because it is consistent with the tradition of thought extending back to Heidegger's *Building Dwelling Thinking*, and because *inhabitant* would be very confusing in a travel and tourism context. Readers should not take the notion of dwelling to mean a "cozy" localism. With both *inhabitation* and *dwelling* Ingold seems to be striving to describe humans as *participating* within environments.

which living beings, both human and non-human, inhabit the earth” (p. 81).

Inspired by Heidegger (1954/1993), Ingold and others (Casey, 1996) insist that dwelling forms the basis for the modern building approach.

**The building perspective.**

*“The environment” set apart.* The building perspective dominates Western thinking, science, and environmentalism; it frames the earth as an opaque solid globe, the outside surface of which is occupied by humans, other species, and objects (Ingold, 2000). Quoting Cooper, Ingold described that the building perspective is epitomised by the trope of spaceship earth and assumes that there is “‘just one big environment’, identified with the order of nature (Cooper 1992: 167)... [which] is profoundly alien to human experience” (p. 218). The building perspective is invoked when people describe conservation lands and/or waters as being “set aside” in order to protect “the environment” from human use, placing administrative and conceptual boundaries between nature and humanity. Setting these boundaries facilitates the exclusion of some human activities from areas that can thereafter be used to examine nature and contrast it with the follies of industrialization (McNamee, 2002) while attracting tourists intent on temporary escape from civilization (Cronon, 1996; Urry, 2000).

*Transport between places that contain activity.* The building perspective frames places as containing human activity. Places are built, and then people dwell in them. Places are said to be created through the compartmentalization of space and objects that are inscribed with human cultural and historical meaning (Casey, 1996; Ingold, 2000). From the building perspective, travel is pre-planned and destination-oriented transport over the land and around the globe in order to engage in certain activities at particular places (Ingold, 2007b). Such travel is, in effect, tourism. When applied to adventure travel, however, this notion frames whole landscapes or environmental features as destinations or places. Landscape-as-destination is evident in Clawson and Knestch’s (1966) five-phase model of the outdoor recreation and tourism experience. Weber (2001) has pointed out that a destination-orientation fails to account for the significance of adventure travel that occurs through active movement “along the way” and in between places.

“The transported traveller,” Ingold (2007b) described, “becomes a passenger, who does not himself move but is rather moved from place to place” (p. 78). In between places, people are nowhere at all except, for a moment, at a spatial grid coordinate. Transport takes time away from being at the destination. The traveller’s desire for time-efficiency frames transportation technology as directed towards and limited in its ability provide instantaneous transport between places (Ingold, 2007b).

**The dwelling perspective.**

In his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* Heidegger (1954/1993) argued that to build, beings must first dwell in their world. The dwelling perspective assumes that humans always-already interact with and inhabit (rather than simply occupy) a constantly changing environment that surrounds them. “Fundamental to the dwelling perspective” Ingold (2005) wrote, “is the thesis that the production of life involves the unfolding of a field of relations that crosscuts the boundary between human and non-human. Human beings are not the only dwellers or inhabitants of this planet” (p. 504).

*Environments and activities begetting landscapes and places.* Ingold (2008) argued that what members of Western societies commonly call the environment might be better understood as a highly-dynamic “zone of entanglement” with intermingling flows of air, water, and soil in which plants as well as human and non-human animals grow and intertwine along their own trails of life. When I refer to an active environment I mean to evoke this notion of surroundings made up of weather, flows, processes, matter, flora, and fauna along with other humans that impact, intervene, and support the travellers’ and local inhabitants’ activities in multiple ways. Landscape from this approach is not a tabula rasa of space in nature layered with human meaning. Rather, landscapes continually change as they embody human and environmental processes and interactions that contribute to various types of landscape including industrial, urban, pastoral, and wilderness among others (Ingold, 2000, 2007b).<sup>29</sup> Place-

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<sup>29</sup> Just as landscapes take shape through interactions, so do the human (and other) beings that inhabit this zone of entanglement; their growth is a mutual process.

making is ongoing and occurs through these interactions as people come and go from existing places and encounter one another along their different trails of life. Places, from the dwelling perspective, are like knots in the meshwork made from and along ways of life. People linger and meet in places; they rest before moving on. Through place making, space is opened up and bounded within and between places (Casey, 1996; Heidegger, 1954/1993). The dwelling perspective reverses the space-place relationship assumed in the building perspective.

Dwelling constitutes an on-going act of becoming that, in the production of one's life, draws on and shapes one's surroundings and fellow inhabitants. Ingold (2005) noted that "even regions of so-called untouched wilderness are deliberately set up to be untouched, and their subsequent monitoring is more akin to conducting a scientific experiment than abandoning the world to look after itself" (p. 504).<sup>30</sup> From this perspective, wilderness grows through the interplay of various environmental or contextual forces, such as economies and rivers, along with the activities of human and non-human producers, such as politicians and managers as well as trees and animals (Ingold, 2005). Ingold has argued that urban areas are no less natural or more constructed than wilderness areas; rather that they differ in terms of the principal producers and their relative influence.

***Engaging through travel.*** From the dwelling perspective, travel is sensual and focused on finding ways through the landscape and environment while attending to other people, animals, and forces (Ingold, 2000). Ingold (2007b) called such travel *wayfaring* and described it as occurring out "in the open" (2007a, p. S19; 2008, p. 1796). Casey (1996) and Ingold (2000) understood self-powered or assisted bodily movement to be an almost-ubiquitous reality of everyday human engagement with place and landscape. Moreover, movement creates and joins places together. As inhabitants, humans leave paths, create places, and open spaces. Ingold (2000) showed that people know and interact with their world through their attentive movement during travels and daily tasks. Different from transport, wayfaring *requires* the traveller to attend and respond to

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<sup>30</sup> Commenting on the notion of cultural construction, Ingold (2005) continued this quote by noting "...This does not mean, however, that the non-human world is counterfeit, a simulacrum of the 'real thing' constructed after an ideal that exists only in the human imagination" (p. 504).

his or her surroundings. Canoe tripping, then, can be examined for the ways in which participants sense, shape, and learn about places, inhabitants, and environments.

***Gathering meaning along the way.*** From the dwelling perspective, meanings of landscapes and objects arise within the context of intentional activities in particular surroundings and are always incomplete and positional understandings of one's (and others') world. Ingold (2000) and Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002) understood knowledge as local in the sense that it accumulates along the path of one's life. Contrary to the Western bias towards rootedness, the dwelling perspective shows that movement provides opportunities to learn and grow in relation to one's surroundings. Disparate places, paths, and processes are woven together through the daily tasks and activities of inhabitants, contributing to the textures of a life-world that is at once social and ecological (Ingold, 2000). Canoeists can ask, therefore, how their trips open spaces and build places in landscapes, what sort of meanings and character these spaces and place have, and how they relate to sustainability.

***Archi-texture and sustainability: considering how to participate.*** Within the dwelling perspective, building is continually going on as long as people dwell in an environment; *architecture* is the activity of taking pause to reflect on and imagine how one wants to build, make places and open space in their world (Ingold, 2000). I use the term *architecture* in this sense as a verb, as an act of critical and creative reflection. Ingold (2007b) was inspired by Lefebvre (1974/1991) who discussed the interpretation of physical buildings and noted that "it is helpful to think of architectures as 'archi-textures', to treat each monument or building, viewed in its surroundings and context, in the populated area and associated networks in which it is set down, as part of a particular production of space" (p. 118). Such an archi-texture implies a meshwork of "trails *along* which life is lived" (Ingold, 2007b, p. 81) that encounter one another and give rise to places. Following Lefebvre (1974/1991) and Ingold (2007b) I use the term *archi-texture*, but rather than apply it to a building that physically structures one's engagement with space and place, I use the term to describe a constellation of

practices that structure how paddlers move through, experience, and influence their surroundings. The archetypal wilderness canoe trip is one such archi-texture. Trip archi-textures shape how paddlers understand and contribute to making places in ways that are more and less sustainable. An archi-textural analysis is well suited to issues of sustainability because it highlights interactions among people's practices, the things they use, the places in which they occur, and multiple broader contexts. By taking pause to consider how trips are structured, I am performing architecture of trip archi-textures.

The United Nations Environment Program and World Tourism Organization (2005) jointly defined *sustainable tourism* as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts [i.e. the ‘triple bottom line’], addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (p. 12) through a continual process of improvement. Definitions that rely on the so-called “triple bottom line” have been critiqued for positioning social and economic processes and impacts as distinct from and equivalent to environmental processes and impacts, which in fact provide the basis and overarching context for economies and societies (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). Conceptualizing ecological impacts of tourism as occurring locally in travel destinations rather than systemically may exacerbate understandings of the environment and society as distinct geographic regions (Hunter and Shaw, 2007).

The dwelling perspective can contribute to understandings of sustainable travel because it situates all growth and activity (social, biological, economic) within a dynamic environmental context that interconnects regions. Scholars and practitioners can examine how social, ecological, and economic systems and health within and across populations, landscapes, and environments are interrelated and influenced by travel activities. For example, participants on *Big Sky* paddled past oil sand pit mines and industrial sites that depend on the fresh water of the Athabasca River. The water of the Athabasca flowed (and continues to flow) through and between territories of many First Nations, through Wood Buffalo National Park, and on to the Beaufort Sea. The river supplied many

human and non-human communities with fresh water, and it enabled the processing of bitumen into oil. The oil produced shaped urban infrastructure, fuelled air travel to wilderness destinations, and became the raw material for canoes and outdoor equipment. Along the way, it contributed to global warming and the pollution of fresh water. The *Big Sky* expedition and broader adventure travel industry were (and continue to be) entangled in such webs of social, economic, and environmental relation.

Taking a grounded place-based approach to outdoor travel activities does not necessarily make those activities more sustainable, but it does help participants and researchers know their surroundings in different ways and possibly engage with and reflect on the consequences of behaviours within multiple contexts. From the dwelling perspective, sustainability is the continuance of life. Living sustainably, therefore, requires careful attention to the ways in which human individuals and communities *participate* in broader processes of life. This conception of sustainability echoes Heidegger's (1954/1993) notion of *sparing*, which he described as fundamental to dwelling. *Sparing* does not imply withdrawal, it is a positive and care-full *engagement* with things that supports them and allows them the freedom to live, become, and follow their own path of life. Learning to live and travel sustainably is a matter of architecture and place-making on a grand scale; a practice of taking pause to consider the world that is built through the ways in which people individually and collectively dwell, and whether that world will be inhabitable for generations to come.

The central question of this monograph is how are the skills used in adventure travel related to the ways in which places are (re)generated and their meanings communicated and shared? Knowingly or not, paddlers engage issues of sustainability. This begs further questions: what knowledge and socio-ecological relations are established through contemporary recreational canoe tripping? How are landscapes, places and their meanings shaped by these practices? Which strands of these meshworks are adventure travellers engaging, contributing, and ignoring? What might a sustainable archi-texture of canoe tripping look like?

**A commonplace journey methodology.** Implications of Ingold's work for the theory and practice of adventure travel were explored using the commonplace journey methodology (see Chapter Two). Over the course of the expedition, participants engaged in a lived dialogue between theory and practice through repeated commonplace cycles of praxis that involved individual and shared observation, reflection, and discussion while performing in situ. Each of the nine cycles was based on a set of prompts that provided a common focus among participants and integrated the dwelling perspective with events and experiences throughout the trip. Data was recorded in participant field journals, tape recordings of semi-structured group discussions, and the researcher's observations as a participant. After the trip, journals and transcriptions were analysed through an iterative process of multiple readings and writing. The readings included: identifying major themes from the dwelling perspective; reading for specific concepts and structural practices that shaped participants' experience on a broad scale; examining each structural practice for the lived experience of space and place, body, time, and relations; refining emergent understandings with counter narratives; and then seeking implications, critiques and promising possibilities for sustainability and wilderness paradigms.

This monograph takes pause to examine the archi-texture of paddlers' socio-environmental relations during a canoe expedition in order to glean lessons about sustainability in and through adventure travel. I focus on the influence of practices and paths on paddlers, the landscapes they visit, and the meanings that result. Such practices and paths enable and constrain participants' understandings and engagements with broader socio-environmental issues of sustainability, and a critical examination leads to alternative approaches.

### **Mapping our Path**

Before moving into the results of the research, I want to summarize my argument thus far. The emergence of recreational wilderness canoe tripping in reaction to urbanization as a way of connecting with nature and building character shows two themes that continue to structure the archetypal wilderness trip: escape from urban areas and the quest for challenge and transcendence in nature. In

Canada, summer camps and university programs have maintained this tradition of practice by following a similar trip structure, or archi-texture. Internationally, adventure travel has been criticized for being overly oriented towards risk and challenge, for being socially exclusive, and for neglecting environmental learning. Although there are variations and exceptions, adventure travel trips tend to focus on overcoming personal and group challenge in wilderness areas that are understood as wild nature in need of protection from human impacts. Claims of the convergence of nature and culture persist within the Canadian wilderness canoeing tradition, but predominant theories of outdoor adventure travel play on the separation of nature and culture, as does an archetypal trip structure that frames wilderness as a bounded destination. Despite multiple critiques and shortcomings, scholars agree that outdoor travel is well positioned to engage participants in embodied experiences of the non-human world that show the interrelation of their social, economic, and ecological realities. The issue of sustainability has forced scholars to call for theoretical and practical approaches to adventure travel that position humans as belonging within their environment, and thus directly challenging the nature-culture dichotomy as an organizing principle of both theory and practice. A position of belonging is the fundamental starting point of phenomenology. Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective provides an alternative account of human-environment relations in which the building and discovery of a meaningful world occurs from a position of belonging.

In the next section I interpret how participants in *Big Sky* related to their surroundings through their canoe tripping practices using the dwelling perspective. The interpretation highlights problematic and promising elements of the archetypal wilderness approach and, more importantly, suggests alternative concepts and practices with which to structure adventure travel which. The treatment of each structural practice concludes with a discussion specific to that section. The general discussion examines the broader implications of the archi-textural analysis for the practice and theory of outdoor adventure travel. I present nine principles of a participatory ecological approach to outdoor adventure travel (see Table 4-1) and several types of environmental knowledge (see Table 4-2),

which can be used as a heuristic device to further explore theory and practice in an emerging sustainability paradigm.

### **Living and Structuring Connections to Place and Sustainability**

Over the course of the expedition three practices emerged that fundamentally structured participants' experience of place and socio-ecological understanding. The findings follow the structural practices of a) planning and preparation, b) travel along the route, and c) engaging in social interactions beyond the group. An appreciation of these three structural practices, and the tasks involved in each, was not clearly understood until well into the expedition. Each structural practice was made up of constituent practices that shed light on the archetypal wilderness approach as well as possibilities for an integrated participatory ecological approach to canoe tripping in support of a sustainability paradigm. All three structural practices shaped and were expressions of participants' engagement with their surroundings and relate to sustainability. Given that participants were exploring a paradigm shift, it is not surprising that their narratives and emergent understandings show paradox and dissent as well as cohesion and concurrence. Emerging understandings and discussions of each structural practice are presented by following along the *Big Sky* expedition.

Drawing together the analyses of each structural practice, the general discussion suggests that critically examining archi-textures in light of one's trip objectives may help prevent unintentional isolation of regions of travel from larger personal and socio-environmental contexts, issues, and changes. To help move the field toward a sustainability paradigm, I offer nine principles of a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel as a heuristic device for scholars and practitioners.

**Planning: mobilizing and managing relations.** Participants' trip planning established a web of socio-environmental relations that structured and expressed participant's engagement with various landscapes throughout the expedition. Planning can be interpreted as an act of architecture, taking a distanced perspective on the coming trip while participants dwell in and rely on urban areas for access to maps, trip reports, and food, for example. The distanced

perspective used in planning *Big Sky* was enabled by the lived experiences of multiple other people canoeing in remote landscapes and along the rivers of our route. Members of the expedition drew on trip reports, journals, as well as their own past journeys. One of the most-experienced participants, Robert described how he might use his experience during *Big Sky* for future planning efforts:

Robert: ... the stories that I will tell myself will be the stories [for] the next time I'm planning a trip like this - what did I learn from the last [trip]? What would I do differently, and what would I do the same? Those are the types of stories that are important for me – and I guess that's the way that I see the stories from this trip...  
[p. 313, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Robert's quotation suggests that the knowledge he discovered through tripping contributed to effective planning based on his past experiences in different landscapes. Planning was not an isolated practice; it collectively drew on participants' past experiences and contemporary connections to shaped future experiences in the landscapes encountered during *Big Sky*.

Planning had serious implications for safety and the enjoyment of the recreational experience and was a major aspect of the expedition, as indicated in the archetypal trip. Planning, as intended, greatly influenced participant experiences. But seen from the dwelling perspective, planning can be understood as a key task that drew upon and established a number of social, ecological and economic relationships that persisted throughout the journey and may or may not have been connected to or provided a sense of the area visited. Tracing some of these connections, I show their influence on participants' knowledge of and engagement with landscapes and, therefore, their senses of and impacts (positive and negative) on places and sustainability. Three understandings emerged regarding planning: First, planning involved suspending and managing social relations in order to open a space in which to be-on-trip in an isolated way. Secondly, establishing a route and itinerary structured where and how the group travelled and provided advanced knowledge of our surroundings. Thirdly, provisioning food and equipment enabled a "self-contained" style of travel that relied on socio-economic and ecological relationships mobilized at home rather

than along the river. Once on the river, planning shaped the group's performance of the activity and experience of the surroundings by (a) creating a space of social disconnection; (b) reducing the influence of local social and environmental factors by pre-determining where, when, and how fast the group moved; and (c) relying on socio-ecological relationships distant to the landscapes through which participants travelled.

Multiple socio-ecological and economic threads relating participants to a variety of people and places were established, avoided, and suspended during planning and preparation. Relations with work, family and friends were largely, but not completely, suspended. Economic and ecological relationships that supported the trip engaged people and regions far removed from the immediate travel surroundings. The knowledge of the places and surroundings through which participants were to travel related, for the most part, to long-past events in European exploration or highly specific information drawn from maps and trip reports. Participants planned in a way that did not expect or require the establishment of socio-ecological or economic relationships with the landscapes, places, and communities through which they travelled. Rather, planning ensured a particular style and rhythm of travel conducive to completing the itinerary. Planning opened a space in which participants could have wilfully avoided settlements—except to re-supply—while experiencing and leaving the landscapes they visited as relatively unspoilt and un-peopled wilderness areas that had supposedly changed little since European exploration. Moreover, participants could experience these landscapes as separate from their homes and as distinct from the socio-ecological relationships that sustained them and their journey. Participants of *Big Sky*, however, intentionally selected and travelled a route that challenged the notion of isolated wilderness landscapes, and which helped make this analysis possible.

*Social relations were managed to open an isolated space in which to be-on-trip.* Participants had to make time available to come on trip by arranging social and financial obligations to family, work, and school. These measures created space and time for the expedition, for participants to be “out there,” “on

trip.” The space created and way of being had a particular character of isolation from everyday life that was partially but not entirely due to the realities of canoe travelling along rivers. Isolation was also a preferred way of being that participants planned for and managed in advance of departure.

Separating themselves from family and urban life was common for the more-experienced participants and members of *Big Sky*. When discussing this trip in the context of his life, and the stories he would relate to family and friends, Chris described his perception of the spaces opened for adventure travel and one of the ways in which he identifies with them:

Chris: [this trip] relates more to me... more on the adventure level or on the ‘away from home’ level—as far as what I consider my close friends or my family. You know, Chris’ always going away. Or in relationships, Chris’ always leaving.  
 ...It’s part of my relational dynamic with a lot of my friends... they tend to be short immersed experiences away from long-term family and friends. And I think that’s one level on which it fits.... It forms some of my social identity in being that person who goes away to do these things, who leads others into these adventures... That’s very much the level on which I relate to it.  
 ...  
 I was thinking, in... slide shows to family and friends, kind of the sub text is that adventure is accessible; you can just get on a plane and go to Bolivia or Costa Rica or Yellowknife. I think it also perpetuates the idea of the outdoors as a place for adventures, a place for learning and reflection and it is separate from the city because it’s always in the context of Chris leaving and Chris returning.  
 [p. 286, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

For Chris, the perception by others that he is “always leaving” contributes to a sense that his adventure travel exists in a separate space, one he wants others to understand as accessible. During *Big Sky*, this space was created and maintained, in part, using an intermediary contact person “back home” to share news of the trip with friends and families. In the past, having a contact person had allowed participants to maintain safety through pre-determined “check-in” times, and to efficiently communicate from remote areas. On *Big Sky*, the need for a contact person was challenged by the group’s relatively frequent visits to towns and the presence of a satellite phone that could be used all along the route. The role of the contact person became that of a gatekeeper who allowed participants to minimize

and manage communication with the “outside world” in order to maintain a particular aesthetic experience.

Participants used and responded to the satellite phone and contact person as ways of creating a socially isolated space in which to be-on-trip. Discussing experiences of what Ingold (2000, p. 144) has called *fields of relationships* and one’s *sphere of nurture* (the arrays of people, resources, and processes upon which each participant’s life depend for ecological and social support and nourishment) Chris, Steph, and Liz described how:

Chris:... because of the access to technology I almost feel a responsibility - like if I don’t call mom when I’m in this town because I can, I’m not being a good son, or whatever...

Liz: It’s interesting; I’m the one who owns the sat phone. When I bought it last year we weren’t passing through any towns. We left from a town, we ended in a town, and we didn’t go through any on the way. But my mom said to me when I told her that I bought a sat phone, she said “okay now you can call me every second day”  
[Laughter all around]

Steph: My mom said the same thing.

Liz: So I said to her, “no, I’m actually not going to call you at all. If you want any information you can call the contact person...” And just to make a point, I didn’t call her at any time.

[Laughter]

[pp. 107-108, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The suggestion of frequent contact with one’s family was laughable to the participants because it so clearly contradicted the ideal space, isolated way of being, and common devotion to immediate travel and living concerns that were understood as fundamental to the purpose and coherence of canoe tripping, even though the satellite phone has made staying in contact a real possibility. The contact person provided a mechanism of limited effectiveness for suspending and controlling social relations enabled by the satellite phone:

James: just listening to this conversation and my own experiences with satellite phones on this trip, the majority of the influence is NOT under my control. Like, I did not choose to have all the conversations... go the way they went, but because the sat phone and the towns were here that’s now impinging on me and I can’t control it past a certain point. And you can’t control the fact that you have a sat phone and now your mother is

saying well now you can call me every two days. You didn't – like you can choose what to do with that now that it's happened to you, but the sat phone made that possibility arrive.

[p. 122, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Being out of touch with family and friends while on the river has different social implications than choosing not to call them on a regular basis when the technology is available. To remain out of touch while carrying a satellite phone implied an intentional spurn of one's family, friends, and obligations "back home." Being out of touch, however, was also central to the leisure activity and experience of canoe tripping. A number of participants did choose to call friends and loved ones on special occasions, to receive their support, and to maintain obligations. James commented on the extent of phone use by Steph in comparison to four trip members who had more history and experience canoe tripping:

James: I think probably for the four of us... it's a strange new technology, and we can remember doing these kinds of trips... before there was that. It's interesting Steph that it's not so new and strange for you, it's just a part of how these trips go! So, maybe part of that relates to – I've observed that you've made many more personal calls than, say, the rest of us [perhaps because] it's an ODD thing for the rest of us. But it's like, well the technology's here I might as well use it.

Steph: yah, because it's not different than a phone, it's absolutely no different.

[p. 120, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The more-experienced members rationalized their use of the phone as resulting from the length and difficulty of the trip; they reportedly would not otherwise have used a phone in this way. In a sense, the nature of the *Big Sky* expedition challenged how some participants negotiated and maintained their desired space of social disconnection. Concerns about technology interfering with "direct experience" of nature have arisen from romantic or anti-modern traditions in the practices and/or environmental ethics of the outdoor industry, (Cuthbertson, Socha, & Potter, 2004). The reluctance of more-experienced participants to embrace satellite phone technology also had to do with attempts to maintain an isolated space and way of being while contending with safety concerns. Mobile phone technology overcame the geographic distance and isolation that in the past

had provided space for retreat and reflection but also a safety concern. In the context of an adventure canoe trip, a satellite phone's high degree of mobility makes it very different from other phones, despite Steph's assertion.

The more-experience participants stressed how the advent of mobile phone technology had changed the nature of tripping, emergency response planning, and what it meant to be-on-trip. Liz recalled older practices and her apprenticeship in paddling before such technology:

Liz: [Before] five years ago I never took any kind of emergency communication. My emergency plan was to get to the nearest floatplane base or road access and hitch or wait. So it could be a couple of days before someone would come along or it could be three days to get out to a road. And that was just the way it was because that technology wasn't available.

James: and that was acceptable.

Liz: ...For me growing up [paddling] without the ability to contact the outside world, without me physically GOING and making human contact - whether that be someone picking us up on a motor boat or a town or a floatplane base, [satellite phones] really changed a lot of things. It changed the - it changed the essence of tripping and in a sense of being able to contact the outside.... Because I've been doing it long enough that I DIDN'T have that [phone] and that [direct physical human contact] worked for me.

...

We didn't have the option to have a phone with us and so we just used other options. The invention of a small sat phone that you could take with you, that we have now, has forced me to change how I interact with people here and with people outside.

[pp. 118-119 BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Safety planning for Liz had relied on researching contingency routes to the "outside world" where she could connect with local people, resources, and networks. Liz clearly sets up a dichotomy and boundary between the world "inside" the wilderness experience and the world "outside." Liz's experience of place, landscape, and inhabitants drastically changed with the advent and her adoption of a phone that could breach this boundary and connect her to "the outside world" from almost anywhere along her route.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the satellite

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<sup>31</sup> Adopting these technologies was not a matter of pure choice, participants discussed at length the social and institutional pressures they felt to adopt and normalize particular uses of satellite

phone allowed participants to plan for contingencies in ways that could ignore the roads, buildings, and settlements in the areas surrounding their route. Such planning relied on the technology rather than knowledge of the area.

In addition to safety planning, participants had to find ways of managing social relations “back home” to maintain an isolated sense of being-on-trip. Chris described a disconnection from home as part of the quality of being “on-trip,” drawing a comparison to what he interpreted as the isolation experienced by European explorers.

Chris: It’s interesting how we define being “on trip”

Robert: Yeah

Chris: and part of that myth of wilderness is that out-of-contactness, you know I think of Hearne and all those people right. And the only contact they had was their journals at the end of it. It was totally up to them how they constructed that space.

[p. 119, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

This account frames social contact as occurring before and after a trip; it discounts the continual interaction Hearne had (and other explorers could have had) with Indigenous inhabitants who largely assured the success of Hearne’s expedition; they could also have contributed to, corroborated, and refuted the information in Hearne’s journal.<sup>32</sup> Scholars have also shown how explorer’s journals were not “totally up to them;” the contents were shaped by the multiple social, economic, scientific, and political purposes of the expedition and were often edited for publication to meet the popular desires of European audiences or to accomplish political ends of the author (Driscoll, 2002; Fischer, 2008; Hearne, 1990). Chris frames wilderness travel and experiences as individualistic endeavours devoid of social contact. James, on the other hand, extended this thread of isolation by critiquing the individualism he felt recreational expedition canoeing privileged:

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phones and personal floatation devices, for example, even as participants also valued other options.

<sup>32</sup> Participants on Big Sky met at least one local inhabitant who told vastly different accounts of the Hearn expedition based on his family stories. Here Chris uses Hearne as a generic example of an explorer; Horne (2005) would likely disagree and has argued that Hearne was uniquely willing to learn from an Indigenous society (see footnote 26).

James: ...For me it's easy to slip into, you know, it's just ME out here because that's how I've always been tripping before. I might have had a partner back in the city, but that's different than having a family back in the city. And I have parents, but that's different than having kids. And so, even within myself I can see a lot of assumptions that I'm making that influence how I experience things and how I understand things and how I speak about things that aren't applicable to where I'm at in my life now, and the change has been interesting. The sat phone is an example of it. I would've not wanted a sat phone before, but now, you know, I spoke to the girls the other day and they were really excited to hear from me, and for a whole pile of reasons. So it's never come up before in any of the experiences I've had, and I think that outdoor ed makes the assumption that satellite phones are necessary [for safety], but not for people to speak to their kids.

[p. 172, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

For James, adventure travel and education have privileged issues of risk/safety and individualism over social contact, especially with one's home, as legitimate parts of the canoe tripping. To experience the landscape and river as isolated and free of "distractions," participants used a contact person as a way of negotiating safety, wireless phone technology, and obligations to friends and family. Chris clearly described a desired lived-space for backcountry travel as separated from everyday life.

Chris: I can provide a different example, sort of the flip side of [people calling us]. Sitting on top of a mountain in the Adirondacks, and a guy is talking on his CELL phone.... Having that cell phone on the mountain brings that mountain into the urban world. It's no longer this separate out-there-ness because I can connect to the rest of my social world.

[p. 121, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Participants actively planned and managed a space of isolation in which to be-on-trip and escape being-in-the-city by suspending social relations with friends and family. Satellite phone technology could breach this geographic and experiential isolation by interconnecting the urban and remote landscapes.

The creation of a socially isolated space may serve certain personal, therapeutic, and/or educational objectives by providing distance and time away from negative circumstances and/or for self-reflection and the development of

individual and group self-efficacy.<sup>33</sup> However, isolation may also be problematic for developing understandings of the ways in which regions are interrelated through various socio-environmental flows and processes that impact sustainability, and which provide context for participants' senses of place.

Movements of air, water, food, and adventure travellers (among others) also interconnect landscapes. Participants' movement during *Big Sky* adhered to an itinerary established during planning. Participants' pre-established itinerary, food, and logistics all significantly shaped experiences of place and the ecological and economic relations that interconnected various landscapes.

*Route and itinerary structured travel and knowledge of surroundings.* A timeline that responded to social, technological, and environmental factors structured the *Big Sky* route. First, personal arrangements opened limited room for the expedition, which was time-bound by scheduled flights from Kugluktuk. Secondly, the physical capacity of the canoes, available food, and methods of processing food required that participants stop periodically along the route for replenishment. Thirdly, the environmental realities of thaw and freeze in the region set limits on canoe travel. Participants planned to depart shortly after the break-up of river ice in spring and paddle until the weather began to turn cold in Nunavut in mid August.

Within these social and environmental constraints, members of the expedition planned an extended route north that challenged dominant wilderness-oriented adventure travel by starting near Edmonton, passing through cities and towns, traversing rural regions and crown lands, and connecting numerous parks and protected areas. The route intentionally challenged the archetypal practice of travelling to a distant wilderness area in which the canoe route would remain.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Using and valuing isolation uncritically and without providing context, it should be noted, may tacitly frame personal and group development as distinct from their relation to larger socio-environmental contexts that enable, situate, and/or prompt such excursions. In some cases separation may be needed and desirable; in other circumstances it may inhibit learning.

<sup>34</sup> The expedition would have begun in Edmonton but doing so would have required connecting the east-bound North Saskatchewan River with the north-bound Athabasca River, and added roughly two weeks to our trip. In this way, the *Big Sky* route responded to our pre-established timeline as well as to geography and hydrology. To negotiate this, participants decided to make the three hour drive to Hinton, AB to begin our route on the Athabasca River. The shift in our starting point was one of the early examples of how participants had to negotiate travel within a

The *Big Sky* route followed rivers with contemporary and historical social, environmental, and economic significance as canoe routes and otherwise. For example, after leaving Jasper National Park the Athabasca River runs through and supplies water to the oil sands industry of Alberta before arriving at the Peace-Athabasca Delta. The delta is part of Wood Buffalo National Park and includes the last natural summer nesting area for the whooping crane. Participants wanted to explore how these aspects of the route interconnected.

While participants thought to challenge the archetypal trip by ‘placing’ the expedition in and across a variety of landscapes and regions, other aspects of the route planning proceeded in ways more-consistent with the archetypal canoe trip. Using topographic maps to discern and measure out a route, James and Liz assumed a building perspective during the planning process. They established a rough itinerary and calculated the route that required approximately 100 days travel including days for rest and re-supply. The itinerary established legs of the journey spanning the time and distance paddled between the starting point in Hinton (Day 1, 0 km), the first resupply in the city of Fort McMurray (Day 29, 976 km), the second resupply in the city of Yellowknife (Day 52, 1,719 km), and the end point in the town of Kugluktuk (Day 100, 2,683 km). The leg from Yellowknife to Kugluktuk took 44 days, and was the longest without resupply.

From the outset, the itinerary established trip parameters (such as the average daily distance, the duration, and the route length) that privileged understanding the trip as transport. Getting from Hinton (Point A) to Kugluktuk (Point B) in a limited amount of time (roughly 100 days) was an overarching concern for participants. Joining the dots on a cartographic map while assembling a route-plan, Ingold (2007b) explained, “enables the prospective traveller... *virtually* to reach his destination even before setting out. As a cognitive artefact or assembly, the plan pre-exists its enactment ‘on the ground’” (p. 86). Participants

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pre-established timeframe. Though we did not know at the time, Fort Assiniboine, a small town on the Athabasca River not far from our starting point, was established during the fur trade in part because of the proximity of the Athabasca and North Saskatchewan rivers at that place. Fort Assiniboine was one end of an overland route from Fort Edmonton that connect the two river systems. This seemingly simple shift in the location of our put-in shows some of the learning about geography, hydrology and history that can occur or be incorporated into route planning.

knew places along the route as distanced, observable, static, and measurable points on map sheets. Knowing before you go, as Ingold (2000, p. 239) called it, allowed participants a measure of assurance in their movement along an unfamiliar route that was established from a distance. Decisions and expectations were based on information available on maps and in trip reports. When asked which stories he felt the group was following, Robert described how multiple sources of information influenced his experience of the landscape:

Robert: Obviously we've got Hearne's diary and that's an interesting story but ...it's more just filling in one aspect of history for the area. We're not following it, you know, his route. It's neat to know an aspect of the past for the particular area we're travelling through. So it doesn't influence day-to-day activity but it influences how I understand the area. I guess Hearne's diary is one example of that; the naturalist guide is another, and we had a book of Aboriginal stories for the area. It's kind of background information. They don't directly influence our day-to-day activity or experience, but [they do] give it a bit more – give it more girth.

...

We've got things like Bill Lyman's report and the Wanapitei report;... stories that DO influence our day-to-day. And they are very specific and focused on what we're going to encounter on any given day.... So we look at [the river] very differently when we're there, we [aren't] just... going into it blind. I guess I feel we have a little bit more information which is sometimes good and sometimes bad. Sometimes it clouds our looking at [the river] for what's there and sometimes it assists by [showing that] "the portage is on the right" without having to actually look and find the portage trail.

...

I talked a fair bit with my friend... whose name was written on the cabin back there. So her stories or her understanding of the Yellowknife and the Coppermine helped me understand what I was going to get into. It doesn't influence my day-to-day... but it helped frame the whole experience of the Yellowknife and the Coppermine for me, having talked to someone who had done it.

[pp. 290-291 BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Robert identified three types of stories that informed his travel: Historical accounts, cultural and ecological references, and personal descriptions. These stories informed his sense of his surroundings. The exploration narratives provided a context to understand the area and inspired the selection of a route, as seen in the archetypal wilderness trip. The activity-specific information, both historical and contemporary, shaped how he planned and actually travelled

through the landscape. During planning, route-specific resources helped participants identify places that could facilitate logistical support. Before ever putting paddle to water, the participants were able to use maps and trip reports to select places to pause by calculating a likely rate of travel and recognizing the limited capacity of our canoes to carry food. Once selected, these places helped participants cope with uncertain events during the actual journey, which, in turn, contributed to the significance of these places within the trip. This aspect is explored further in the second structural practice, but is evident in the way Robert described his perception of the city of Yellowknife:

Robert: ... Yellowknife really became a part of my consciousness... the instant we left Fort Smith and had that discussion about Steph leaving. And ever since then there's all this stuff happening in Yellowknife and the closer we got the more I thought about food happening and the potential to call [loved ones] and meeting Dana and the potential to have some "me time" in the city..... so Yellowknife became really a part of my—I don't know—the forefront of my thought.

I knew we were stopping in Yellowknife from our two years of planning but that's when it really hit.

[p. 116, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Some of the cities and towns along the route were planned points of access to resources and networks back home that supported the journey. Characterizations of more-remote sections of the route also show the building perspective. If the planning process framed cities and towns as points on the map, the areas between points were often, according to the participants, framed or idealized as un-peopled space. Participants acknowledged their own complicity, the prevalence, and problems of the desire for untouched spaces of wilderness as well as the more-pragmatic intentions of explorers they reference.

James: We talked about ... this idea of exploring, you know, why did Hearne explore what he did? It wasn't just so he could say I've gone somewhere that's untrammelled by man. You get that a lot today when people, many people that I've led said "oh I wonder if I'm the first person ever to step foot here?" or every now and then I get that kind of feeling and I wonder, but then I catch myself and think well, probably not. And there's a sense of disappointment that comes along with it - that there are no unexplored places left on the planet, really right? Except for small little places... But there's no real point in doing that except to say that I stepped where no one's ever stepped before.

Not like Hearne, who needed to get somewhere to discover a route or whatever right?

Robert: ya [explorers] weren't doing it for the "let's go explore the wilderness." It [was] "can we get new fur supplies?" or "can we get a new route here to help with shipping?" Not inherently just so I could be there.

Steph: but I wonder if there's something more behind that, like for me, why there is this desire to be the first person, and that's not just me, it so many people.

[pp. 52-53, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

Even as participants tried to establish a route to resist idealizing the wilderness experience, they also recognized and self-critically identified with an archetypal approach to supposedly un-peopled landscapes.

The planning process focused on suspending family and work relations and establishing a route and itinerary, aspects understood by participants as shaping the lived experience of their surroundings and of being-on-trip. Consistent with the archetypal canoe expedition, the group planned to be largely out of touch and socially isolated; participants vigilantly orchestrated and negotiated their experience of being-on-trip within their itinerary. Participants' route selection challenged the archetype by travelling through a variety of landscapes both in terms of ecozones (see Figure 3-1) and in terms of human activities (urban, agricultural, industrial, protected area). During planning, participants established a route and itinerary for traversing a landscape they treated—at this stage—as static two-dimensional space. To plan such a traverse, participants presupposed and required a specific type of logistical preparation. The itinerary, just described, along with the logistics, described next, combined to structure participants' interactions with and knowledge of surroundings, places, and people. The group did not anticipate that their food and logistic preparations would play a significant role in structuring their engagement with the surroundings. This influence became clear during travel.

***Provisioning mobilized relationships in advance of travel.*** The planning process managed and temporarily set aside certain social connections, but the process also mobilized and put to work other economic and ecological relations in the acquisition of equipment, funds, and food. Before the trip, participants on *Big*

*Sky* brought together multiple goods and services in Edmonton to form a web of relations that provided physical and social support throughout the expedition. James' response to a prompt asking about the "self contained" or "self-reliant" travel, terms that participants used often, captured the approach to logistics, equipment, and food planning that structured participants style of travel, experience, and impact on their surroundings:

James: [I've often heard and seen] this desire and striving to be self-contained. Like what you said Phil, we have to bring and carry everything we will need or do without. The more I thought about it the more I felt it couldn't mean that. The notion of "self contained" is an exercise in advanced planning and forethought that takes years of experiences [such as] forgetting food [somewhere], etcetera. So it's not self-contained but forethought. But who can exist without their environment? We take so much from the city: double bagging our food, etcetera, really we're not "self-contained." We have to ask what's outside the container. ... There's a wilful blindness.  
[p. 280 BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

Careful planning and preparation were essential parts of participants' safety and their being able to care for themselves while on the river. By avoiding reliance on the immediate surroundings and other inhabitants along the way, the self-contained approach to logistics and food preparation expressed and reinforced an experience of travel as isolated and individualistic within a wilderness landscape assumed to be pristine and un-peopled.

As James noted, the idea of being self-contained is misleading because participants relied on food, fuel, equipment brought from around the world and accessed in urban centres during preparations rather than sourcing supplies along the route during travel. Discussing the term "the north," Robert alluded to broader socio-cultural influences and institutional relationships that supported the expedition during planning:

Robert: Obviously the six of us wanted to come to the north and come to the Coppermine and we had some conscious or unconscious connections to wanting to see our country... the caribou... Obviously there's the level of Canadian society and how it views the north and the symbols that filter down through the six of us.

But then [there] are the institutions within Canadian society, and the two that I'm thinking of are Mountain Equipment Co op and the Royal

Canadian Geographic Society, both of which gave us money and both of which are expecting some sort of story in return.

The purpose of the RCGS is to show Canada to Canadians, that's their mission statement. So their expedition committee is looking for expeditions that take place in Canada by Canadians... This whole other institutional layer [filters in] even when we're doing recreation and not [travelling] in an education or institutional setting.

...The same is true for Mountain Equipment Co-op, somewhere it will come up on somebody's books that [they] gave 2000.00 dollars to this expedition... And whether we've done a slide show or given them something. It filters through the different institutions.  
[p. 326, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Institutional support helped to perpetuate a particular style of backcountry travel and narrative with currency for those institutions.<sup>35</sup> Other, smaller, institutions and individuals also supported the expedition; among others, a local butcher supplied dried meat at reduced price, and a pack-maker in Ontario loaned canoe packs. The acquisition of goods through purchase and sponsorship in advance reduced an element of uncertainty in the ability of the local area to provide food and goods, and participants' ability to acquire these during the journey. Members of the expedition were not "self contained" but, rather, knowledgeable of and reliant on urban ecological, economic, and social systems distant to the areas they visited. The limited capacity of the canoes dictated that participants would have to draw from "outside the container" by re-supplying in the cities of Fort McMurray and Yellowknife. To do this, participants relied on Canada Post and networks of friends to deliver pre-packaged provisions to specific places.<sup>36</sup>

Planning practices presupposed that participants could not or should not (as with the conservation ethic of Leave No Trace) secure necessary resources and sustenance from local inhabitants, the rivers, or the lands through which they travelled. This, in turn, had implications for what participants knew and learnt

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<sup>35</sup> These institutions had mandates that subtly shaped the stories offered to them in return; participants felt an expectation to align with dominant archetypal expeditions. The Royal Canadian Geographic Society (RCGS), for example, exists within and continues a tradition of exploration, and Mountain Equipment Co-op is the major outdoor equipment and clothing retail outlet in Canada. Both generously supported the Big Sky expedition.

<sup>36</sup> One of the clearest exceptions to this lack of local sustenance was the constant need for potable water; the collection of which afforded considerable learning for participants.

about the places, people, and environment in advance of and during their travels. Liz's narrative makes it clear that planning to be "self-contained" directly enabled her preferred experience of "canoe tripping" and delineates what the activity does and does not include.

Liz: ... about bringing all our food and stuff, the outdoor gear and clothing that we use... directly relates to how we travel. To travel like a canoeists is very different than the way that people who are [hunting and fishing do] ... In terms of the schedule that we're trying to achieve, or the destination and how many kilometres a day we have to go, I'm not sure that [stopping to hunt or fish] would entirely work with how we've chosen to get there [considering]... the weight and time, and the effort it would take to just FEED yourself.

...

Robert: Like we could choose to do some of those things, like if we set up the trip from the beginning... and recognizing that it would take longer, or the days would be different.... The thing that I see in going that way is government regulations and the fact that there are SEASONS for hunting specific animals, there are licences to get, there are differences between being a White Canadian and an Aboriginal Canadian... That to me is what I see as the single biggest limiting factor.

[p. 129, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The planned itinerary was paramount for Liz, and it imposed strict limitations on how participants travelled. The itinerary was facilitated by preparing socio-ecological relations in advance in order to be "self contained" while travelling. Preparing in this way freed participants to travel as "canoeists" who "make kilometres" without *having* to procure, purchase, and trade for food and equipment along the way. Participants were freed to travel where they liked rather than adapt to local resources or settlements. Moreover, once established, the itinerary left little time to discover and build local social, ecological, and economic relations. Most of the participants resisted the idea of using local resources for this type of journey even as they recognized some of the implications and limitations that self-contained travel imposed on their experience.

Robert's comments in the preceding narrative indicates that self-contained travel is, to an extent, a response to and avoidance of local contemporary resource management policies and politics that directly relate to environmental protection. Chris provided another example of the limits of participants' socio-environmental

awareness. While paddling past oil sands industrial development along the Athabasca River he commented on the irony of touting self-contained and Leave No Trace practices as environmentally ethical during outdoor adventure travel that heavily depends on petrochemicals for quick-drying and waterproof equipment and clothing.

The influence of an established itinerary within archetypal canoe tripping is evident in James' description of destination-oriented travel, typical of the building perspective, but also of the movement itself as central to the canoeing experience. In addition to government regulations, James observed that:

James: It strikes me that...there are two other systems that are incompatible here...This trip, for us, it's about TRAVELLING – essentially when you boil it down right? We're going somewhere; whether we have a destination in mind, or it's a process, or it's a combination of both, it's movement. At the very least for me the movement is part of the REASON. I like to be going, making some kilometres.

I also like to see certain things, you know I want to see Bloody Falls, I wanted to see Fort Smith, I wanted to see the Canadian Shield again, those kind of things. That's one sort of system.

Then there's the nomadic subsistence hunting sort of system that to me ... I don't have a destination to travel to. I have animals to go find, right? So if they move then I move; if the fishing isn't good here we've gotta go somewhere else. So we're not travelling just to travel we're travelling to live.

...

Robert: at some level that's like Hearne and Mackenzie... they didn't have a pre-planned route but they had somewhere that they were looking for and they had to deal with the subsistence –

James: but they could also say “we'll get there when we get there.”

Robert: Ya exactly, exactly.

Chris: [whereas] we should be going home on the thirtieth, or our jobs are beginning on the fifteenth or whatever.

[pp. 129-130, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The itinerary set an overarching framework for the trip within which participants used a self-contained style of logistics to enable “travel just to travel.” The experience of canoe tripping, as James' explained, centred on *moving*.

Participants' strict itinerary and pre-established route privileged approaching this movement as transport. Doing so largely valued "making kilometres," which contextualized elements, inhabitants, and events encountered between the put-in and the take-out as opportunities or obstacles for advancing along the route, while precluding attending to and using affordances for "travelling to live." Participants understood and planned for the landscape and their travel through it as disconnected from the physical, social, and economic stuff of their lives. Participants experienced the direct influence of the environment as presenting challenges to their lives and movement rather than enabling them.

James contrasted "making kilometres" with "travelling to live" through nomadic subsistence practices that respond to what the land and its inhabitants (human and non-human) provide. Despite James' assertion that these are two incompatible systems, they have a common connection in dwelling and need not be dichotomous. Travel during *Big Sky* did respond to the surroundings, but did so within the limitations set by the itinerary, logistics, and food planning practices. Participants' need to collect relatively clean fresh water provides one example of travelling to live and having to rely on our surroundings. For the most part, as Chris indicated, the stuff of participants' lives happened beyond the bounds of the *Big Sky* route and itinerary.<sup>37</sup> Crucially, food and logistics planning both facilitated and expressed a distanced relationship with the lands through which participants travelled.

Put differently, the approach taken to planning and provisioning food and equipment freed participants to be ignorant of the ways in which their needs could have been met by the areas through which they travelled. Knowledge of the immediate surroundings and inhabitants was rendered optional because participants had assembled much of their food, equipment, and safety through exogenous urban networks before departing. Planned suspension and management of social obligations as well as the preparation of food and equipment in the

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<sup>37</sup> Considering recreation as a space, time, and way of being that is intrinsically rewarding and outside of everyday life and work is central to Western notions of leisure. Participants' understanding and approach to leisure and tourism as outside of their everyday lives may be a significant obstacle in promoting sustainable practices that integrate leisure behaviour within social and environmental realities and impacts at home and away.

planning stage of the expedition allowed participants to plan a route that was, in places, highly remote for the travellers and did not depend on local settlements or resources. Participants were freed to experience landscapes as being devoid of social, economic, political, or ecological relationships upon which they depended and in which they were currently involved. Once planning had occurred to make the trip self contained, these socio-economic-ecological relationships presented as a matter of choice, of “wilful blindness,” rather than a given reality of the environment, inhabitants, and activity of canoe tripping.

In the archetypal expedition, inspired by stories of exploration and pristine wilderness, the chosen route dictates logistical planning. Participant narratives in this study, however, suggest that a tradition of self-contained logistics and travel actually enabled participants to select and experience a route as isolated wilderness. These practices reduced (but did not eliminate) the need to engage local economies and ecologies, rendering some engagements with the surroundings optional rather than necessary, and erecting other limiting factors such as the need to resupply. Archetypal wilderness trip planning and logistical practices enable travel that can avoid settlements while promoting encounters with landscapes as pristine, remote, and separable from participants own lives, human activity, and regulation. Importantly, these aspects of separation occurred within a space built by participants whose planning, from the outset, drew together some relationships and resources and distanced others. Travellers could plan differently: they could to prioritize the social, ecological, and economic relationships that support and shape their route and journey.

***Re-thinking the planning of trips: A discussion.*** Participants initially came to know the landscapes through which they were to travel by way of stories, reports, their own lived experiences, and most significantly, topographic maps. Together these sources of information allowed the route, itinerary, and supporting logistics to be devised in advance of travel. Significantly, such planning, preparations, and provisioning reduced the complexity and necessity of engaging the landscapes and places of travel as actively involved in producing the journey and sustaining participants. Certain relationships, such as food gathering, were

constrained by the established itinerary and became optional and rather than fully integrated into the trip and lived experience a region.

Planning practices treated the landscape and route primarily in spatial and geographic ways. This bias is especially evident in traditions of European exploration as well as conceptions of wilderness that focus on geographic area and distance from human disturbance. The route was the paramount concern that drove planning, and it dictated the other aspects of planning that supported travel. Travel was understood as transport from point to point. The move from a wilderness paradigm towards a sustainability paradigm, however, suggests challenging the primacy of “the route” and perhaps focusing primarily on socio-ecological and economic relationships enabled by activity-place combinations, which could guide routing decisions and support local engagement and learning.

Planning shaped the socio-environmental experience and knowledge gained by participants through travelled. Moreover, as (O’Connell et al., 2005) described, achieving and learning about sustainability necessitates struggling with and coming to understand one’s place within, rather than abstracted from, local socio-historical, economic, and ecological interconnections, impacts, and responsibilities. By drawing on historical records of exploration such as Samuel Hearne’s account of travels to the Coppermine River, participants did locate their own travel and some of their surroundings within a historical context of European exploration. James’ desire to see Bloody Falls provides but one example. Participants’ continued comparison of their own experience to exploration narratives suggests that these narratives contributed to the development and description of senses of place, movement, and history of the landscape.

Despite participants’ attention to historic European exploration during planning, and even as they self-critically identified with un-touched wilderness, participants intentionally challenged the archetypal wilderness canoe trip through their route selection. Planning and preparatory practices that went on to structure participants’ lived social, economic, and ecological (dis)engagement with the area, however, also suggest that their journey was abstracted from the contemporary implications of colonial exploration in the region as well as other

current issues contributing to sustainability and knowledge of place. Such conflicted narratives and practices reflect participants' discomfort with established ways of making sense of wilderness travel by canoe as well as the depth to which these ways of thinking are rooted in recreational Euro-Canadian canoe tripping practices.

Using wayfaring to challenge and expand dominant notions of environmental learning, as suggested by Cuthbertson et al. (1997) and Fox and McAvoy (1998), requires critically evaluating *where* participants travel but also, and possibly more importantly, *how* participants travel. Ingold's (2000) notion of a *web of relations* provided a useful analytical tool in assessing how, through their practices, participants interrelate with places near and far in ways that influence the sustainability of their activity and these different regions. In this sense, participants' preparation drew together resources (food, money, equipment) from multiple "outside" areas to facilitate being-on-trip in a way that could avoid settlements and engage the landscape as a disconnected space of wilderness untrammelled by their own and other people's human activity. As we shall see, travelling by canoe through rural and industrial areas challenged participants to interconnect rather than disconnect diverse landscapes, as is evident in Chris' comment upon encountering the oil sands development. Planning practices directly affected place making by drawing together resources from multiple distant areas to enable "self-contained" travel with "minimum impact" on the landscape visited. In this way, participants relied on dominant resource-extraction and economic systems to (re)build wilderness areas that appeared to be exclusively non-human. The positive and negative socio-environmental and economic impacts of this form of dwelling allowed for the preservation of certain wilderness qualities but also effectively reified the nature-culture dichotomy in the landscape and experience of participants.

Practitioners and researchers can assess the degree, kind, and locations of place making, place-based knowledge, as well as the sustainability of the various relationships drawn together (and suspended) in the planning and production of a

journey. There is a difference, however, between a route planned and life on the river. Participants encountered their route in the open, in all its lived complexity.

Practitioners and participants should critically consider whether and when the suspension of relations “back home” serve or hinder the purpose of a trip, senses of place, and sustainability. Isolation might be an important aspect of a journey, or parts of it, because it can encourage focused attention or a particular experience of place, for example.<sup>38</sup> However, explicit examinations of the connections between one’s home and a visited protected area might foster a stronger sense of place both at home and during the trip while promoting understandings of factors that contribute to the relative sustainability and interrelation of both landscapes. Routes could also occur closer to home. These ideas fit with trends supporting local food consumption and the reduction of fossil fuel use for long-distance transport.

Practitioners could also change the stories that inspire route selection or use these stories differently. Rather than imagining oneself as explorer, why not examine how the landscape has changed and seek alternative narratives of the events from inhabitants? In addition, routes could be located in landscapes and flows that show interconnections. Routes could be inspired by entirely different “stories” that challenge the nature-culture dichotomy and encourage participants to experience the interconnection of environments, inhabitants, and themselves. Following a drop of water through a watershed, for example, might focus attention differently and teach about sustainability and ways of life. Different still, the story, and route could unfold together by mixing planning and travel from place to place without a pre-determined path.

Archetypal trip planning practices may contribute to the perception of a distinction between society and nature. Resources are mobilized in urban areas to enable an expedition to travel in such a way the paddlers can avoid evidence of

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<sup>38</sup> The expansion of mobile phone coverage may make the creation of spaces of solitude more difficult and such spaces may seem more artificial or actively managed to those people who habitually relate through mobile technologies. Where might the boundaries of “wilderness” move in the future? Will they correspond to cellular or satellite coverage? These technologies challenge practitioners to consider ways of negotiating—beyond simply claiming to be in wilderness—the social expectations of participants and their families.

human places (settlements, dams), uses (hunting, fishing, logging), and processes (park and wildlife management) through which human societies interrelate with environmental systems. Thus, participants are able to engage and maintain remote landscapes as spaces of pristine nature in contradistinction to their urban lives. To encourage place-based knowledge and/or sustainability through planning practices, participants could consciously contend with the location, degree, and beneficiaries of the impacts of provisioning a “self-contained” expedition. Participants could also seek out and engage local goods and services. Why not plan to get food along the way by making multiple stops at towns and/or by contacting local hunters and fishers in the area? Such plans could even be based in local history. For example, the *Big Sky* route passed through Fort Assiniboine, a town that was a historically important re-supply point for fur traders. Rather than stopping for curiosity’s sake, participants could have experienced the town in a way that more-fully informed their senses of the place and the town’s history while using *Big Sky* to help support the town through contemporary social and economic relationships. Rather than being self-contained, participants could use their planning and logistics to engage and come to know the socio-ecological landscape. Practitioners could still plan for safety and a predictable food supply while also engaging differently with places and socio-ecological relationships that actively support the journey. While practices within planning established an operating structure for the expedition, the journey itself was unknown and subject to the groups’ ability to cope with the uncertainties of life on the river.

**Travel structured regions and routes.** This expedition involved multiple modes of travel that structured place making and meanings. In addition to canoeing, participants rode buses, used a pick-up truck, and flew in aeroplanes. Travel by canoe and otherwise structured participants’ senses of their surroundings in three key ways. First, rapid transport to and from the canoe route disoriented participants and allowed them to ignore rural areas. Secondly, once participants began canoeing they negotiated travel as both transport and wayfaring within their dynamic environment and fixed itinerary. By locating the put-in relatively close to home and travelling through rural areas, the route challenged

participants to recognize and interconnect urban, rural, and remote landscapes.<sup>39</sup> Travel through different landscapes resulted in different senses of movement. Thirdly, despite these forms of engagement, participants understood transience as limiting their environmental knowledge geographically and temporally. Though contested, some participants positioned rural areas as outside the norm and disruptive to their sense of being-on-trip.

***Rapid transport separated regions in participants' experience.***

Converging from all over the city, paddlers met at a parking lot early in the morning. Together, they secured the canoes, double-checked, and loaded the equipment, clothing, and food – everything needed for a self-contained trip. The driver pulled away; and passengers settled in for the four hundred kilometre drive to the put-in on the Athabasca River. Travelling fast, passengers alighted only to re-fuel and stretch their legs. Being transported on the bus, passengers were free from the burdens of interaction or the need to attend to the surroundings. Many riders slept (see Figure 4-1).

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<sup>39</sup> This common landscape typology or continuum of urban, rural and wilderness is based on the predominance of human influence within a landscape and tends to “gloss over” remote industrial and resource-extraction sites of forestry and diamond and oil sands mining in northern Canada, for example, which play a key role in urban and rural ways of life as well as issues of sustainability. Likewise the typology tends to devalue the non-human ecology and environmental influences that permeate urban areas and interconnect these diverse landscapes.



*Figure 4-1.* A paddler sleeping on the bus as she is transported to Jasper National Park at the outset of a canoe expedition. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Using highways and aeroplanes, travellers cut through and jumped over rural places, paths, and livelihoods, subsuming them (and participants' own dependence on them) into an unknown *space* of little perceived importance within the archetypal canoe trip. From a critical perspective, however, rapid transport across an unknown rural space played an important role in structuring the archetypal wilderness trip by separating and distancing familiar urban landscapes from unfamiliar wild landscapes; transport across the rural space disoriented participants and dislocated the landscapes of travel. Indeed, Chris, an experience outdoor educator, strongly held to this separation as holding educational value for individuals and groups. Nearing the end of the trip, he explained that:

Chris: Good old nature[—]culture...my lived experiment tells me that it's a true distinction.... I use the outdoors or my involvement in the outdoor activities as places for reflection, re-creation, and education. And I'm

completely comfortable and I completely exist in that false dichotomy or that created dichotomy, it works for me.  
 [p. 352, BS 7, August 16 (Day 101): Town of Kugluktuk, UTM: NF8124 on 86O, 1993]

By skipping over rural areas, transport to and from the route encouraged participants to perceive a separation between landscapes for canoeing and those of their everyday lives. Based on past trips and in comparison to *Big Sky*, participants noted how rapid transport between starkly different landscapes created real senses of disconnection. Liz described coming home by train from a previous trip after 40 days above the tree line, and she referred to participants' flights home as a "jump"; James also described difficulty adjusting to a new environment after rapid transport:

Liz: On the train when we started to come back into the trees... everything looked really foreign, but it was the environment which I have lived most of my life and yet the trees – the sight of trees again was just really weird. And darkness too—the sight of dark—like DARK darkness not dusk.... I wonder what will happen to you or how you'll feel when you get on a plane in Kugluktuk and three hours later you're in Edmonton... and how that will be for all of us, really because we're all making that jump...

James: I've travelled on trains and plains and its going SO much faster and not having the chance to adjust – I get in in Kugluktuk, get out in Leduc or whatever, right, and there's WAY more people and there's way more concrete – like concrete was one of the biggest factors for me on some of the long trips. I suddenly look around and go holey shit there's a LOT of pavement!  
 And I wasn't used to it.  
 [p. 219, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

Rapid transit disoriented participants and highlighted differences between the urban and backcountry environments that travellers experienced sensually. Participants described the light and darkness, feeling surrounded by trees, and the hardness and flatness of pavement. In this way movement contributed to a sense of place through comparison and contrast. Within the archetypal wilderness approach and trip structure, rapid transport from an urban area to a wilderness area may highlight distinctions and differences among environments.

Participants chose the route for *Big Sky* as a way of exploring a sustainability paradigm. Although participants on *Big Sky* could ignore rural areas on their way to the put-in, the ecozone in which they began paddling was, for the most part, familiar to them. Although initial transport encouraged a liminal rural space, starting the canoe route in a familiar area reduced participants' initial disconnection. Echoing other participants, Chris described that:

Chris: I really like that idea James... every day we do ten or fifteen kilometres, we're INCHING along the landscape and we're SEEING, SEEING the gradual change and incorporating it into our nowness or into our reality.... It's that gradualness [of canoeing] and how it incorporates it into our – it's less jarring, it [reduces] that separate idea that I have of the north... [It's] like I left from my friend's house and I went canoeing and somehow I ended up on the Arctic Ocean.  
[laughter all round]  
[p. 220, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

Rather than highlighting stark differences among landscapes, the slowness of canoe travel through a continuum of landscape types allowed Chris to gradually adjust to and interconnect places and landscapes from his everyday life with landscapes and regions, like the north and the Arctic Ocean, he had imagined as remote and separate. Through rapid transport, a more-typical wilderness-oriented trip structure could have reinforced an experience of the north as a distinct and disconnected region rather than a landscape interconnected with Chris' home.

*The itinerary shaped engagement with an active environment.* At the put-in participants transitioned from being passively transported by bus to actively coping with a dynamic environment while travelling by canoe. As a kind of place, the put-in (and take-out) arose out of the coming and going of paddlers; the location of these places depend on the presence of an accessible reach or lake with suitable space to ready equipment. Put-ins became significant places through and for transition: where participants who had been transported *over* the landscape became more involved in their travel *through* a dynamic environment. The put-in is a place to “gear up” with the tools and clothing needed for travel and life on the coming journey. From the put-in, paddlers began wayfaring along routes; they

began interacting with their environment and its inhabitants, living and travelling in the open with the wind, rain, and rivers (see Figure 4-2) (Ingold, 2008).

Contrasting her lived experience in urban and river environments, Steph described one such flux:

Steph: There are certain things that being in a city don't allow for. In terms of DARKNESS, even when you're out at night there are always lights on so it sort of takes you away from any kind of sun rotation. I understand that walking through the park on your way to work you seem to incorporate some of those things, but I do think that physically being in the city doesn't allow for certain things that you would experience out here.

[p. 50., BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Steph's comments about darkness and the sun are particularly telling of the lived experience of dwelling within and surrounded by an environment in which non-human elements and processes predominate.<sup>40</sup> Only from the building perspective do humans understand the earth as orbiting the sun; diurnal and seasonal transitions of light and dark are experienced as the sun arcs overhead in the sky and falls below the horizon (Ingold, 2000; 2007a). Canoe travel in the open allowed Steph to more-fully live in relation to these elements of her surroundings. Canoeing required participants to listen to rapids, watch winds, and feel currents in particular ways.

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<sup>40</sup> Ingold (2000) discusses the difference between a *spherical approach* to one's world, in which humans are *surrounded* by their environment, and a *global approach* in which humans surround and engage "the environment" as if from a distance (i.e. spaceship earth).



*Figure 4-2.* Transitioning to travel in the open after leaving a put-in. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Attention to the surroundings is taken up more fully in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*. The environment certainly presented compelling forces that demanded Chris' attention and influenced his sense of belonging. He reported feeling in place when:

Chris: the paddling is effortless, when it's flowing, or when I'm fully engaged in the paddling, when it's more than a repetitive motion. Like running a rapid, being fully engaged in that environment...I feel out of place in the opposite of these situations, i.e. when paddling feels difficult or disjointed against big waves and with rain that never seems to end and everybody else is finding this as a cake walk and the whole affair seems totally and completely pointless and meaningless [laughter all around]. And then there are there three horsemen of the apocalypse:

Bugs,  
Wind,  
Rain.

[pp. 246-247, BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

Chris' narrative certainly gives a sense of travelling and living in the open along the route, his sense of place is one of movement through an active environment that continually surrounds and acts on him (in almost-biblical proportions). The narrative gives the sense of Chris attempting to skilfully and intuitively

integrating himself with the movements of his surroundings, and this being the purpose of his activity. The activity loses meaning for Chris when paddling feels “difficult and disjointed” in relation to the river, sky, and other paddlers. Chris also interprets his body and actions as efficient or deficient in coping with his environment and in comparison to other travellers in order to move along the itinerary.<sup>41</sup>

Canoeing required participants to cope with aspects of their environment, and therefore influenced what participants knew and understood about their surroundings. James compared paddling along a channel of the Peace-Athabasca Delta with areal video footage of the delta he saw at the Wood Buffalo National Park offices. The contrast, for James, highlighted how canoeing positioned him and structured his sense of the delta:

James: I had one particular sense of what the delta was like, and how I experienced it... we only see one little strand of it as we paddle through. And then going into the parks office to see the video where they fly over the same area in a plane, just gave me a very different sense of the landscape that I was paddling through. What does one afford you, and what does one not? Flying over in the plane, I had no idea what it smelt like or the frustration of not being able to find a campsite. That doesn't show up when you're in a plane. But then, I also had no sense of how big the [delta] was... seeing it from the plane, holy crap! We could have been paddling for days before we found anywhere to camp. So the canoe changes the way you experience.

[pp. 41-42, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

James described how his mode of travel structured his sensual engagements and knowledge of the delta. From a distance above, James developed a sense of the delta's total size in terms of geographic space relative to the route, but he felt it lacked sensuality. Travel by canoe, in contrast, allowed James to engage intimately the smells and watery *surroundings* of the delta, which became meaningful and elicited his frustration while searching for a campsite. From above, the landscape became a context in which to understand travel; from the canoe, travel provided a context through which to understand the landscape. This distinction is crucial to environmental learning. In the former, transience is

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<sup>41</sup> Here is a connection among group dynamics, physical ability, and an active environment.

problematic for learning about a region; in the latter, transience *is* a way of learning about a region. The former suggests a sense of objective knowledge; the latter suggests a sense of intimacy, emotion, and subjectivity. Such sensual understanding of a landscape would likely differ among people who regularly inhabit an area, those who repeatedly travel through a region or along a stretch of river, and those who pass through an area or travel a river only once.

Travel by canoe was not pure wayfaring; it drew on and required wayfaring but always within a frame of transport. The established itinerary as well as participants' levels of skill and experience influenced the blend of these two approaches to the river environment. As a result, participants lived in a tension between needing to reach a pre-determined destination and, simultaneously, negotiating movements in relation to cycles and phenomena of their inhabited world.

The mix of transport and wayfaring hints at ways in which conscious, unconscious, and embodied knowledge of place were learnt and limited through canoe travel. The strict itinerary and constant use of maps encouraged participants to attend to time as linear and surroundings as relatively inactive geographic space to be traversed. The group tracked the kilometres paddled per hour and per day, as well as the group's point along the route measured in both total days and total kilometres travelled. Describing upstream travel, for example, Chris noted that "every day we do ten or fifteen kilometres, we're INCHING along." Mocking participants' desire "make kilometres"—even while sleeping—Robert recalled a comic discussion about "putting on sleeping bags and continuing down the river. We'll wake up in the morning and use our GPS to figure out where we are!" These comments show how navigation by map and GPS can be independent from the participants' physical experience and perception of their surroundings and may limit their need to gather information from their surroundings and from other inhabitants. The influence of navigation on embodied knowledge is taken up more fully in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*. While participants tracked their linear progress, they were not moving along the map; they were moving through a world with which they had to cope in order to travel efficiently and safely. Thus, travel

by canoe also implied wayfaring: attending and reacting to the surroundings. The tension between transport and wayfaring permeated participants' life on the river and was a fundamental element of the activity, experience, and skill of canoe tripping.

Canoe travel for participants, given the objectives of *Big Sky*, engaged a core physical and cognitive learning through and for wayfaring *within* an understanding of travel as transport that was lived through a pre-planned itinerary. This negotiation was clear throughout the expedition and is evident in numerous narratives. Discussing the development of a connection to a landscape through one's presence on a canoe trip, for example, James highlighted wayfaring when he noted that such a connection is "more about how you engage with the landscape rather than whether you're [simply] there or not. It's about paying attention or being aware of things." In response, and building on this, Chris highlighted transport by emphasizing "miles to make" and limited time. He described how the tyranny of the itinerary could shape life on-trip:

Chris: to some degree it's time, like we're on a schedule. Most programs that I've run have been on a schedule, you get from point A to point B. If it's raining outside you still have a schedule to get to, you damn well march those kids through the rain!

James: [Laughter]

Chris: like, that's what it comes down to right?

James: It does. Often. Yes

Chris: like, if we get downed by weather and it's crappy weather for a week

[  
James: we're

gonna go.

Chris:... we've got miles to make, we have a certain external pressure to - to perform and therefore our - our connection to this place is defined by the TASK ... the... mode of transportation.

[pp. 49-50, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Participants' mode of travel and connection to place involved both wayfaring and transport. The relatively slow travel and need for skilled perception and action allowed participants to access temporalities embedded in the environment, but always with consideration for the "external pressure" of the group's itinerary. Participants were always cognizant that "nature bats last," that they could for

example be “downed by weather” and wind-bound indefinitely. For the most part, however, this fact only added pressure to move along when they could and negotiate their itinerary within an environment that both helped and hindered their travel. The itinerary and mapped-out route promoted an understanding of paddling as transport. Nevertheless, negotiating the itinerary, safety, enjoyment, and group cohesion required that participants attend and adapt to their changing environment, which required them to paddle as wayfarers. Participants came to experience, for example, different temporalities such as the diurnal cycle, seasons, and latitudinal position through a daily routine of tasks. Group members tried to adjust their travel, eating, and sleeping to environmental conditions to minimize risk and discomfort and maximize efficiency and pleasurable travel. Participants tried to make the most distance along the route per unit of food they carried and time they had available. To do so, they necessarily engaged environmental features and flows salient to canoe travel, and these had meaning within the context of the itinerary. In addition to presenting challenges, the surroundings also facilitated travel. For example, the river’s current is clearly portrayed as helpful in Chris’ narrative about feeling in place while paddling with the flow (see p. 166). Such embodied placement is explored in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*. For now, it suffices to recognise that canoe travel was not solely human powered, and that efficient travel meant working with environmental flows.

***Routing challenged knowledge and experience of diverse landscapes.***

*Environmental knowledge through travel.* Participants had developed understandings of multiple aspects of their surroundings and reported attachments to patterns of movement in landscapes similar to those in which they had learned to canoe (see p. 99). Many of participants’ past expeditions had been inspired and built around traditions and notions of wilderness as isolated areas. These past experiences facilitated senses of movement that participants valued as a way of being-on-trip. Participants resisted their own transience as a way of coming to know their environment; they preferred environmental knowledge rooted in place, which they attributed to local inhabitants. Moreover, even as participants struggled to overcome a wilderness approach, they also resisted travel through

urban, industrial, and rural landscapes that did not provide a familiar experience of being-on-trip.<sup>42</sup>

The narratives show a strong desire among predominantly urban participants to deeply know and connect with non-urban landscapes through an activity that is transient; this creates a core tension between how participants understand their practices and their desired outcomes. A participatory ecological approach to adventure travel may help reconcile this tension by bringing to light different forms of environmental knowledge that are involved in movement and skilled adventure travel, while also suggesting ways to alter practices to differently engage environments and diverse landscapes in a changing socio-environmental context of sustainability.

Over the course of the trip, participants came to appreciate patterns of movement as a form of environmental engagement. Participants did not initially understand wayfaring practices as a form of environmental learning or knowledge, which they tended to anchor in place. I had asked participants if and how canoe tripping helped them understand their environment.

Liz: I actually don't think it does—well it helps me understand it a little bit, but it doesn't really help me know anything about the environment because we just travel on the river. Maybe I get to know about how the currents work in the river' but I need to spend more time to really know about stuff that's passing me by. I know a lot about the specific river currents, channels and weather, but beyond that I don't know much.

James: I have no idea what this river looks like at break-up, and I won't at the end of this trip.

Robert: But that's not because of canoeing, it's because of the time spent in the area, right? We only come through the area for four days on a canoe trip. I think that's the argument against outdoor recreationists who come through for a ridiculously short period of time.

Chris: Ya, they're consumers of the landscape. The fact that we're transient through this environment is problematic, many outdoor

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<sup>42</sup> To clarify my language, by *rural* I do not necessarily mean pastoral or agricultural landscapes. I refer to rural areas as any landscape ranging between those obviously urban areas to those which participants identified as being their preferred tripping landscapes, which were highly remote and wilderness-like. Along the Slave and Athabasca rivers, for example, participants encountered people (though sometimes none for days) in *rural* areas that were quite remote and rugged. Industrial logging and oil extraction, cabins, settlements, farms, and towns also occurred along the way.

educators have the idea that “we’ll bring folks to have a wilderness experience, and they’ll become more attached.” The link we make about bringing people into places outside their area of comfort and having them developing an attachment, I don’t think they’re that linked.

James: I don’t feel a lot of connection to this northern landscape, this particular one isn’t a part of me in the same way that it sounded like it was for Peter or Bob or Albert or whoever we talk with’ who lives here and travels these rivers all the time. Partly that’s the time issue, and we’ve only spent a few days here, and I only see it in one season. For me, the Canadian Shield in North Western Ontario feels more like a home in terms of an outdoor landscape because I’ve spent so many years there and maybe the north would become like that for me if I were to spend more time in that area as well.

[p. 47, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

This conversation shows how participants’ approach to canoe travel required attention to their surroundings that was limited and might be extended. Liz’s contribution here is reminiscent of James’ coming to know only a “strand” of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. She implied that canoeing structures knowledge, what little she thinks might accrue, along the routes paddled but rarely re-visited. Her comment of “just travelling on the river” also suggested that, for her, environmental learning is confined to the course of the river and directly relates to travel and movement. Her environmental learning relates to the channels and flows of the river as well as the weather, all moving and in flux. Liz, a highly experienced paddler and trip leader, has likely become comfortable and unconsciously competent in making her way safely along a rushing river. Such knowledge and ability imply significant embodied awareness and environmental understanding built up over time and with training that suggests the power and prevalence of wayfaring in her paddling experience and understanding of the river. Yet, Liz and others dismissed this environmental knowledge as not being sufficiently “rooted” in a place over time. Liz felt she needed to spend more time in place to know what she was passing along the route.

James and Robert further delimit environmental learning temporally. They pointed out that the seasonality of canoeing in general and the short specific timing and reach of the river in particular situate knowledge of the river. Robert and Chris express frustration over “ridiculously short” experiences undertaken by

many recreationalists who, according to Chris, consume rather than connect with their surroundings, engaging them as a generic wilderness for personal challenge. Robert and Chris appear to value a long-term commitment to an activity and area as an important way of connecting with a landscape.

Even though participants were frustrated with what they saw as problematic yet prevalent links between wilderness experiences and environmental stewardship, they struggled to reconcile the transience of canoe tripping with the connections they themselves felt to particular landscapes through which they had travelled. James also attributed such a connection to local inhabitants and his own experiences in North Western Ontario. His comments state that he grew into a knowledge and relationship with the landscape of the Canadian Shield over many journeys throughout days, weeks, multiple seasons, and years. For James, these trips contributed to his sense of feeling at home in that landscape, which he described as “part of me.” As James expressed, landscapes and ecozones differed in their form and, therefore, the wayfaring they required. He did not feel at home canoeing in the northern landscape the way he had in the shield of Ontario. James saw greater value in the knowledge, experience, and place relationships of local inhabitants (Peter, Bob, and Albert), who also contributed to James’ own knowledge and sense of the landscape.

*Travelling through diverse landscapes.* Participants found the transience of canoe travel suspect, and they resisted portions of their path that led through rural landscapes and multiple settlements. Even as participants were critical of wilderness experiences as providing attachments to place, the more-experienced trippers nevertheless privileged senses of movement they had developed through canoeing in remote wilderness landscapes. In this sense, participants were consistent with the archetypal wilderness paradigm, locating the ideal route entirely within a wilderness area. Other participants, however, contested this notion, which was further challenged by the reality of the route.

Participants regularly encountered cabins, settlements, and towns every three or four days during their travel on the Athabasca and Slave rivers. Even as research participants enjoyed learning from other inhabitants along the way, some

of the more-experienced paddlers framed this rural experience as outside the norm of *what* and *where* a canoe trip should be. Including towns and cities along the route challenged taken-for-granted distinctions between being-on-trip and being-in-the-city (see Figure 4-3).



*Figure 4-3.* Portaging through the hamlet of Fort Assiniboine along the Athabasca River is an example of travelling through various landscapes. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Chris, for example, persistently characterized this portion of the route as a “road trip” in contrast to what and where he felt a “canoe trip” should be. Anticipating the remote and isolated qualities of the travel and route through the Canadian Shield and Barren Lands north of Yellowknife and to Kugluktuk, Chris commented that:

Chris: I leave Yellowknife and what? It will take [me] on the path to Kugluktuk, versus what I’ve just experienced on this ROAD TRIP.  
[p. 90, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Liz, also a highly experienced trip leader and outdoor educator, valued a daily round away from towns as her preferred experience of recreational canoe tripping.

The narrative below gives the sense that towns were not a necessary part of the canoeing experience.

Liz: so the towns have been – I’ve enjoyed because I’ve met some people that live there’ but um, [it] wouldn’t have bothered me had I paddled right past because I don’t feel the need to go in.  
[p. 110, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Liz’s position was echoed by James who, like the others, enjoyed meeting people but described how towns disrupted his sense of being-on-trip.

James: I have a similar sort of feeling about towns.... There are so many... diverse options, as compared to a canoe trip where we could paddle or we could not paddle, you know, we could sleep in or we could not. I mean they’re not binary options entirely, but I feel more focus on a more limited range of options.... I want to say our focus could be more of a depth and detailed focus when we’re canoeing together, but I’m not one-hundred per cent sure... but I feel that there’s a faster pace in towns, and there’s a kind of dispersion effect as soon as we hit the town where we all run off in all directions.... so for me towns have had a very TROUBLING relationship.  
[pp. 110-111, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Liz felt she could avoid towns because they were not a necessary part of a canoe route. For James, towns were troublesome in that they altered the focus and simplicity of life on the river and being-on-trip that were hallmarks of a canoe trip. For Chris, a “canoe trip” belonged in a remote wilderness landscape without the frequent encounters of inhabitants and settlements. Participants were able to marginalize towns and value pristine landscapes by practicing supposedly self-contained travel and planning practices that heavily relied on cities and settlements.

The higher value that more-experienced participants associated with remote landscapes created resentment from at least one less-experienced paddler. Discussing the road trip analogy Steph, who was going to return home from Yellowknife, noted that:

Steph: It hasn’t been a road trip at ALL for me... I really firmly believe that everything we see is relative ‘cause for you guys it’s been more road trip, for me it HAS been more wilderness. But as you guys go one way towards even more wilderness, I go another way towards more city. How I view this last month is different I think than you guys. So I kind of get the analogy of the road trip but it doesn’t sit well with me in terms of my

experiences. It's sort of demeaning them almost. Like: "oh, it's just been a fun little road trip." But for me it's actually been really challenging. [p. 105, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The comments by Chris and Steph, like those of Robert in Chapter Three: *Living Stories* regarding the Nine Lakes Portage (see pp. 89 & 90), suggested that senses of a landscape may be understood and contextualized in relation to their sequence along a route that includes participants' homes. That is, participants' senses of a landscape depended on *where* they have been and where they might be going.

Travelling across a variety of landscapes enabled participants to place wilderness areas into broader socio-environmental contexts, and highlighted how tripping practices built and reinforced distinctions among regions. A supposedly self-contained approach to travel, for example, enabled leave no trace ethics and practices to be confined to the backcountry. James reflected that:

James: I never questioned [packing out garbage] as a camper because the problem was covered up. Minimum impact makes this issue invisible because we pack out our garbage to the trailhead and therefore we've done everything we can, and we have almost no visible direct impact in the backcountry. I feel really frustrated a lot of times when I look at the amount of plastic bags we have here... I don't want a student to come off a trip [with me] thinking that their actions – that things are not much more complicated than actually they are.... In terms of minimizing trace, the answer can't be finding zero impact. [p. 67, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

Participants recognized and valued the role of minimum impact camping in managing environmental impact but they were frustrated with a simple "pack it in, pack it out" approach that accompanies self-contained travel. Steph observed that it "seems like it's okay so long as we're not leaving the garbage [in the backcountry], then we're leaving no trace. But once we get out, where does that garbage get pushed?" When confined to the backcountry, minimum impact re-inscribes regions of nature. However, questioning these practices challenges the boundaries and segregation of nature and society.

***Restructuring travel: A discussion.*** Archetypal wilderness trips create spaces of social, ecological, and economic disconnection to which canoe trippers feel a sense of attachment. Sustainability, however, demands that participants

understand regions as interrelated, and this can be done through adventure travel by following and consciously attending to flows that interconnect landscapes. Rivers, money, people, pollution, information and air all flow between regions. In pursuit of sustainability, and to broaden understandings of place, adventure travellers can change the ways in which they engage these flows; they can engage the human ecology of their own trip, and within their surroundings.

Participants understood their surroundings relative to environmental cycles and flows along their route. James and Liz's notion of travelling a 'strand' evokes Gibson's (1986) notion of a *path of observation*, which occurs along a "unitary movement, an excursion, a trip, or a voyage" (p. 197) that can last hours, days, or years. Understood broadly, each person's life progresses along an extended path of observation (Ingold, 2000). According to Gibson, people (and animals) become oriented to a region by travelling along multiple paths.<sup>43</sup> Each canoe trip, then, provides opportunities for one's (inter)relationship with a region to grow incrementally along the route. A canoe trip, however, is punctuated by transitions between modes of travel (car, canoe, and plane) that shape how landscapes are experienced as being connected to one another as well as the traveller (see Figure 4-4).

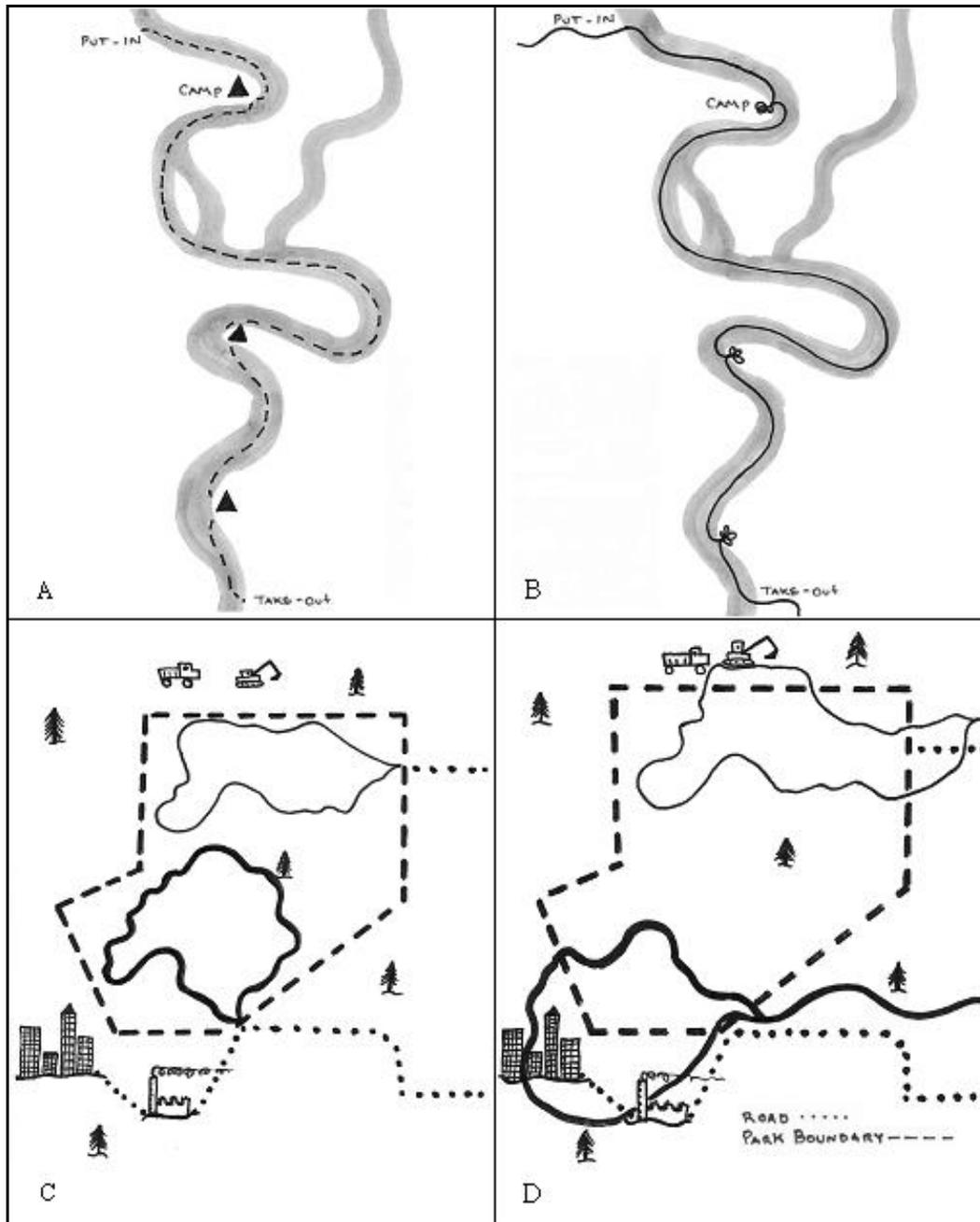
Transitioning from travel by bus to canoe required participants engage features, flows and environmental processes in the open (Ingold, 2008).<sup>44</sup> Ingold (2008) described that "life in the open, far from being contained within bounded places, threads its way along paths" (p. 1) immersed in a dynamic "weather world" in flow and flux. Life out in the open is not exclusive to particular landscapes or places, despite archetypal wilderness experiences and trip structures that confine canoe travel to wilderness areas. Casey (1996, p. 22-24) showed that

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<sup>43</sup> Indeed, local inhabitants, explorers, and tourists over many generations have travelled paths of observation through Canada's north that, taken together, enable the creation of maps that facilitate objective notions of transportation across the region (Gibson, 1986; Ingold, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> An alternative to *self-propelled travel*, the term *travel out in the open* better recognizes the motive power of environmental flows such as the currents of rivers and air, among others, which help and hinder human movement. The term emphasizes interaction by acknowledging that the environment is actively involved in human travel and is not simply a platform upon which it occurs. Finally, the term avoids the distinction between motorized and non-motorized travel that tends to reflect anti-modern values.

different landscapes and environments present features that give rise to an “operative intentionality” that, in relation to the corporeal intentionality of the traveller, facilitate and privilege particular modes of movement. In this way, canoeing makes use of rivers, lakes, and shorelines that enable camping and travel through various ecozones knit together into a *region* for canoeing at certain times of year. That canoeing is already a way of relating to the surroundings is evident in narratives by Liz (see p. 171) and Chris (see pp. 164, 166, 169) regarding river current and the flow of the activity. Participants downplayed this kind of environmental knowledge. However, as a way of knowing and inhabiting the surroundings, canoe travel need not be constrained within areas that travellers predetermine to be wilderness.



*Figure 4-4.* Canoe routes as paths of observation. (A) Representation of a river canoe trip understood as transport from campsite to campsite, and (B) as a path of observation. (C) Multiple paths of observation segmented by rapid transport along roads to a park boundary, gate, or put-in, and (D) multiple paths of observation that transgress park boundaries. Both C and D result in familiarity with a region. In D, the region for canoeing expands by following rivers beyond park boundaries, and thereby engaging broader contexts that situate the journey and the park, including areas of urban, industrial, and resource extraction activity. Figure courtesy of the author.

Narratives showed that participants travelled efficiently out in the open by engaging various temporal and environmental processes, such as wind patterns and seasonal changes in daylight. While on the river, participants felt most “in place” while fully oriented to their task so long as their performance was coordinated with the dynamics of their surroundings. Being-on-trip meant being “in the here and now” while achieving a set itinerary by carefully coordinating movements in response to environmental processes. This description perfectly evokes the Ancient Greek concept of *kairos*, described by Vernant (as quoted in Ingold, 2000) as the moment in skilled work when “human action meets a natural process developing according to its own rhythm” (p. 335). Different from *chronos* (measured time), *kairos* cannot be mapped or predicted; rather, it requires attention and judgement to the unfolding of one’s surroundings. Perhaps the need to attend to *kairos* was accentuated by the long route and demanding itinerary of *Big Sky*. More-experienced participants’ senses of belonging within patterns of movement—rather than particular places—may also indicate an attention to *kairos* that has been cultivated over years of learning to canoe in specific landscape and ecozone types. The lived experience and performance of canoe tripping was deeply structured by the need for participants to negotiate *chronos* and *kairos*; accomplishing a set itinerary by strategically engaging environmental processes.

Complicating matters and emphasizing travel as transport, participants understood transience to be problematic for environmental knowledge. While Liz acknowledges the weather and currents in her narrative on environmental learning (see p. 171), she frames the environment and “real” knowledge of it as residing in places rather than moving and growing. Such resistance continued despite participants acknowledged senses of place in movement as well as their negative assessments of “once in a lifetime” canoe tripping. Such positions suggest that participants value trips as ways of staying in touch with particular types of landscape. Singular brief encounters may indeed be problematic in knowing a particular place, as the participants described. Nevertheless, from the dwelling perspective, the narratives show that participants accrued and expressed

knowledge and senses of their surroundings by engaging flows through travel, by experiencing the landscape along their route, and by engaging with other inhabitants. Some days the members of *Big Sky* only moved around camp, other days they travelled up to 80 kilometres. *Big Sky* provided environmental understanding and engagements that were limited in duration, season, and route.

The findings suggest that physical movement is not necessarily problematic for connecting and learning about places, landscapes, and environments. Indeed, James recalled that Peter, Bob, and Albert “travel these rivers all the time.” Participants’ perception that they had limited environmental knowledge may stem from their assumptions about transience, the landscapes they valued, and where they travelled. Participants understood elements of their environment, but they did so in the context of their mode of dwelling and travel. Environmental knowledge takes different forms, and canoe tripping provides access to certain types of environmental knowledge within the limits established by the nature and practices of the activity.

Interactions with other travellers and local inhabitants allowed participants to further share in knowledge that was deeper in time and broader in geography. Adding complexity, participants resisted the “road trip” pattern of movement through rural landscapes. Participants’ resistance stemmed from their focus on *kairos* in relation to particular non-human processes and rhythms, such as a break in the weather that allowed for travel, within a strict itinerary (*chronos*) as well as their senses of being-on-trip within and not beyond wilderness landscapes. Such pre-determined selection and exclusivity of landscapes and routes is also evident in Jacobson’s (2005) caution to avoid hydro dams and logging operations within the archetypal wilderness trip. Archetypal wilderness trips segregate between landscapes based on the prevalence of human-built infrastructure and influence. Participants enact and experience this segregation through their pre-planned routes within (and rapid transport to) wilderness areas. These practices implicitly value wilderness while simultaneously avoiding and negatively valuing human ecology. By locating canoe trips only in wilderness areas, the archetypal trip structures participants’ experiences of landscapes, environmental flows and

cycles, and inhabitants (non-humans and possibly some humans) as belonging to distinct regions of nature. Travel, routing, and leave no trace practice reinforced the isolation of these regions from surrounding socio-ecological realities and everyday lives of participants.

Bounding canoe travel based on degrees of human influence in a landscape may impede learning about sustainability. Doing so frames nature as a destination that is isolated from home and erroneously segregates the ways in which participants inhabit landscapes that are, in fact, interconnected through socio-environmental systems as well as the lives and travels of participants. An orientation to wilderness-type landscapes as a destination region can be seen in Chris' narrative that frames wilderness experiences as "consumption of the landscape," (see p. 171-172) in Liz's and James' dismissals of towns (see p. 175), and Steph's juxtapositions of her wilderness experience on the river with her urban life in the city (see p. 175-176). Archetypal tripping practices that assumed "true" nature is found in a wilderness destination "out there" beyond society may be limiting participants' understanding and lived experience of interconnections among landscapes and their own lifestyles.<sup>45</sup> Repeated canoe expeditions that remain within wilderness destination-regions continue to weave boundaries between nature and society into the landscape. Using of self-contained travel practices, participants can experience these regions as pristine nature while leaving no trace. Yet the learning that happens through tripping is not *only* a matter of the landscape, it is also a matter of canoeing as a mode of engagement with the world, whether the landscape is industrial, urban, or wilderness. Participants could use canoeing to foster and explore socio-environmental relationships within and across a variety of settings woven together by the flows of water upon which canoeing depends.

A bias towards destinations and against transience means that tourism and adventure recreation theory can do more to recognize travel as a way of knowing, experiencing, and influencing the world (Cuthbertson et al., 1997; Fox &

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<sup>45</sup> While the segregation of society and nature is expressed and enacted in the archetypal wilderness trip, such trips follow from dominant modern approaches to environmentalism, time, and space.

McAvoy, 1998; Ingold, 2007b; Weber, 2001).<sup>46</sup> The notion that activities are contained within and contextualized by places and regions is typical of the building perspective. A bounded approach to canoe travel combines the wilderness preservation movement with the dominant destination-oriented approach to tourism; doing so centers activities as well as personal environmental impact and responsibility within specific regions.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, such an approach limits participants' ability to integrate the destination into the broader context of their lives. Finally, movement along a river, for example, is framed as limiting (rather than fostering and expressing) environmental knowledge and engagement.

Casey (1996) approached travel seriously; he described that *regions* are created by knitting together places and landscapes *through travel along multiple paths*. Moreover, Ingold (2000) argued that knowledge grows along these paths. Indeed, travel by canoe provided James with a context in which to discover meaning in the delta landscape. This is why confining travel in the open to landscapes based on an urban-wilderness continuum reinforces participants' experience and knowledge of nature as a distinct region, separated from society in both geography and time. From the dwelling perspective, put-ins and take-outs are places made through and for transitions between ways of travel that facilitate different interactions with landscapes and environmental features. Put-ins and take-outs can, therefore, come to signify the threshold of a region of nature in which society and travellers are understood to be visitors and supposedly do not belong. To take the dwelling perspective and sustainability paradigm seriously, adventure travel must literally and figuratively move beyond urban, rural, and wilderness landscape typologies that make the nature-culture dichotomy operational as an organizing principle for practice and theory.

The archetypal wilderness trip isolates travel and life in the open within supposedly pristine natural areas through rapid transport, creating a liminal space

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<sup>46</sup> This presents a paradox. If true nature (wilderness) can only be known to humans by settling within it, and doing so destroys wilderness, then wilderness and nature can never be known. Ingold (2005) argued similarly when he stated that because places arise out of human inhabitation and are inherently social, and Nature is by definition non-social, the protection of Nature and the protection of places are incompatible.

<sup>47</sup> See Wood and Fels' (2008) for the role of maps in exclaiming and advertising Nature as a region and destination to be visited.

between city and wilderness. Participants experience nature as being “in the middle of nowhere.” Understood from a sustainability paradigm, such practices perpetuate a lack of engagement with geographical, ecological, and historical contexts that would otherwise deepen understandings of place and sustainability.

According to O’Connell et al. (2005), fostering sustainability depends on attending to interconnections among landscapes, environments, and inhabitants over time. The route of *Big Sky* intentionally challenged the isolation of wilderness by following rivers beyond the backcountry through urban, industrial, and rural landscapes.<sup>48</sup> Doing so opened possibilities for participants to interconnect landscapes and understand their own positions within various environmental flows and cycles, such as fresh water and participants’ complicity in oil sands extraction. Travel in the open can (and does) occur in a variety of landscapes in which travellers can foster socio-ecological relationships, sustainability, and senses of place.

In addition to *where*, *when* and for *how long* trips occur, the findings suggest that *how* participants travel may be crucial to their understandings of and positions within various environments. Self-contained approaches to canoe travel, for example, allowed participants to reduce temporally and spatially *immediate* ecological entanglements in favour of regionally exogenous goods, services, and resources. Such practices contributed to building and maintaining an *aesthetically* pristine wilderness landscape and to impacts in other landscapes via socio-environmental and economic flows that interconnect regions. Self-contained travel may reduce participants’ experience and knowledge of their surroundings and self as ecologically interrelated in positive ways through movement and travel.<sup>49</sup>

The value participants found in slow “inching” travel by canoe as well as interactions with local inhabitants suggests promising possibilities for approaches to travel within a sustainability paradigm that encourages participants to

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<sup>48</sup> Indeed the cities of Montreal, Winnipeg, and Edmonton grew from put-ins and take-outs at the ends of portages along historic canoe routes.

<sup>49</sup> Leave No Trace ethics and practices seem to encapsulate, promote, and value exactly this sort of short-term occupation of wilderness spaces, rather than an integrated inhabitation of diverse landscapes.

understand the geographic, historic, and ecological contexts of their route and expedition. Two promising avenues towards broadening and deepening place-based knowledge have emerged from *Big Sky*. First, a traveller's wayfaring skills and activities in the open involve embedded knowledge and embodied experience of the environment. Geographic and ecological isolation enacted through practices of route selection and self-contained travel may limit such knowledge.

Conversely, participants might expand such knowledge by following flows across rural, industrial, and urban landscapes. Secondly, discussions with other travellers and residents facilitated participants' understandings of the interconnections among landscapes. Ingold (2000) described *exchanges of knowledge* as occurring when inhabitants share perspectives about the world as they meet, reside, and travel together. Exchanges of knowledge contributed to senses of place and understandings of socio-environmental issues that permeated a continuum of landscapes. While learning from other travellers and local inhabitants may seem basic, engaging with people outside of "the group" challenged the archetypal wilderness experience and paradigm. Some participants were apprehensive about the challenge towns and other people presented to a traditional focus on group dynamics.

#### **Social interactions beyond the group and engaging realities of place.**

Transportation by bus and plane allowed participants to ignore rural areas, which they also resisted travelling through while paddling. Nevertheless, three understandings emerged regarding the social interactions of participants with people beyond the members of the expedition. First, within the archetypal wilderness paradigm participants were ambivalent towards towns, which functioned as places of rest and resupply but also interrupted being-on-trip as focused on "here and now" with "the group." Participants resisted towns by excluding them from notions of canoe tripping proper, and by highlighting the potential for towns to create group conflict. Secondly—and in support of a sustainability paradigm—social interactions and visits to towns along the *Big Sky* route exposed participants to socio-environmental contexts and issues of sustainability in the region through which they travelled. Participants empathized

with local inhabitants and were able to connect these “local” issues to their own lives. Thirdly, interacting with other travellers and local inhabitants highlighted for participants how travel by canoe provided a particular way of understanding their surroundings. That is, interacting with others prompted participants to reflect on their own positions within multiple socio-environmental contexts, including their immediate surroundings.

*Ambivalent relationships with towns.* Acknowledged as a reality of the landscape, towns helped facilitate travel and provided rest, but also distracted participants from being-on-trip in the “here and now.” Participants showed ambivalence towards towns and framed them begrudgingly as necessary but distracting from being-on-trip—the “price” to which Robert refers:

Robert: Well Yellowknife and Fort Mac are concrete points that we already, like six months ago knew that we were to spend a significant amount of days in, because we knew that we had food to pack... had new group members and... We already had that “there’s gunna be a town and there’s and there’s gunna be a price...”

[pp. 115-117, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Participants also welcomed towns as places for pause along the way. James’ narrative expressed both a sense of movement and how towns provided rest from difficult travel.

James: When we were paddling across Lake Athabasca I was feeling a little tired that day because it was a long day, and I thought it would be really nice to hit the shore and STOP and know that we can stay there for a day and kind of re-coup some energy. But... Fort Chip for me didn’t really begin until, you know, it sort of grew on me part way through the day before we got there, and it definitely was growing on me as we crossed the lake and I could see the lights on the shore and that was a HAVEN so to speak.

[p. 115, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

The ambivalence and resistance to towns suggests that they lie outside the archetypal wilderness approach to canoe travel. Resistance from participants centred on disruptions presented by towns to the cohesive focus of the group as well as being-on-trip in the “here and now.”

Early along the route, Robert, Liz, and I discussed go into the town of Athabasca. The discussion itself was an indication of towns being a contentious

prospect for outdoor educators. There were concerns that the group would lose the sense of remoteness and cohesion cultivated while paddling. Yet, the group decided to stop. For Liz, a very experienced outdoor leader, such stops disrupted the coordination of the group:

Liz: I think that a town's disruptive to me, I don't really like going into them. I find that in terms of group stuff it makes things different, I feel like it makes group decisions more difficult, I feel like we're trying to deal with many many more factors because we all want to get our needs and wants met in a town. And at some level that creates potential conflicts because we have so many differing opinions on what each of us wants to do in the town. So I find it very disruptive.  
[p. 109, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

In this narrative, towns are places where options for action and participants' goals proliferate; they divert attention away from the group, its common objective, and daily round. For Liz, this led to potential conflict. While not all participants saw towns as creating conflict, most positioned towns as outside the "canoeing experience" proper. Participants may have to tolerate towns in order to re-supply food, for example, but they did not think of settlements as integral to the experience of canoeing.

Towns not only altered experiences of place upon participants' arrival in them. Foreknowledge of towns drew attention away from the "here and now" of being-on-trip. Robert commented on his knowledge of Yellowknife and Fort McMurray "six months ago" and James described how Fort Chipewyan "grew on me part way through the day before we got there." Participants anticipated multiple affordances that attracted their attention well in advance of arriving in a town that—like satellite phones—directly challenged the isolation of the archetypal wilderness experience. The ability to address concerns back home was one such affordance:

James: A lot of my thought time was spent [in Yellowknife]. Even though my physical body wasn't anywhere near [there], at that point mentally I was here [in Yellowknife], sort of a bending of space almost. ... I was trying as we were paddling, to not get caught-up in that because ... I can miss some of the enjoyment and the beauty of where I'm actually physically at....  
...

Chris: I find that displacement in time and place for me approaching Yellowknife for me wasn't so much for Yellowknife – like I knew the tasks that were here – but really it was just like for the Fall for me. All my thoughts coming into Yellowknife have been more about how I am going to plan the classes I'm teaching now, or how my relationship is going to turn out.

James: That's an interesting comment too on towns and of a sense of connecting us and affording opportunities that are physical and material HERE right? Like you can go into stores. We can't when we're canoeing. And there's a certain amount of opportunities here, but there is also connections...that extend temporally and spatially way out. For, like, Yellowknife as an urban centre resonates with “well, what am I going to do in the fall?”  
[pp. 115-116, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Just as towns and cities were places of rest and pause, they were also nodes at which participants could connect to and concern themselves with a vast array of activities, both near and far in space and time. This detracted from their enjoyment of “being in the moment” that was central to the experience of being-on-trip.

For the participants with training in outdoor education, towns were “interruptions” to the archetypal wilderness experience. Reflecting on his experience leading groups at youth camps, James described that institutional policy and camp traditions explicitly discouraged him from engaging his followers with local inhabitants. He related that:

James: [At my old camp] my job was to entertain the kids ... The focus was... ALWAYS on the GROUP and the PRESENT. It wasn't so much that we didn't want to know other stories, it's that our focus was on the here and the now and who we were with. That was explicitly mandated through the [camp organization's] mission statement. So the other things just fell off the way but... it MAKES the landscape not a rich tapestry or something with history. In some ways the land is IRRELEVANT because the focus is SO MUCH on who you are with....  
My experience with those kinds of encounters [with people outside the group] is that they've been framed, either explicitly or not, as an intrusion on the group...  
[pp. 298-301, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

The point seems clear: the predominant focus within the archetypal wilderness paradigm on “the group” and their dynamics as well as individual growth came at

the expense of learning about the landscape, its inhabitants, and their histories. Chris described how his perspective on social interactions outside the group had changed, but expressed caution about negotiating this within institutional objectives and traditions:

Chris: ...about visiting towns and interacting with other users and inhabitants, ah reflecting back, I think that will change for me. In the past I've...typically avoided those kinds of encounters, and I've found great value in them on this trip. So, from a personal tripping point of view that'll... change for me.

From a professional point of view I think it will depend on the context of the group and the goal of the interaction, and [whether] it helps... the students achieve the educational outcomes...

[p. 357, BS 7, August 16 (Day 101): Town of Kugluktuk, UTM: NF8124 on 86O, 1993]

The more-experienced participants were troubled with the distinct and ingrained focus within adventure education on self and group that they saw as impeding environmental learning within the broader realities of the landscape, environment, and inhabitants.

*Social interactions enabled contextual knowledge.* If towns disrupted common group flow, action, and harmonious work, such “interruptions” also allowed group members to learn from people beyond the group about the socio-environmental contexts and place in which their journey occurred. Paddling through landscapes that were picturesque and obviously worked for resource extraction (logging, mining, trapping) blurred stark contrasts between nature and “the city” as places or regions and opened room in which to explore the interconnections among landscapes. Meeting hunters, trappers, and fishers as well as encountering pulp mills, farms, and oil sands development exposed participants to various socio-environmental issues and realities. Steph highlighted how, in addition to affording connections to her social support network, towns helped her, as a novice, to place herself in unfamiliar landscapes:

Steph: but there's actually a second part to that connection. It was connecting to outside people, but it was also locating the land because otherwise I felt like it was this huge vast—  
... so in my journal I would write Fort Chip, it was a place... some kind of a marker—it was something that pulls. And it did tie back to a socio-cultural perspective or historical perspective on where these towns came

from. So it was partly [cultural interest] and partly connecting outside places too, connecting the land to where I am physically.  
[p. 107, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Steph put forward a distinct challenge to the archetypal wilderness experience that framed towns as interruptions within pristine landscapes of travel. She used towns to inform her understanding of the socio-cultural realities of places and landscapes. Her approach is consistent with sustainability paradigm, and would support learning about places, issues, and one's own position within them.

Some individuals that participants met along the route and in towns were key informants about local socio-environmental realities of which participants would not otherwise have been aware. Bob in Fort Chipewyan told about water level, flow patterns, and pollution changes resulting from both the WAC Bennett hydroelectric dam as well as the oil sand developments up stream on the Peace and Athabasca rivers, respectively. These projects have caused major problems for hunting, fishing, and the health of the delta and local communities.<sup>50</sup> Added into this complex socio-ecological mix is the management of Wood Buffalo National Park, a World Heritage Site that encompasses a Ramsar site and much of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Just as the town of Fort Chipewyan provided participants a chance to connect with their "outside" world, so it provided Bob a chance to share his concerns for, and knowledge of, the delicate and unique socio-ecology of the area. Participants welcomed this knowledge, but Bob's stories also meant that participants could no longer think of Wood Buffalo National Park, the river, and surroundings as pristine wilderness. As Ingold (2005) described, nature and the flows of an environment that contribute to the character of a place could not be "parked" (p. 507) within park boundaries. The park, delta, and their inhabitants were intimately contextualized within the impacts of distant laws, policies, practices, and economics of resource extraction and consumption that flow through landscapes.

James: ... just after Fort Smith as we paddled away from the campsite, we looked at that big pipe coming down and dumping stuff into the river.

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<sup>50</sup> See Loo (2007) for more information on the impacts of these developments on the Peace and Athabasca rivers.

And it got me thinking about how everywhere along the trip thus far, we've heard people say all of the problems that up-stream issues are causing, particularly the Bennett Dam. Yet, you go and look at what Fort Smith is doing to the river, and I don't know anything about this.... a lot of environmental problems are... carried away downstream and its out of sight. And so all you see in terms of the problems are "I have a problem with my neighbour upstream", never "I'm causing a problem for my neighbour downstream", whether is dumping pollutants into the river or building a dam or whatever it is....But then we could look at well what is Edmonton doing' that's transporting its problems down river?  
[ p. 65-66, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Within this narrative, James described places such as Fort Smith and Edmonton as existing within and contributing to flows of water and pollutants. His narrative incorporated influences of events, like the pipe, his reliance on the river for water, as well as personal exchanges of knowledge and encounters with people along the way. James is beginning to wrestle with sustainability in the environment through which he was travelling. Struggling to find drinking water highlighted, intellectually and physiologically, the quality of water in the Athabasca River; this opened opportunities for participants to empathise with local inhabitants who also depended on the river. James and Robert commented that:

James: I find that to be a very strange experience feeling dehydrated on a river trip, and at some level bringing the point home MORE about the state of affairs on in the waterway, a major water way.  
Robert: and... for us as recreationists it's short term. But folks like Charlene who we met on the Athabasca said the same thing: it's absolutely ridiculous that we're here next to the river but we can't get our water from it.  
[p. 76 BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

A simple daily task like finding drinking water involves ecosystem dynamics extending beyond the river and influencing the lives of inhabitants as well as the travel and health of participants. Attention to water and discovering one's own position within its flow is addressed in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*. The examples from Fort Chipewyan, Fort Smith, and the Athabasca River, however, show how *exchanges of knowledge* can enhance understandings gained through *exchanges of substance* (Ingold, 2000). Taken together, the narratives on

water showed that participants engaged with ecological, socio-political, physiological, industrial, and economic realities of their own and others' lives that have implications for sustainability. Water provided a common thread through which participants and inhabitants could empathise, reflect and discuss experiences, and weave elements of landscapes "out there" into a context for dwelling on trip and at home within contemporary socio-environmental realities. James described how encounters with others beyond the group added value to *Big Sky* by extending opportunities for his own learning (see Figure 4-5):

James: One particularly powerful experience... for me on this trip has been the people that we met and the experiences we've had like going out to the ice. And it's not so much that we were out on the ice but that we got to talk to Joel and the stories he gets to tell and things he has to say, and meeting him. And there's a whole litany of people that we've met. MOSTLY, though if we were trying to... avoid those kinds of contacts this trip would have been greatly impoverished, for me at least.

...

Like Joel kept talking today about going out to the land and getting food.... In the past as an outdoor educator [I] felt that it was... an incompetence on my part that I don't fish or hunt, and I no longer feel that way after this trip...

I'm actually in a mode of travel... that's different, and it's different than living in the city... And so that's been interesting, seeing the sort of three different life-worlds if you want. The life in the city that I lead, the life I lead when I'm tripping, and the life that some of the really interesting people that we have met, the powerful people that we've met along the way.

[pp. 357-358, BS 7, August 16 (Day 101): Town of Kugluktuk, UTM: NF8124 on 86O, 1993]

James explicitly described his encounters with some people along the way as opportunities to extend his understanding of landscape relations through others' description and practice of particular skills. James realized that he does not have to perform and teach all of these skills; his mode of engaging with the land can be augmented and informed by other ways of dwelling that provide different experiences of the surroundings. Interactions beyond the group helped members of *Big Sky* realize their entangled and position within local socio-environmental histories, ecologies, and economies of the region.

*Diversifying the intersubjective experience of place.* Participants engaged other inhabitants who were living, working, and travelling along the rivers.

Exposure to multiple ways of inhabiting rivers enabled reflection and understanding among participants of the ways canoe travel shaped their own perception. Participants came to recognize and value a “river community” that was generally comprised of anyone encountered along the river. While on the Coppermine River, a popular river for wilderness canoe tripping, James noted that “we see more people on this river... there feels like a river community here MORE than on the Yellowknife and Winter River and Starvation River.” Examined more closely, and seen in James’ narrative, participants perceived the river community as comprised of two groups: a community of recreational paddlers, and a community of local inhabitants. Participants consistently distinguished between these communities and they self-identified with the paddlers.

Interacting with these two groups was complex and difficult because participants gained different kinds of information from inhabitants and other canoe trippers. Information from each group was treated differently when applied to participants’ own travel. Robert distinguished between these groups when describing how each contributed to his knowledge of his route and surroundings:

Robert: [One type of stories are] from the river community.... Like the stories that Charlene told us, you know?... Also folks like Bob told us about Fort Smith. They gave us an indication of what we were going to experience both community-wise and also you know, the winds are bad here, or take this route, um, the ice might still be here. Things like that. ... The Americans [paddling down] the Yellowknife River, kind of the same sort of scenario as the river community where they could tell us about the rapids that we were yet to encounter and we could tell them about the ones that they were yet to encounter. A little bit – even more in the here and now than trip reports or things like that.  
[pp. 290-291, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Local inhabitants and other canoe groups helped facilitate the *Big Sky* journey. Both provided information on the realities of the river beyond what the maps could provide. They drew participants’ attention to different aspects of the surroundings. Local inhabitants provided socio-environmental knowledge situated in a broad social, historical, and ecological context. Other paddlers, on the other hand, provided focused and activity-specific details of present river conditions

(see Figure 4-5). Realizing differences in how the river is known through a variety of activities helped the paddlers reflect on and ward off naturalizing the way canoeing shaped their own perception the surroundings.



*Figure 4-5.* The river community. Left: Discussing features of the Yellowknife River with a group of Americans who were descending the river as participants were ascending it. Right: Going out to the ice on the Coronation Gulf with Joel and hearing stories about the land (and water) and its inhabitants, both human and non-human. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Canoe tripping skills and tasks provided a common frame of reference and point of connection for discussing river conditions and experiences in a coherent way with other paddlers along the river. This common frame of reference was less available when engaging local inhabitants; participants struggled to adapt information to suit their mode of travel. Robert and Chris discussed a tip they received regarding cabins along the river:

Chris: Mark! Mark's cabins!

Robert: Everyone we had met before had given us great information, totally bomber, and then we meet Mark who tells us where ALL the cabins are [downstream from Fort Smith].

Chris: and can mark them on the map.

Robert: and its absolute [garbage]

Chris: FOR US, from our point of view... probably it's just the context to which Mark refers. Maybe it's a hunting camp so they go in there in the winter on their sleds [when] things are more accessible. Or the damage to the forestry cabin which was supposed to be beautiful; it looks like a great cabin if it wasn't for all the carnage that the animals ripped through there.

[pp. 310-311, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

The information proved out of date and context for participants. Some of the cabins were unreachable by canoe, others had been in shambles for some time,

and our informant, who travelled the river by motorboat, had underestimated the time to travel between them by canoe. Moving past their evident frustration, participants tried to adjust for canoeing as their own way of engaging the landscape when they discussed conditions with locals who travelled in different ways. Chris observed that:

Chris: I think that's a good example of [how] the technology we use... frames our space in the landscape and that how Mark frames his landscape when he's out on his speed boat, or Albert when he talks about, you know, how far we're going to get... when people talk about distances right?... "ah you know, that's about ten miles down the river." Which I think because the use of our maps and the rate we're travelling at, I think we're very aware of what is a kilometre worth, whereas when you're travelling in a SPEEDboat... the meaning of that unit is completely different...

Robert: Which is, I think, the same as Bob telling us to go down the Coupé

James: Oh ya, ya

Chris: ya,

Robert: ya, it's dead easy in a speedboat. It was flat, it was-

Chris: Brutal

Robert: a miserable experience [laughter]

[p. 44, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

The Coupé was “a miserable experience” because it had almost no current to help canoeists along, a factor much less significant or with different implications when travelling by motor boat. Even when participants were not well served by the information they received (which was rare), it helped them—through reflection—to better understand how they themselves travelled, and how other inhabitants might differ in that regard. Such intersubjectivity would not be available in the archetypal wilderness trip except with other group members. Chris' reflection on awareness of distance arising out of the combination of slow physical travel and a constant map use provides an excellent example of how a mode of travel and traditions of practice can shape environmental perception. These narratives also show, however, a potential to dismiss information and local inhabitants without trying to understand how they might inhabit the landscape differently.

***Social interactions: A discussion.*** The influence of towns proved to be complex. While canoe trips may engage towns and rural populations (gateway communities, guiding services, outfitters), these settlements receive little attention and prominence in archetypal wilderness paradigm and approach to tripping. Participant narratives suggest that interacting with other inhabitants encroached on “the group” and senses of being isolated on-trip in the here and now, a tradition supported by wilderness tripping institutions.

Focusing exclusively on “the group” and the “here and now” has two profound implications that run counter to the celebrated tradition of canoeing as a nexus of nature and culture. First, inhabitants who could facilitate learning experiences based on local knowledge remain distant, possibly invisible to the group. Secondly, the surroundings that a group has ostensibly come to experience receive little explicit attention and the landscape plays a substantially diminished role as timeless scenery not to be disturbed and the origin of challenges for “the group” to overcome. Following Harrison (2004), this archetypal wilderness and adventure experience can promote the active forgetting of past and present human inhabitation, and can support an over-estimation of the naturalness of canoe-tripping landscapes as timeless, un-managed, and un-peopled. Moreover, elements of practice that de-couple participants’ own physical activity from the surroundings (such as self-contained tripping) limit their embodied awareness, skilled abilities, and physical roles within their surroundings; Wattoo (2007) has described such participants as remaining “outsiders” to the landscapes in which they travel.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the archetypal wilderness paradigm and trip structure does little to expose and challenge stereotypes, promote diversity, or raise understandings of ways of life and human-environment relations in rural and remote regions.

Nevertheless, towns disrupted participants who *were* attentive to their river environment. Towns disturbed rhythmic and coordinated day-to-day tripping practices that were privileged by some participants during *Big Sky*, and they shifted participants’ attention towards more distant concerns. Despite conflict

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<sup>51</sup> The notion of embodied engagement is further explored in Chapter Five: *Ecology of Skill*.

over the disruptions caused by towns, they opened opportunities for participants to engage in exchanges of knowledge that allowed participants to place themselves and their actions within various environmental, historical, economic, and socio-cultural contexts and processes. Understanding surroundings through exchanges of knowledge beyond the group may help address the individualistic focus on an unmediated present that Fox and McAvoy (1998) have critiqued within the archetypal wilderness paradigm. The practice of exchanging knowledge beyond the group holds promise within a sustainability paradigm because doing so reveals new or different knowledge of participants' environment as well as diverse ecological relations. Encountering others incorporates greater diversity into outdoor experiences and practices. The ability of social interactions beyond the group to encourage reflection on one's own way of being-in the landscape suggest that "*lived with*" human-environment relationships that Beringer (2004), Fox and McAvoy (1998), and Hull (2000) call for are well-served when participants and the archi-texture of their trips recognize the histories and presence of those who already inhabit landscapes. These practices *are* consistent with the nature-culture connection celebrated in Canadian canoe tripping traditions and literature (Henderson & Potter, 2001; Raffan, 1999).

To an extent, the northern Canadian landscapes did not allow participants in *Big Sky* to ignore the human inhabitation of the lands and rivers. The narratives make clear that participants valued and were able to embrace practices and experiences that were not accounted for within the archetypal trip structure and wilderness paradigm, but may nevertheless be common in the regions participants travelled. In addition to challenging archetypal notions of being-on-trip, towns functioned as places for rest and meeting of others. Supporting an emerging sustainability paradigm, towns helped participants "place" the landscape in broader historical and socio-environmental contexts and issues. Towns gathered together inhabitants, activities, trails, and histories of a region. In doing so, towns facilitated exchanges of knowledge through which participants began to empathise with inhabitants and their realities of place, as seen in the example of finding drinking water. Social interactions that exposed socio-environmental

interconnections extending throughout the surroundings deepened participants' insights into places. The influence of upstream oil sand and hydroelectric development on the Peace Athabasca Delta is one example. Participants understood implications of these issues for sustainability in the region, of their trip, and within their lifestyles at home.

Information about travel and route conditions gathered by participants from other travellers and local inhabitants highlighted, for the members of *Big Sky*, how canoeing structured their own perception of surroundings. Skills provided participants with an ability to intuit significant features and events along a route, which underpinned their discussions with others about conditions and experiences. Extending Fox and McAvoy's (1998) as well as Cuthbertson et al. (1997) thoughts on environmental learning through wayfaring, participants in this study learned about their environment by learning *how* to travel and cope with life in the open, a process that involved others beyond the group. Shared skill and experience, according to Ingold (2000), provide an avenue for sharing senses of place. Ingold described that:

...if people from different backgrounds orient themselves in different ways, this is not because they are interpreting the same sensory experience in terms of alternative cultural models of cognitive schemata, but because, due to their previous bodily training, their senses are differently attuned to the environment.... And if knowledge is shared it is because people work together, through their joint immersion in the settings of activity, in the process of its formation. (pp. 162-163)

The notion of working together as a way of understanding the other's reality makes sense when the world is understood as surrounding inhabitants who take up intimate positions within rather than distanced perspective on the surroundings. Sharing environmental understandings through shared skills directly challenges (and helps negotiate) notions of cultural subjectivity and perceptual relativism that suppose others' experiences to be inaccessible as well as separable from the land. At the core of the archetypal wilderness paradigm is a nature-culture dichotomy that does violence to lived relationships of all inhabitants by framing them as

“cultural” and subjective experiences of nature, a realm only truly knowable through scientific inquiry.

In the context of sustainability and cross-cultural realities in adventure travel, a quest to engage a region of nature coupled with notions of perceptual relativism provide easy excuses for the dismissal or marginalization of people from different “cultures.” Such exclusions diminish opportunities for travellers to learn about issues of sustainability, explore different relationships with the surroundings, and further inform their sense of place. Finally, perceptual relativism undermines relationships to place as actual lived and practiced realities. Harrison (2004) showed how people used mundane practices in relation to landscapes to selectively ignore, forget, maintain, and leave traces of various histories. The findings of my research suggest that the archetypal wilderness trip, through the three structural practices, actively ignores others’ inhabitation of a region while actively erasing participants’ own influence on the landscape. Such trips essentially make—for participants—a space of wilderness.

Humans can and do learn, share, and teach skills and tasks that both express and demand particular ways of apprehending the landscape. That is, dwelling and skill development provide ways to begin overcoming and negotiating the problem of subjective perception. From the dwelling perspective, any “view” of the world actually arises out of pragmatic modes of apprehending and engaging one’s surroundings. “Apprehending the world,” according to Ingold (2000), “is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view *of* the world but of taking up a view *in* it” (p. 42). Learning from others to do things differently can alter a person’s “view” and understanding in their world.

Participants’ complex experience with towns speaks to the importance of tact and balance in structuring adventure travel experiences within a sustainability paradigm so that participants can learn from the landscape as well as its inhabitants – or better yet, how the landscape is inhabited. Recognizing that towns can both enable and detract from learning about a region highlights the importance of how participants are generally attuned to their surroundings.

Experiences on *Big Sky* and a devotion to sustainability both suggest cultivating an orientation towards exploring socio-environmental interrelations rather than extolling the virtues of nature.

Narratives also suggest that institutions intending to promote sustainability through outdoor recreation, nature-based tourism, and adventure travel may need to assess critically the myths, policies, and traditions that structure their product offerings and, therefore, participant experiences. According to participants of this study, archetypal wilderness canoe tripping practices tend not to address how various people inhabit the destination or region of travel. To encourage sustainability, scholars and practitioners can carefully and intentionally critique and restructure product offerings to facilitate interactions among participants and local inhabitants during the planning and enactment of an expedition.

### **A general Discussion of Archi-textures and Ethics in a Sustainability Paradigm**

To review, I discussed three structural practices within *Big Sky*. Planning involved mobilizing urban socio-environmental relations to create and manage a space of social isolation. Such planning is consistent with the predominant focus within outdoor and adventure education on individual growth and group dynamics within isolated wilderness settings. The route, timeline, food, and logistics were planned to support “self-contained” travel that allowed participants to isolate themselves—to an extent—from social, economic, and ecological relations in the region they travelled. Rapid transport by bus to the put-in disoriented participants and reinforced this sense of isolation. Participants on *Big Sky* challenged this by starting their route close to home, in relatively familiar territory, and paddling through a variety of worked landscapes.

To progress along their route, participants used and negotiated environmental processes. Paddlers orchestrated wayfaring and *kairos* within an active environment and, at the same time, transport and *chronos* within an established itinerary. This negotiation situated participants within particular socio-environmental relationships, and in certain landscapes resulted in familiar senses of movement for the more-experienced paddlers. While participants chose the

route to challenge the wilderness archetype, the more-experienced paddlers also resisted and marginalized towns and settlements as distracting from their preferred sense of being-on-trip. Less-experienced participants disagreed, and most participants found that settlements provided insight into local histories and ways of life. Travelling through diverse landscapes helped interconnect regions and show participants their own ecological position within socio-environmental realities. Social relations with other paddlers and local inhabitants helped participants progress along their route, challenge preconceptions of pristine surroundings, and highlight canoe travel as one among many modes of understanding the surroundings.

Together, the three structural practices suggest fundamental implications for the theory, practice, and ethics of outdoor and adventure travel within a phenomenology of dwelling (Heidegger, 1954/1993; Ingold, 2000). First, the Western nature-culture dichotomy provides an organizing principle that underwrites all three structural practices within the wilderness approach. To support a shift towards a paradigm of sustainability, alternative ways of thinking about outdoor travel must be accompanied by alternative ways of doing outdoor travel that move beyond the nature-culture dichotomy. The commonplace journey can help recreationists, practitioners, and researchers contribute to this shift by combining self-reflexivity, critique, and creativity in thought and practice within adventure travel. Secondly, the archi-textural analysis suggests a different approach—a participatory ecological approach—to understanding and structuring human-environment relations within adventure activities. Thirdly, the analysis highlighted multiple types of environmental knowledge expressed by participants. These types of environmental knowledge may help recreational participants, practitioners, and researchers reflect on the ways in which their own activities and trip structures shape learning about place and sustainability. Finally, a participatory ecological approach suggests different environmental ethics within adventure travel.

**Shifting paradigms through praxis.** Participants were keen to embrace new concepts and ideas, and were critical of what they saw as dominant practices

that needed changing. Nevertheless, participants struggled to make sense of, value, and foster recreational experiences related to contemporary socio-environmental issues and settings. Early in the research process, Robert expressed his frustration with outdoor recreation and education programs purporting that participants engage the cultures and environmental issues of a region; he used the Peace Athabasca Delta as an example.

Robert: ...James and I were discussing while making coffee, and to me it seems that the notion of outdoor recreation as a driver for cross cultural connection... and, you know, people becoming aware the Peace Delta or the Athabasca. It's all very nice in principle ... But the REAL question for me...is HOW, HOW is that facilitated? Like, so many recreation programs bring you there for four days and then let you go and you never have any contact with them again, until they are mailing out next year's catalogue....

[p. 64, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Before addressing ways to ameliorate lacks of social and environmental awareness among participants and programs in a shift towards a sustainability paradigm, the findings also suggest that the wilderness paradigm perpetuates these deficiencies in various ways. Participants used two overarching contexts in their narratives that reflect an entrenched dichotomy between society and nature. Narratives regularly drew distinctions between being-in-the-city and being-on-trip. Such contrasts reflect important differences in lived realities and experiences of self and place, but also an understanding of canoe tripping as an experience of contrasts rather than interconnections among urban and wild landscapes. These contrasts left little conceptual space for rural regions and inhabitants, which participants resisted including in their notion of canoe tripping but also embraced as a source of learning. In addition, participants often compared their experiences on *Big Sky* with their interpretation of European exploration of the Canadian landscape and the specific rivers participants travelled.

Neither the city-wild dichotomy nor European exploration strongly suggests contemporary socio-economic and ecological interconnections that O'Connell et al. (2005) showed are necessary for fostering sustainability. Moreover, Fox (2000) has called for critical interpretations of dominant Euro-

North American wilderness experiences that glorify “white male explorers and naturalists and images of self based on autonomy, solitude, and detachment” (p. 52). The archi-textural analysis suggested that wilderness experiences and the wilderness paradigm are perpetuated and can be resisted through practices that actively shape inhabitants, landscapes, and places. The possibility that adventure activities reinforce perceived separations between participants’ lives and distant spaces of wilderness reinforces various authors’ critical positions related to environmental ethics and sustainability. Beringer (2004), Fox and McAvoy (1998) and Hull (2000) called for approaches to environmental ethics within outdoor recreation and adventure travel that position humans as part of their environment. Lugg (2007) and O’Connell et al. (2005) have stressed that sustainability must not be considered a simple by-product or add-on to the status quo of outdoor activities.

The archetypal Euro-Canadian wilderness canoe trip relies on a nature-culture dichotomy as an organizing principle. Put into practice, the organizing principle privileges geographically, ecologically, and socially isolated and individualistic experiences that emphasize stark differences in landscapes based on the relative degree of human influence. The archetypal wilderness trip assumes, re-builds, and then confirms the nature-culture dichotomy through structured experiences that implicitly and explicitly distinguish between (rather than interconnect) nature, society, and human corporeality. Such experiences require critical examination because, according to Lauretzen (as cited in Fox, 2000), they provide participants with a “self-authenticating subjectivity” (p. 52) that can be misleading. Distinctions between nature, society, and self were reified in the archetypal wilderness expedition and through *Big Sky* in two ways: First, by planning to be socially isolated and ecologically “self contained,” and secondly by actively avoiding human settlements, infrastructure, and social interactions beyond the group. This self-reinforcing process and principle present a serious theoretical, structural, and practical impediment to an emerging sustainability paradigm that is able to address contemporary socio-environmental issues.

The use of the nature-culture dichotomy within the wilderness approach implicitly frames adventure travel as being concerned with nature, and travellers and local inhabitants as “cultural” groups who differ in their subjective perceptions of “real” nature. Paddlers are freed, then, to ignore and reject human inhabitation and human contributions to landscapes as detrimental to their supposedly direct experience of a vestige of primordial or pre-historic (before culture) nature.<sup>52</sup> Framing and valuing the corporeal experience of wilderness as “shedding culture” to engage “directly” with nature presupposes that one’s body, culture, and environment are somehow separable. Indeed, van Wyck (1997) has shown how such logic frames culture as polluting a supposedly primordial ecological self. A sustainability paradigm in adventure travel, however, requires a notion of corporeality that integrates human and environment relations and positions travellers as participants in (rather than visitors to) in their surroundings.

Participants on *Big Sky* struggled to use the nature-culture dichotomy to make sense of their own skilled environmental engagement, locals’ knowledge and use of the lands and rivers, and the complex socio-environmental interactions supporting the trip and seen along the route. The concept and language of the nature-culture dichotomy could not adequately represent, explain, and enable these types of human-environment relations as valued elements of participants’ practice and experience of canoe tripping. The narratives from *Big Sky* show conflicted and complex learning happening through canoe tripping as participants struggled with the wilderness paradigm while seeking new ways of making sense of their activities and experiences.

Pursuing a sustainability paradigm through a theoretical and practical approach that integrates humans and their environments necessitates deeply probing, critically questioning, and carefully contextualizing outdoor experiences described by recreationists, programs, and scholars using wilderness discourse

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<sup>52</sup> See van Wyck’s (1997) critiques of “posthistoric primitivism” (p. 85), human “intrusions” as disease (p. 24) and the cultural “pollution” of nature and ecological self (p. 77): These positions gloss over the heterogeneous modes of human inhabitation and dwelling that, as *Big Sky* shows, are sites of struggle, self-expression, learning, and sustainability. West et al. (2006) have argued that ignorance of and violence to local ways of being occur in a global approach to creating protected areas, a process that creates new categories of nature and environment within peoples’ surroundings.

and relying on the nature-culture dichotomy. The phenomenological approach used during *Big Sky* offered the researcher and research participants different ways to understand travel practices and issues of sustainability among diverse populations and landscapes. By assuming that humans are, from the outset, positioned within environments, a phenomenological approach implicated both theory and practice.

Payne and Wattchow (2009) identified a recent turn towards slow pedagogy and corporeality in outdoor education research. Lugg (2007), Nicol (2002a), and Payne (2002) have advocated using diverse epistemological positions to re-think how outdoor education theory and practice position the environment and issues of sustainability in relation to participants through their activities. Nicol, in particular, suggested that scholars and educators question and actively engage what it means to “know” the environment through experiences of outdoor travel, and not assume that a connection with nature, and responsibility for it, will happen incidentally.

Challenging the nature-culture dichotomy and pursuit of a sustainability paradigm can extend to and through research and pedagogical methods that blend theory and practice. The commonplace journey, as employed in this research, integrated and critically examined the theory and practice of outdoor travel and education situated within broader socio-environmental contexts. This methodology was built around experiential learning techniques and processes commonly used in outdoor education. Participants engaged in cycles of praxis that involved attentive action, reflection, and discussion to enable self-critique and creative re-interpretation of specific practices and contexts in situ. Most importantly, Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective provided an alternative to the nature-culture dichotomy as a theoretical approach to practical knowledge that shifted participants’ experiential as well as conceptual knowledge and values. As an analytical frame, *archi-texture* enabled an analysis and re-imagining of the ways in which lived outdoor travel activities and experiences structured, cultivated, and embodied socio-environmental relations on a broader scale and with respect to a sustainability paradigm.

**A participatory ecological approach to adventure travel:**

**restructuring activities.** Skills have recently received a great deal of critical attention (Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Lugg, 2004; P. Martin, 2004; Payne, 2002; Payne & Wattchow, 2009; Wattchow, 2007, 2008), findings from this study suggest that technical outdoor skills *per se* are not necessarily problematic in fostering senses of place and sustainability. From the dwelling perspective, skills and activities are essential ways of engaging, knowing, and expressing relationships with landscapes and environments. Of concern is the limited theory and critical attention in adventure travel research related to skills and activities as ways of knowing and attending to one's environment.

The archi-textural analysis of *Big Sky* complicates notions of an outdoor activity as a unitary skilled practice by showing activities to be comprised of multiple tasks and skills. Component practices engaged participants in various ways within environments, across landscapes, and over time. Participants' patterns of practice can be examined individually, in combination, or cumulatively for impacts on places and communities, types of environmental learning, and sustainability. The findings bring forward problems and possibilities in the archetypal wilderness approach to adventure travel and suggest a new participatory ecological approach to environmental relations.

Rather than showing a need to “de-skill” activities in nature, analysis of *Big Sky* suggests that place-based approaches and sustainability within outdoor travel would benefit from scholars examining how activities structure participants' engagement with their surroundings relative to their stated objectives. Scholars and practitioners might ask in what ways, relative to sustainability for example, do an activity and its component practices entangle participants with places, landscapes, environments, and other inhabitants?

Despite desires for socio-environmental connection, many archetypal wilderness canoe tripping practices reinforced experiences of landscapes in which participants were disconnected from their life at home but also—and crucially—from participating in the immediate ecology, societies, and places in which canoeing occurs. Put differently, the practices engaged participants in a way that

positions the landscape or region of travel as socially, ecologically, and economically isolated, when in fact they are not.

Participants actively made space for the expedition in their everyday lives by suspending social relations at home. Within this space, participants planned a route and itinerary and then arranged their social, ecological, and economic relationships in support. The archetypal trip occurred within “wilderness areas” accessed through rapid transport that enables participants to ignore rural areas and settlements. Moreover, rather than relying on the region in which the trip occurred, participants relied on distant webs of relations to support “self-contained” travel. Structuring adventure travel in this way supports social, economic, and ecological relationships in the tourism generating market rather than the peripheral tourism destination region (Weber, 2001). Wilderness canoe trippers can *experience* the destination as pristine and timeless nature, and contribute to *making* it so by ignoring and removing human social, economic, and ecological relations in the region through travel practice that free them from *having* to know, understand, and engage contemporary and historic socio-environmental and economic realities, relationships, and traditions.<sup>53</sup> Going into towns, for example, becomes an intrusion and a matter of choice. Participants who locate their relationships in distant urban areas are able to travel through a landscape while supposedly leaving no trace and thereby helping to make and keep that region of practice supposedly pristine. This logic depends on travellers ignoring these practices as acts of place making (for better and worse) which occur, in part, through traces that are and are not left behind, traces that are ignored, and traces that are relocated. Through their contributions to and experiences of place, participants remained outsiders to the landscapes through which they travelled.<sup>54</sup> Making such relationships a matter of choice for travellers

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<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the removal of supportive relationships from the destination region contributes to the disproportionate framing of landscapes and environments within adventure travel as presenting challenges to rather than support for travel and wellbeing. In addition, it must be stated that human relations are not totally removed, rather they change in different ways: a shift away from resource use and towards conservation and minimum impact management practices, for example. But these ideological and ecological shifts differently influence local inhabitants and ways of life.

<sup>54</sup> Maintaining a lack of familiarity may, in fact, be a central approach to landscape underlying contemporary outdoor adventure education that uses wilderness to move participants outside their

significantly shaped their relationship with local inhabitants as well as the relevance and value *for* local inhabitants of developing adventure travel resources.

Interpreted critically, the archetypal wilderness canoe trip builds *spaces* of wilderness: bounded regions of pristine and timeless nature “out there” that participants experience as foreign and disconnected from their lives, the lives of inhabitants, and boarder socio-environmental contexts. Jasper National Park, for example, was promoted as a destination, a *place* of nature and wilderness (Zezulka-Mailloux, 2007). These spaces have become naturalized as the “proper” destinations, settings, and regions of adventure travel activities, which—as seen in Chris’ narrative about repeatedly leaving home—confirm to participants and friends “back home” that wilderness exists and is accessible.<sup>55</sup> For participants from urban communities, such experiences may further reify the dominant Western nature-culture dichotomy. To counter this problem, a possibility exists within adventure recreation to expand theoretical and practical treatments to include a variety of tasks that contribute to place knowledge and sustainability, and occur in and across multiple landscapes not only in places but also along flows that interconnect them.

Participants on *Big Sky* engaged in various archetypal travel practices, but they also resisted the wilderness ideal by travelling beyond the archetypal setting to interweave wild spaces, settlements, rural landscapes, and industrial areas. By engaging multiple realities of the landscape, *Big Sky* resisted building and experiencing spaces of wilderness, and this approach opened other promising possibilities. The adventure activity itself provided a coherence system that was, literally, grounded in participants’ engagement with their surroundings. A canoe trip, for example, is an intrinsically rewarding way to enact and explore interconnections within and among various landscapes and environmental

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comfort zone, and which focuses primarily on self-improvement and group dynamics—rather than seeing these as resulting from and necessary for adventure travel devoted to other purposes. It seems reasonable to suggest that such an education depends on unfamiliar and isolated or dislocated settings.

<sup>55</sup> Wood and Fels (2008) describe how maps play a key role in encouraging this process by signifying Nature and beckoning travelers and tourists to come visit, a process that also shapes visitors’ experience upon arrival.

processes through multiple corporeal, socio-ecological, and economic practices and realities.

The archi-textural interpretation, based in Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, suggests a "participatory" approach that integrates human-environment relations within outdoor adventure travel. This approach is intended to provide an alternative to the nature-culture dichotomy as an organizing principle, and to support the development of a sustainability paradigm within outdoor adventure travel and education. Nine tenets of a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel are summarized in Table 4-1. These principles can be used as a heuristic device to further explore, develop, and shift adventure travel theory and practice.

Table 4-1

*Principles of a Participatory Ecological Approach*

1. Environments are active.	Outdoor travel activities occur out in the open while interacting with flows, features, and inhabitants (human and non-human) in dynamic environments that influence participant's movement as well as social and environmental relationships. <sup>a</sup>
2. Landscapes are interconnected.	Landscapes of various types provide opportunity for travel and learning. Multiple flows interconnect landscapes, which are shaped to different degrees and proportions by both human and non-human forces. Outdoor travel need not be restricted to a type of landscape or typology based on an urban-wild continuum.
3. Activities occur in contexts and create context.	Adventure travel activities, experiences, and skill are situated within larger personal and socio-environmental (social, ecological and economic) contexts and histories. Skilled travel activities, daily tasks, and routes also provide a context in which participants understand surroundings.
4. Activities are multiple.	An outdoor activity is comprised of multiple practices and tasks that require skill, occur at various stages of a trip, and are coordinated among people within and beyond the group of participants.
5. Skilled performance expresses environmental knowledge.	Through skilled adventure travel activities, participants share and embody forms of socio-environmental knowledge. They develop, express, and share meaningful relationships with elements of their surroundings that are salient to their activities. Tools and technologies shape the skills and environmental knowledge developed. <sup>b</sup>
6. Relations are mobilized and managed.	Participants are positioned within social, ecological, and economic relationships that they mobilize and manage, and which extend beyond their immediate surroundings to interconnect diverse landscapes and environments.
7. Movement is fundamental.	Adventure travel occurs primarily as a mode of movement in or between places and regions. Movement along a route is fundamental to knowing, engaging, and interconnecting inhabitants, places, landscapes, and environments. <sup>c</sup> The choreography of different modes of movement over the course of a trip influences how travellers relate to and interconnect regions. The combination of activity and landscape as well as the chosen route and itinerary enable and constrain movement.
8. Learning and growth occur in places and along routes.	Travellers' learning and growth occur in places and along routes by developing and practicing outdoor living and travel skills while exchanging substances and knowledge with other travellers, local inhabitants, and their share surroundings. <sup>d</sup> Prevalent traditions and discourses in the activity may influence how travellers understand and experience themselves as being with others in an environment.
9. Travellers and local residents inhabit and participate in environments.	An ethic of sustainability is consistent with active, respectful, and self-reflexive participation in the continuing lives of places, landscapes, environments and their human and non-human inhabitants.

*Note.* The name *participatory ecological approach* is meant to imply that adventure travellers are participants in shaping diverse environments and landscapes. The principles inform one another. They are presented beginning from one's extended surroundings (1) in order to contextualize the personal position (9) as a locus of growth and action at the centre of a web of socio-environmental relations (Ingold, 2000). Hence, the approach is both *participatory* and *ecological*. The order is not intended to imply any hierarchy, sequence, or process. Table courtesy of the author.

<sup>a</sup>See Ingold (2007a, 2008) regarding life in the open. <sup>b</sup>See Ingold (2000) regarding skill, tools, and technology. <sup>c</sup>See Ingold (2000, 2007b, 2011) regarding movement, place, landscape, and environment. <sup>d</sup>See Ingold (2000, 2008, 2011) regarding exchanges of knowledge and substance, learning and growth.

The process of developing the participatory ecological approach brought together multiple elements, including: (a) motivated, knowledgeable, and self-reflective research participants with significant experience in canoe tripping; (b) purposeful in-depth attention and scholarly discussions throughout the trip; (c) a rigorous and radically alternative theoretical approach to human-environment relations (Ingold's, 2000, dwelling perspective), and finally, (d) an innovative research methodology that enabled learning through praxis. Enacting this approach on a broad scale will require multiple levels of educating, experimenting, and learning among researchers, recreationists, and leaders who are willing to open up and alter the structural elements of canoe tripping.

A nuanced and contextualized approach to skill shows activities to be central to the ways in which travellers engage their surroundings, including fellow inhabitants. A focus on skill as a dialogic interaction positions the person as a "participant" in the becoming of their socio-environmental surroundings. The shaping power of human environmental engagement cannot be avoided. People can only choose their engagement, not choose to abandon it, and it behoves each person to consider how and why they engage in certain ways. The participatory ecological approach shifts the debate from questioning *if* travellers engage the environment to questioning *how* they engage their surroundings. *How* refers to pragmatics as well as the spirit or orientation of the traveller's interactions, both of which change with place and time and exert multiple socio-environmental effects.

The participatory ecological approach to adventure travel is meant to resonate with paddlers' canoe tripping experiences while opening possibilities within a sustainability paradigm. To this end, the approach provides language, concepts, and possibilities for practice that travellers and practitioners can use to understand, develop, and share methods for enabling insight into self, community, and environment related to sustainability and place. The participatory ecological approach contributes to understandings of environmental engagement in eco- and adventure travel research within a knowledge-based platform (Jafari, 1990). Moreover, by questioning and providing alternatives to the wilderness paradigm,

a participatory ecological approach forwards both the praxis and ethics platforms that Macbeth (2005) argued are needed to interrogate tourism practices, policy, planning, and management within a sustainability paradigm that is “value-full” (p. 972). Focusing on skilled activity, the participatory ecological approach may facilitate alternative meanings and experience to the wilderness experiences that Fletcher (2009), Fox (2000), and Warren (1998) have shown to be largely exclusive to relatively affluent participants of European heritage. The participatory ecological approach has strong pragmatic applications for actively fostering place relationships and sustainability through attentive and responsible practices that occur within many different socio-cultural traditions. If a shared understanding of the world arises through a shared set of acquired skills, then people of diverse backgrounds can use travel and skilled practice as a way of sharing meaningful landscapes, environments, and ways of life. The focus on skill also positions discussions of socio-environmental relationships within contexts of people’s physical and socio-economic abilities and constraints. The participatory ecological approach, then, demands researchers attend to and be clear about multiple complex forms of environmental knowledge.

The participatory ecological approach suggests some simple ways to alter practice in response to Robert’s question about *how* outdoor travel might connect participants to places and other people. First, by travelling in ways build, depend on, and respond to local socio-environmental relations. Secondly, by engaging routes that interconnect one’s home with a variety of landscapes. Thirdly, by recognizing that any one trip provides only partial understandings of a landscape, and that embodied knowledge and connections may develop through long-term and repeated involvement in an activity and environment out in the open. Familiar and unfamiliar “senses of place” were less associated with places and more related to types of landscape and environments that facilitated different senses of movement, some of which were reminiscent of participants’ formative canoe trips. Fourthly, by valuing social interactions as opportunities for participants to witness, engage in, and reflect on different contemporary and historical human ecological relations that are part of the landscape. Taken together, this

interpretation frames participants' adventure travel as a series of paths of observation out in the open among other inhabitants; paths along which travellers follow, encounter, and mobilize flows of people, goods, food, water, and air that surround them and interweave diverse socio-environmental contexts. Given this, scholars, educators, and practitioners might critically assess and pragmatically address how and to what degree any one trip, or series of trips, positions the participant as an inhabitant of the travel landscape and contributes to their senses of place and understandings of a region. Paths of observation, then, may be better understood as *paths of becoming* (Ingold, 2008) along which participants mobilize resources, grow themselves, and adapt to and shape surroundings that help as well as hinder travel and becoming.

**Re-thinking environmental knowledge.** Participant narratives and the archi-texture of the *Big Sky* expedition showed a need for. Ideas and approaches to environmental knowledge implicate the fullness both specificity as well as diversity in the ways in which adventure travel researchers, leaders, and participants understand and delimit environmental knowledge. Environmental knowledge extends beyond scientific and place-specific knowledge of an outdoor activity, from the stories and histories that inspire participation and journeys, through the planning and travel practices, and extending outwards to the other human and non-human inhabitants beyond the group, as well as the political, policy, and management practices governing regions and peoples.

In addition to critical interpretations of the archetypal wilderness trip, the structural practices suggest ways in which participants engaged or could engage their surroundings and sustainability through travel. Because archi-textures shape travel experiences, they need careful planning in relation to participants' desired outcomes and program goals. The degree to which participants suspend their social relations and communication with home, for example, should depend on the purpose of their journey. Trips that are more isolated could purposefully work to mitigate unintended senses of disorientation and disconnection among participants by making interconnections explicit. Social, ecological, and economic interconnections among landscapes and through environmental processes provide

opportunities for exploring issues of sustainability, such as the drivers and impacts of oil sand mining. The logistics, planning, and travel showed that participants valued the geography of a route more highly than the socio-ecological relationships the route embodied or enabled during the trip. Rather than subordinating and mobilizing socio-ecological relationships to support a route that reflects wilderness ideals, canoe routes could follow, respond to, and explore socio-ecological relationships that support of sustainability across various landscapes and regions.

The participatory ecological approach to adventure travel may aid in a transition from a wilderness paradigm, dominated by notions of landscape as wilderness and knowledge as culturally specific, to perspectives that focus on interconnected and conflicting human ecologies and ideologies which are, according to the literature, better suited to understandings of sustainability (Marker, 2006; O'Connell et al., 2005). By re-framing the relationship between individuals and their surroundings, the participatory ecological approach extends and supports O'Connell et al. who suggested that sustainable outdoor recreation focus on 1) interconnections between societal, economic, and environmental issues, 2) interactions with nature, 3) the development of skills, values, and attitudes while allowing for critical reflection and action, and 4) engaging and involving communities so as to ensure learning is contextually appropriate. By framing the traveller as a participant who is aware of, reflects on, and develops skills to cope with his or her interactions in socio-environmental and economic issues and contexts, the analysis and participatory ecological approach suggest multiple forms of environmental knowledge (see Table 4-2).

Table 4-2

*Types of Environmental Knowledge*

Name	Description	Learned & Expressed	Examples
Activity-specific	An explicit and/or embodied understanding of the features, mediums, flows, and inhabitants of an environment through a skilled activity.	Acquiring and practicing skilled activities in situ over time.	Meanings of patterns and changes in the weather or understanding currents in a river.
Sentient ecology <sup>a</sup>	Demonstrated intuitive feeling, awareness, understanding, and ability to function in and with familiar and responsive habitats and inhabitants (both human and non-human).	Through education of attention, enskilment, and competence in situ over time, through journeys, and with others (human and non-human). Also, through stories told in order to express the feeling of the teller's sentient ecology.	Understanding where the fish are likely to be in a river, how best to approach them, and what they are likely eating at that time of day or year.
Personal ecology	Cognitive and/or lived bodily awareness of one's position within and relative to environmental systems through life and travel in the open. <sup>b</sup>	Encountering and reflecting on how one's self and activities are situated and interrelated with multiple broader contexts.	Understanding how one relies on and impacts local and/or systemic hydrology. Awareness of the production, movement, and consumption of pollutants.
Experience-specific	Understanding and attending to a unique socio-environmental context.	Enskilment and socialization by a community of practice in particular meanings and traditions of an activity, including stories that inspire and give relevance to the socio-environmental milieu.	Being-on-trip as isolated in a wilderness setting, focused on the "here and now" and "the group."
Regionally interconnective	Understanding interrelation of different landscapes, regions, or global systems.	Travelling out in the open along paths that connect diverse landscapes. And/or examining flows from elsewhere that contribute to a place or region.	Recognizing the impacts of urban infrastructure and oil sands industry on the Peace-Athabasca Delta.
Socio-environmental	Understanding the unique Sociocultural and ecological realities, histories, knowledge, ideologies, and relationships within a place, region, or group of inhabitants.	Experience and discussion with inhabitants or group members over time and journeys made. Through oral and written histories, as well as management regimes.	Wellbeing and interaction among the people, flora, and fauna of the Peace Athabasca Delta. The historic and contemporary contexts of First Nation resource extraction and state governance.

*Note.* Elements of movement added to notions of environmental knowledge as anchored in places or regions. The table summarizes some of the diverse and partial ways in which participants knew their surroundings. These types of environmental knowledge embrace movement and attempt to integrate social, economic, and ecological realities. Not distinct or exclusive, these types of knowledge interact, extend, and may deepen one another. Knowledge of one's personal ecology, for example, could lead to knowledge of regional interconnections. Table courtesy of the author.

<sup>a</sup>The term *sentient ecology* was coined by Anderson (2000, p. 116); my explanation is based on Anderson as well as Ingold (2000). <sup>b</sup>The notion of travel in the open is based on Ingold's (2007a, 2008) notion of life in the open.

*Big Sky* highlighted numerous promising possibilities for encouraging senses of place and sustainability through existing and adapted practices. Cuthbertson et al. (1997) speculated on a difference between destination-oriented travel and travel as a way of being, a notion clarified by Ingold's (2000) distinction between wayfaring and transport. For participants in *Big Sky*, *being-on-trip* was fundamentally a style of movement that negotiated transport and wayfaring in response to environmental conditions that were pertinent to outdoor living and travel within a temporally and geographically constrained itinerary. Augmenting the wayfaring element holds promise for environmental learning because it requires participants place themselves, consciously and unconsciously, in various socio-ecological relationships. The value of slow travel and wayfaring on *Big Sky* supports the possibility of interconnecting landscapes and accessing multiple socio-ecological realities through travel, as suggested by Cuthbertson et al. (1997) and Fox and McAvoy (1998).

Repeatedly being-on-trip cultivated knowledge and familiarity, expressed as a sense of movement, within particular landscape types over time and along multiple paths. Such senses of belonging suggest the benefits of taking a long-term approach to participant-landscape connections, as well as limits of "one-off" trips and "take-away" education (Payne & Wattchow, 2009). Canoe travel was not simply one among many possible modes of transport; it provided a way of being in relation to the surroundings. The skills and techniques used by travellers hold opportunities for socio-environmental learning and knowledge.

Investigating various epistemological approaches to environmental learning, Nicol (2002a) proposed integrating environmental philosophy with four types of knowledge described by Reason (1998): (a) *experiential knowledge*, which is cognitive and affective in response to direct subjective encounters shaped by mode of travel; (b) *presentational knowledge*, which enables someone to represent, make sense of, and find value in experiences that are situated within broader contexts; (c) *propositional knowledge*, which includes theories and concepts about how the world works that are not available through direct experience; and (d) *practical knowledge*, which inextricably links a person to their

surroundings through actions that express a person's values and knowledge. The dwelling perspective adds to practical knowledge by emphasizing that skills also contribute to these other forms of knowledge through an internal logic (negotiated through traditions, myths, and beliefs and within socio-environmental constraints) that shapes experiences, structures meanings, values, and language used to represent one's world, and contributes insight about the workings of the world.

Participants used various techniques to achieve their preferred way of being-on-trip, which relied on knowledge of, and relations within, various settings. Participants mobilized resources within their urban home environment, for example, to enable a self-contained travel. This approach to travel was consistent with and learned through traditions of practice intended to incur little impact, for better or worse, on local inhabitants' activities. Travellers did not compete for local resources, though they also did little to support local economies. Participants inhabited the rivers in limited ways that they often contrasted with their understanding of the ways that local inhabitants and past explorers related to the land. The ways in which urban participants learned to travel on the river shaped how they understood and related to surroundings they shared with others, many of whom learned and practiced different ways of inhabiting the land. Social interactions enabled participants, other travellers, and local inhabitants to learn from one another about their shared surroundings.

Rather than avoiding social encounters, exchanging knowledge with others enabled participants to engage different socio-environmental relationships and histories more-fully. Social relations and human settlements need not be framed as encroaching on a wilderness experiences; during *Big Sky* social encounters beyond the group provided opportunities for sharing local knowledge and encouraging self-awareness. Moreover, skilled practice as a way of knowing leaves room for difference, conflict, and struggles between individuals and groups. Centring human-environment relationships in skilled practice rather than "culture" also facilitates recognizing, understanding and working together across differences and, for example, may help counter problematic stereotypes of

Indigenous peoples being inherently “closer to nature.”<sup>56</sup> According to the dwelling perspective, people are “close” to their environment because they engage in practices that support intimate relationships with and knowledge of their surroundings throughout their lives and across generations.<sup>57</sup> Socio-environmental and economic participation enables conscious and personal engagement in local and activity-specific issues of sustainability, such as access to fresh drinking water and the use of petrochemicals in canoe equipment.<sup>58</sup>

**Practicing ethical architecture.** The structure of the archetypal wilderness trip shows it to be insufficient and possibly counter-productive in meeting the challenges of sustainability. The wilderness approach is largely disconnected from the “everyday” lives of participants as well as local inhabitants. Alternatives to “urban escape,” “exploration,” and “risk” as guiding values and metaphors are needed for adventure travel to move past the nature-culture dichotomy and offer more inclusive travel experiences that support sustainability.

While the dwelling perspective adds complexity to notions of an outdoor activity and environmental knowledge, the theory helps explain *why* and *how* outdoor and adventure travel is well positioned for an emerging sustainability paradigm. The dwelling perspective shows that places, environmental constituents, and other inhabitants become meaningful through one’s active involvement with them. A participatory ecological approach to adventure travel,

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<sup>56</sup> Highly applicable to fostering sustainability, an approach focused on cultivating lived environmental relationships contrasts with retrospective longings for “original states of nature” and searches for mythic “ground zero” points at which humanity (often and problematically equated with Western society) departed from nature (through technology, rational thought, agriculture, and/or writing). Such propositions problematically imply natural indigeneity for some peoples and the (not so) tragic ascension to a fallen state of modern civilization for others (Ingold, 2000; van Wyck, 1997).

<sup>57</sup> Understanding human-environment relationships through skilled practice may also help local inhabitants negotiate and communicate problems related to their own place relations that arise with tourism development.

<sup>58</sup> The ecological impacts of, for example, purchasing imported foods in remote communities could greatly increase negative environmental impacts when compared to transporting the same goods from home by canoe. Locally produced goods might likely be more sustainable and also have a greater potential to support deeper senses of place for travelers and ways of life for locals. The pursuit of sustainability always requires carefully studying and weighing options that are context and case specific. However, learning about sustainability happens precisely in the negotiation of plans, practices, priorities, and values.

therefore, requires a positive ethic of mutuality, belonging, growth, and creativity. Researchers, participants, and practitioners need to consider more explicitly the ways in which activities integrate various landscapes and enable participants to maintain ongoing engagement with, and commitment to, the health of various socio-environmental processes.

The ethic of wilderness preservation naturalized in outdoor adventure travel has been a valuable response to localized environmental degradation caused by unsustainable resource extraction and on-site recreation behaviours. As James' narrative on self-contained travel suggested (see p. 151), however, participants cannot tenably apply an ethic of pristine nature to the broader contexts of lives that require consumption and resource use. Such an ethic will invariably be misanthropic. Moreover, the archi-textural analysis suggests that wilderness experiences unintentionally compartmentalize nature.

Acknowledging inalienable human (and personal) participation in and shaping of environments makes environmental ethics within adventure travel more complicated and more broadly applicable within participants' lives beyond canoe tripping. From the dwelling perspective, *preservation* is not the prevention of human impacts on a region but, rather, an active and ongoing care for non-human values and qualities of landscapes and environments. In addition to a participatory ecological approach and multiple types of environmental knowledge, adventure travellers require ethics to assess value and select among actions and impacts in pursuit of sustainability.

Heidegger's (1954/1993) notion of *sparing* as an ethical way of being (see pp. 134) suggests that such an ethic involve an ongoing process of praxis, which van Manen (1997) described as "thoughtful action: action full of thought and thought full of action" (p. 159). Praxis is inherent to and enabled by Ingold's (2000) understanding of *architecture* as a practice of taking pause to consider how to build/act (or not) in relation to socio-ecological processes and other inhabitants encountered in life. As was the case on *Big Sky*, adventure travel often provides opportunities for participants to pause within and reflect upon their lives "back home." Participants on *Big Sky* also took time to consider the trip itself in relation

to their social and environmental values. That is, participants in *Big Sky* explicitly engaged in praxis to move their travel towards a sustainability paradigm, thereby striving to align practices and values.

The findings suggest that to more fully cultivate connections to place and adopt a sustainability paradigm participants and practitioners need to find responsible ways to enmesh more, not less, with their surroundings. Doing so requires acknowledging and taking responsibility for the web of socio-ecological relations that interlace and support participants' lives at home and on-trip. Archi-textural analysis facilitates critical evaluation and innovation regarding the limits and opportunities for participants of activities to engage their surroundings and fellow inhabitants.

Recognising human influences *within* environments suggest that scholars and practitioners should attend to the ethics of diverse and ongoing forms of participants' engagement with various regions and flows over time and from various distances. A participatory ecological approach to adventure travel requires moving away from ethics organised around the nature-culture dichotomy that value "naturalness" over and against "society." A key way of making this move is to challenge the destination-oriented focus and assumption of where adventure activities ought to occur (i.e. in wilderness settings). Acknowledging the central importance of skilled practice (rather the wilderness settings) as mediating environmental learning, impact, and knowledge broadens possible forms, meanings, and settings of adventure travel. Making such a move allows practitioners to broaden regions of practice to include paths, flows, and transit through various landscapes to purposefully engage and explore contemporary socio-environmental realities. Returning to the notion of praxis, re-enacting the archetypal structure of wilderness trips will continue to reinforce a wilderness paradigm. Values of sustainability need to be enacted through participants' and practitioners' own routing and travel—*how* they travel—with respect to individuals, the group, other inhabitants, and their shared surroundings.

Participant connections to landscapes fostered through archetypal wilderness trips provide evidence that connections to place can and do occur over

time through continued participation in adventure travel. Connections to isolated wilderness experiences, however, should also stand as a reminder that senses of place—even senses of naturalness and wilderness—are not equivalent to sustainability, and that “one-off” or “once-in-a-lifetime” adventure trips may have a limited ability to foster place relationships. Despite these limitations, participant connections to landscapes strongly suggest that adventure travel provides a way for them to maintain, over the course of their lives, relationships with diverse environmental elements and inhabitants.

The archi-textural analysis showed that archetypal wilderness experiences tend to be self-fulfilling quests for nature in opposition to society. Because of this, the use of outdoor adventure travel as a tool in the pursuit of sustainability must not be limited to critical evaluations of urban modes of dwelling. Scholars, practitioners, and participants must also critically evaluate the socio-environmental relations embedded within their adventure travel practices as being deeply interrelated with lives “back home.” In this way, tripping practices can provide both a mirror and window through which to investigate ways of life at home and along the river.

Rather than supposedly severing ties, adventure travel can mindfully knit together disparate remote, rural, and urban landscapes and inhabitants. Adventure travel can also be a way for participants to cultivate, maintain, and explore relationships with particular flows, landscapes, and environmental processes and rhythms. Thus, an ethic of sustainability could guide adventure travel in which participants engage ongoing socio-environmental realities.

### **Implications for the Field**

**Responding to critiques and changing contexts.** How are adventure travel skills related to the (re)generation, communication, and sharing of places and their meanings? Responding to this question raises critiques and promising possibilities of practices from within the wilderness paradigm and an emerging sustainability paradigm. Participants on the *Big Sky* expedition came from a particular wilderness tripping tradition in Canada. Academic and popular literature has described canoeing in this tradition as an actual or possible nexus of

nature and culture. The tradition of practice, however, came about in response to urbanization and highly values remote and supposedly pristine landscapes that are devoid of human influence and distant from urban areas. Organizations such as summer camps and university programs continue to engage participants with the landscape through an archetypal canoe tripping structure that shapes the experience and meaning of landscapes in ways that are problematic within a sustainability paradigm.

Despite desires for connections between nature and culture, the structure of the archetypal wilderness canoe trip, like the structure of many adventure travel expeditions, ignores rural areas and reinforces contrasts between urban and wilderness landscapes. The fact that social interactions beyond the group were a concern for participants indicates the degree to which social isolation has been normalized in the archetypal wilderness experience and tripping tradition. Participants did engage histories of European exploration and the fur trade, much older activities with diverse social, economic, and ecological consequences for many peoples and landscapes. Expeditions may play an important role of keeping historic journeys present by re-tracing and possibly questioning past ventures. However, histories of European exploration warrant caution. Fletcher (2009) has shown how eco and adventure travel continue to re-iterate colonial histories and perpetuate contemporary exploration and exploitation. A bias towards pristine nature within the wilderness paradigm also means that much adventure travel avoids or passively laments the socio-economic activities that currently shape landscapes at the nexus of nature and culture (Braun, 2002). On *Big Sky*, this bias appeared as critiques of the “road trip” along the Slave River, and as desires to set foot where no one had before.<sup>59</sup> Participants in this research were highly self-reflective, and they took critiques of wilderness very seriously. Participants dedicated the trip to re-examining their practices and ways of thinking about wilderness travel. Experiences on *Big Sky* suggest that social interactions beyond the group can augment participants’ learning about local histories and realities.

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<sup>59</sup> Tales of exploration, it would seem, can easily be conflated with contemporary archetypal wilderness experiences in ways that ignore essential differences related to travellers’ engagement with local ecological, social, political, and economic realities.

A sustainability paradigm demands that adventure travellers begin to acknowledge critically their involvement in contemporary as well as historical socio-environmental contexts (such as White-Indigenous relations) and processes (such as the water cycle). These contexts and processes interconnect and shape various landscapes and they enable, situate, and are influenced by travel practices. Traditions of practice, moreover, teach participants meaningful ways of engaging (or disengaging) these landscapes, contexts, and processes and are therefore a crucial element in developing a sustainability paradigm. Highlighting the importance of practice in place making and environmental relations, Ingold (2000) argued that “the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings” (p. 186).

Archetypal wilderness trips engage the physical and imaginative activities of participants in a structure that periodically cycles between being-at-home and being-on-trip, between being-in urban areas supposedly distanced from nature, and being-in natural areas supposedly distanced from “society.” The process is clear in the dynamics of Chris’ social relations, which he described as always in the context of leaving and returning from “the outdoors” (see p. 140), a place separate from the city for adventures, learning, and reflection. Such a cycle enable distanced self-reflection, but it also enables self-authenticating wilderness experiences that confirm and conform to the nature-culture dichotomy. On the ground, the cycle re-inscribes distinct regions for everyday life and wild nature.

The socio-environmental context to which the archetypal wilderness trip responded, and in which the wilderness paradigm made sense, has changed significantly with the rise of issues such as global climate change. A lack of suitable theory has become particularly problematic and apparent as scholars and practitioners of adventure travel strive to respond by adopting an ethic of sustainability (O’Connell et al., 2005). Academic authors and educators tend to agree that outdoor adventure travel is well positioned to engage this new context, and have called for new “lived-with” (Hull, 2000) approaches to the practice and management of outdoor recreation activities. Calls for such an integrated

approach to human-environment relations were taken up by participants of *Big Sky* as an opportunity to critically examine and move beyond the nature-culture dichotomy within the structure and meaning of adventure travel.

**Developing alternative approaches to travel and research.** Lugg (2007) cautioned against superficial adoption of sustainability in outdoor education and adventure travel; she highlighted that deep critique and re-working of outdoor education and adventure travel are required. Such work is not only a matter of theorizing, it necessitates examining and questioning the very details of what participants do and how they make sense of their activities and surroundings. The academic theory of adventure travel has not yet significantly blurred the ontological distinctions between nature and culture nor explained such blurring if it occurs during adventure travel experiences. Lewis (2000) and McCarthy (2002) have advanced this area of research by focusing on embodied awareness and understanding of place and self in rock climbing and mountaineering. Digging further, the nature-culture dichotomy also structures methodologies used to study adventure travel. Developing integrated approaches (theories and practices) to human-environment relations will likely require methodologies that can integrate theory and practice.

Literature, research, and practices in fields beyond those familiar to adventure travel scholars and practitioners may enable serious responses to critiques as well as new understandings of practices within adventure travel. Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective was used in situ to provide different founding conceptions of human-environment relations, landscape, and travel while allowing for and valuing skilled practice, which some authors have critiqued as being problematic for environmental learning (Payne, 2002; Wattchow, 2007). Participants on *Big Sky* explored the Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective as a way of opening opportunities for new and different thought, practice, and learning during their trip and for the broader field of adventure travel. To integrate and interrogate theory and practice, the participants and researcher engaged in cycles of praxis along a commonplace journey and were prompted by concepts from the dwelling perspective. The journey was a

pragmatic approach to learning and research that extended traditions of self-reflection within outdoor and adventure education.

Innovative data collection, sources, and analyse can broaden perspectives on adventure travel within an emerging sustainability paradigm. The commonplace journey provides one possible framework for travelling along routes while engaging and learning within multiple contexts. Industrial and Indigenous land uses, for example, can be explored in relation to one another as well as environmental, health, and economic issues that move across landscapes and through environmental systems. For a self-critical perspective, an archi-textural analysis provides but one way of making sense of adventure travel practices. Travel and learning traditions within adventure travel can provide different ways of gaining knowledge that can be embraced and adapted as research methodologies. By attending to perspectives that are critical of adventure travel, practitioners and scholars can work to develop new and alternative theories and practices for a sustainability paradigm.

Alternative theoretical perspectives allow participants to challenge the assumptions and myths that pervade their practices and thinking. The concept of a path of observation, for example, challenged participants to acknowledging their environmental learning through movement and to wrestle with their bias against transience. Such challenges lead to larger scale questions, for example, about the nature, scopes, and types of environmental knowledge in adventure travel. A sustainability paradigm may require environmental knowledge, leadership styles, and settings that are different from those currently valued in adventure travel. Experiences during *Big Sky* suggest that social interactions can enable exchanges of knowledge and substance that teach participants about landscapes and places, human-environment relations, and ecological conditions. Alternative theoretical approaches suggest alternative programming practices (such as food planning), evaluative standards (such as the benefit accrued by local populations), and overall structures (such as the duration or repetition of a trip).

**Back to the skills and activities themselves.** Throughout planning and travel for *Big Sky*, participants mobilized particular urban social, ecological, and

economic knowledge and relationships through practices that shaped different landscapes. These practices enabled a style of travel “out there” that made certain relationships optional and facilitated leaving almost no trace in the destination area by displacing socio-environmental impact to various areas through participants’ webs of relations “back home.” Participants were highly ambivalent about social interactions beyond the group. Towns, for example, were necessary to support the journey but were also a source of conflict and distraction from some participants’ ideal or familiar wilderness experience of being-on-trip in the “here and now.” Participants orchestrated an isolated space in which to be-on-trip, which could also be used to reflect on the sustainability of one’s everyday life. The problem of building spaces of wilderness, however, could be avoided—and the learning for sustainability improved—by acknowledging how, and to what effect, participants dwell and build spaces through the trip itself.

Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective showed skills to be fundamental in processes of place making and environmental learning. A key finding of this research was that the physical requirements of canoe travel provided a context through which participants understood and made sense of their environment. Haluza-DeLay (1999) provided an early challenge to assumptions and complacency regarding outdoor activities within the outdoor field by identifying antagonistic relationships between technical skills and environmental knowledge. Understanding skill as more than a technique of the body, however, shifts the debate towards nuanced approaches to the complex socio-environmental relations and meanings afforded by particular skills and tasks. Such an approach forces practitioners to reckon the environmental relations, knowledge, and experience facilitated by their own activities. To examine skill is always to imply an environment and landscape in which those skills are performed.

Although participants avoided some local ecological relations, being-on-trip out in the open meant engaging with various other environmental processes and landscape features. Some participants felt familiar senses of movement during travel through landscapes similar to the ones in which they had learned and practiced canoe tripping. This finding attests to the importance of activity-

landscape relations in fostering particular senses of place. Social encounters beyond the group provided intersubjective experiences that further informed participants' understanding of their historical and ecological place in relation to other inhabitants and their shared surroundings.

The archi-textural analysis showed that participants' lived experiences of landscapes were influenced by the ways in which transport, wayfaring, routing, and itineraries were negotiated over the multiple phases of a trip. Participants assembled a particular experience of landscape that drew on and shaped their social and ecological relationships. Even as participants valued senses of movement and the environmental knowledge embedded in their travel skills, for example, they resisted settlements and found the transience of canoe travel problematic for environmental learning.

Planning, travel, and social practices all hold opportunities for participants to engage with environments, landscapes, and places in ways that can deepen place learning and ecological awareness. Travel by canoe was fundamentally a negotiation of socio-environmental flows (wind, water, local settlements) that participants engaged, to varying degrees, "out in the open" along their route. For example: participants on *Big Sky* readily used the flow of rivers for progress, but they were not comfortable being dependant on their immediate non-human surroundings for food. This negotiation implicated personal, group, community, and environmental growth, health, and safety. Moreover, it resulted in senses of movement and shared experiences for participants while, at the same time, placing them relative to particular socio-ecological processes (hydrology) and issues (pollution). Adventure, learning, and relationships all reside in the unfolding negotiation. Over time, participants had learned from one another, other groups, local inhabitants, and leaders the skills, tools, and technologies with which to orchestrate these flows. Understanding one's own growth, development, and progress as deeply interrelated with surroundings has as-yet unknown implications for person-place connections and sustainability within adventure travel. Having travellers relate with local inhabitants, however, provides opportunities for community development. One thing is clear: participants and

practitioners can better seize opportunities to engage with and manage socio-environmental relations if this negotiation is made explicit.

Environmental relationships within adventure travel need to be understood within the broader contexts of a participant's practices, skill development, and participation. Narratives suggest that over time and through multiple journeys along paths of observation, participants became familiar with landscapes, places, and environments. Travelling paths that interconnect urban, rural, and remote landscapes and communities can potentially foster understandings of place that are better suited to issues of sustainability while also guarding against self-authenticating wilderness experiences that isolate archetypal regions of practice. To the extent that participants relied on local exchanges of substance and knowledge, their paths of observation may, in fact, be more akin to paths of becoming (Ingold, 2000, 2008). This suggestion requires further analysis of participants' sensual environmental interactions through and for travel.

Engaging physically demanding environments through activities that require a degree of skill has traditionally been the core of what outdoor adventure recreation does. *Big Sky* revealed that there are significant opportunities within these core activities to foster socio-environmental learning and relationships. Skilled practices can cultivate deeply personal socio-environmental relationships by positioning participants, individually and together, in relation to particular elements of their surroundings. Valuing these embodied relationships has implications for program delivery within a sustainability paradigm. For example, opportunities for such relationships may be lost to participants of "one-off" commercial adventures, which tend to focus on excitement and require little in the way of skill (Buckley, 2004). Understanding skill as relational also enables connections to be drawn to certain socio-environmental issues (such as the damming and polluting of rivers) as directly relevant to participants. The challenge for educators, scholars, and practitioners interested in sustainability and place relationships, then, is to help participants identify, develop, understand, and reflect on their own position within these issues. Recognizing such interconnections enables the development of heuristic frames through which

different skills, tools, and technologies can be evaluated for their ability engage participants in particular issues, places, or environmental relations. The socio-environmental relationships with landscapes and places that adventure travel enables must to be understood within the specific set of skills that make up an activity, and as changing with a participant's skill development, learning, and experience. Heuristic frames such as the participatory ecological approach to adventure travel provide a crucial, and missing, analytical tool in an emerging sustainability paradigm.

**Re-emergence of socio-environmental concerns.** By re-examining skills and practices, socio-ecological interactions re-emerge as significant and central elements of adventure travel. *Big Sky* showed that participants do indeed engage with social and ecological systems through their practices, activities, and skills. These interactions, however, are often overshadowed by an inward focus on individual and group social dynamics. Person-environment interactions that occur through skilled practice also open opportunities to integrate adventure travel within larger personal and socio-environmental contexts and issues. But, these interactions are structured by the arch-texture of a trip. So, practitioners and participants need to reflect on the paradigms, myths, ethics, and values that guide practice and, therefore, experiences and engagement with place. Such reflection can re-frame travel practices and environmental knowledge, leading to new understandings of current and possible travel practices and trip structures. For example, the proposed participatory ecological approach to adventure travel hints at what outdoor adventure travel and environmental knowledge might look like based on principles of responsible participation. Skills are learned and practiced in contexts that are environmental *and* social (Ingold, 2000). An integrated approach to human-environment relations through skill, therefore, opens the possibility that environmental knowledge and place perceptions are shared among participants of an adventure travel activity. Moreover, place perception and environmental knowledge held by different communities of people could be taught and learned using skilled activities.

Adventure travel is a significant way through which predominantly urban dwellers involve themselves with diverse landscapes and peoples. The archi-texture of adventure travel is, therefore, at once unavoidable and powerful (for good and ill) because practices within a trip mediate meaning and facilitate knowledge. Archi-textures can, for example, reinforce or resist ignorance of socio-environmental realities. To advance a paradigm of sustainability, participants, practitioners, and scholars need to reflect on trip archi-textures so as to clearly and responsibly position regions, destinations, and practices of travel within larger socio-environmental contexts.

**Moving onward.** Critical attention and further research is needed into the interpretation presented here: that archetypal recreational canoe tripping facilitates building regional spaces of wilderness that are experienced as socially and ecologically isolated. In an attempt to re-think and re-do adventure travel, this monograph has traced participant place making and movement on a macro-scale. The analysis would be deepened by examining how specific travel practices (such as paddling, navigation, Leave No Trace camping, and fishing) engage participants in socio-ecological relationships at a more intimate scale. Such an examination may further challenge Western biases against transience as a viable path towards environmental understanding. By extension, other adventure travel activities also beg critical archi-textural analyses and re-structuring in support of a sustainability paradigm. This project has examined ways in which an adventure travel activity interconnects and influences multiple landscapes and places through movement. Following Cronon (1992) and Lefebvre (1974/1991), future archi-textural analyses in tourism and recreation can also examine the multiple human and non-human flows that contribute to the character, sustainability, and meaning of specific places or destinations.

Additional research is needed to confirm the development of senses of movement and factors that contribute to its development, such as long-term participation in a geographic area or ecozone through a particular adventure activity. In addition to the common practice of researching particular adventure programs, a focus on skill development suggests that practitioners, educators, and

researchers also examine adventure activities from the lived perspective of participants. Such research might prove beneficial to educational policy and program development. The processes by which skills and knowledge for wayfaring and travel in the open are taught and learned deserve further critical and empirical attention. Building on and adapting “what works” in adventure travel can further inform a participatory ecological approach and types of environmental knowledge. Doing things differently will also reveal and create different meanings that may take the adventure travel field along new paths.

### **An Ecology of Outdoor Skill**

#### Abstract

Responding to calls for de-skilling outdoor travel and focusing on sustainability, technical canoe tripping skills are critically examined for the ways in which they structure travellers' social and ecological relations. Throughout a 100-day canoe expedition, the author and six participants employed a commonplace journey methodology for this exploratory study. Analysis of participant narratives about navigation, wayfaring, and paddling, as well as water collection and food provision show how skills shaped participants' interrelation with their surroundings. Informed by Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, skills are interpreted as directing participants' attention and shaping their development in relation to salient parts of their surroundings, and contributing to an intuitive sentient ecology shared within a community of practice. Practical and theoretical implications for outdoor adventure travel and education are discussed.

*Key words:* outdoor, adventure, ecology, sustainability, skill, community of practice.

This project took a critical ethnographic and phenomenological approach to the lived experience of six participants on a 100-day canoe expedition called Paddling the Big Sky (*Big Sky*). The entire trip covered 2,683 km in northern Canada. In response to calls for sustainability and deep critical analysis of adventure travel (Lugg, 2004, 2007; O'Connell, Potter, Curthoys, Dymont, & Cuthbertson, 2005), this expedition was used to critically interpret the role of canoe tripping in shaping participants' engagement with their socio-environmental surroundings. As suggested by Nicol and Higgins (2008), I explore an ecological ontology in which "the actions of humans are seen in direct relation to the environment they inhabit" (p. 238). The actual tasks and activities of travel have until recently gone largely unquestioned regarding environmental relationships in outdoor recreation and education scholarship. The relationship between skills and environmental learning is now hotly debated; various authors have considered "de-skilling" outdoor education on the grounds that technical skills divert participants' attention from nature and socio-environmental issues (Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Lugg, 2004; Payne, 2002; Wattchow, 2007).

Other research has suggested that climbers and paddlers, for example, cultivate embodied knowledge and senses of belonging through sensual interactions with their environments (Lewis, 2000; McCarthy, 2002; Wattchow, 2008). My research builds on this perspective by interpreting participant performances of outdoor skills using Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective. This paper explores the question: "*How might the practice of outdoor skills shape environmental perception of participants through an 'education of attention'?*" I present an account that shows importance and limits of participants' technical skill development as a way of engaging and growing in relation to their surroundings. The paper explores the structure of the trip as a *path of becoming*. Skills that are examined include route finding (navigation and wayfaring), paddling, and outdoor living skills (water collection and food provision). The findings are part of a larger research project exploring the application of Ingold's dwelling perspective within adventure travel in order to raise problems and promising possibilities for adventure travel theory and practice related to senses

of place and sustainability. As exploratory research in the tradition of Stebbins (2001), the findings and generalizations made should not be understood as definitive or representative of a population, but as re-interpretations of concepts and phenomena that suggest possibilities in need of further research.

### **Theoretical Approach**

Inspired in part by Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002, 1964/1968), Ingold (2000, 2007b, 2008) described the core idea that structures this paper: that a person's life is a *line of becoming* within their environment. People make their way along their line of life, according to Ingold, by developing the skills they need to negotiate their surroundings, exchange substances with their environment, and share knowledge with their fellow inhabitants. Life along a line of becoming results in what Anderson (2000) and Ingold (2000) have called a *sentient ecology* within familiar environments as well as the socio-environmental impacts of the person's exchanges of substance, knowledge, and skilled practices.

A line of becoming does not occur between points or realms; rather it grows *along* a trail and *amidst* an environment (Ingold, 2008). Each line, Ingold explained, is one among many interwoven traces that make up the tissue and texture of the land, but also of each organism. "Every line—every relation—in fluid space is a path of flow, like the riverbed or the veins and capillaries of the body. As the sanguinary image suggests, the living organism is not just one but a whole bundle of such lines" (Ingold, 2008, p. 1806). Organisms, including people, are not entangled *in* relations, rather as Ingold suggests they *are* tangles of relations, or bundles of lines of growth. An ecology of life, according to Ingold, "must deal not with the relations *between* organisms and their external environments but with the relations *along* their severally enmeshed ways of life" (2008, p. 1807). This theoretical understanding is especially important when considering the nature and sustainability of the interrelation of participants and their surroundings through adventure canoe tripping, an activity that gives shape to landscapes and participants. Travellers on a canoe trip *exchange substances* (Ingold, 2000) in numerous ways, including when they consume food and water;

they *exchange knowledge* (Ingold, 2000) when they share stories and help each other acquire new skills.

Ingold (2000) described human perception within an active environment as a function of a holistic and environmentally situated sensory system. *Skills*, he has argued, are carefully cultivated capacities of perceptual awareness and intentioned response in relation to one's surroundings. Ingold (2000) described five key dimensions of skilled practice:

First, intentionality and functionality are immanent in the practice itself, rather than being prior properties, respectively, of an agent and an instrument. Secondly, skill is not an attribute of the individual body in isolation but of the whole system of relations constituted by the presence of the artisan in his or her environment. Thirdly, rather than representing the mere application of mechanical force, skill involves qualities of care, judgement and dexterity. Fourthly, it is not through the transmission of formulae that skills are passed from generation to generation, but through practical, 'hands on' experience. Finally, skilled workmanship serves not to execute a pre-existing design, but actually to generate the forms of artefacts. (p. 291)

A skilled activity, according to Ingold, *is* an environmental relationship that carries intentions and meanings, the practice of which shapes both practitioners and settings. The technical skills that participants bring to a trip, or which they acquire along the way, directly impact where travellers can go and how they relate, impact, and respond to their surroundings, influencing their line of becoming and how they emerge from a trip.

Acquiring skill requires what Gibson (1986) has called an *education of attention*: the fine-tuning of one's perception to elements of the surroundings that afford action. Reed (1988) showed that perception, and not just knowledge, can be shared by multiple subjects who share abilities and experiences.<sup>60</sup> Ingold (2000, 2001) positioned the concept of an education of attention as part of a

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<sup>60</sup> The commonplace journey research methodology depends on this notion; travelling together the researcher can come to know something of the ways in which participants engage and understand their surroundings.

process of developing embodied perceptual skills and of coming to know one's surroundings; Ingold called this process *enskilment*. Facilitating the education of attention, then, requires a mentor to establish a situation in which a novice can perceive and act directly, while being instructed to notice certain things and “get the feel” of the performance and environment (Ingold, 2000, 2001). Ingold (2000) described that by practicing an activity, a person becomes intuitively familiar with and adapted to the demands of the setting, which is also shaped through the person's practice. Participants' technical practices during an extended canoe expedition are interpreted here in terms of their attunement and adaptation to their surroundings.

Heidegger (1927/1962) described two fundamental attitudes with which humans attend to objects. Things, particularly tools and equipment (paddles, canoe, waves), are *ready-to-hand* when they are brought into use, and therefore brought into relation with other things and processes, in order for the person to accomplish some concern. A person's attention is focused on the concern, and awareness of the thing occurs in the context of performance. Things are *present-at-hand* when they are conceptualized as isolated or discrete objects that are the focus of the person's concern and attention. Such attention is observational and analytical. Attending to something as present-at-hand creates distance between the perceiver and the object or place. Being concerned (using either attitude) with a thing, even if it is geographically distant, draws it into close attention for the perceiver. Heidegger called this phenomenon *de-severance*; he described that “‘de-severing’ amounts to making the farness vanish—that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close” (1927/1962, p. 139). The place a person finds herself in and experiences, Heidegger argued, is not only a geographic space, but is better thought of as an entangled drawing-together of the things, objects, and places of her concern, be they physically near or far.

*Sentient ecology*, a term originally coined by Anderson (2000), refers to a person's or community's embodied understandings of an environment expressed through awareness, skill, and competence of practice in relation to the demands and elements of that particular environment. A sentient ecology is a form of

knowledge that is “based in feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one’s life in a particular environment” (Ingold, 2000, p. 25).<sup>61</sup>

To reinforce the close connections of Ingold’s (2007b, 2008) ideas to adventure travel, I use the term *path* rather than *line* of becoming throughout this paper. The wandering three-dimensional nature of a path should be emphasized: it is pressed into soil, submerged in, against, and with the flows of rivers, crosses lakes and is buffeted by winds; a path moves over, under and around obstacles, through buildings and forests, incorporating elements of the surroundings (many with their own paths) along the way. While not being Ingold’s main concern, his ideas have profound implications for understandings of place and notions of sustainability within adventure travel. The issue explored in this paper is not *whether* canoeists engage nature, but *whether* and *how* paddlers and elements of their environments interact to shape one another, and to what effect on their mutual being and becoming.

## Methods

The six participants in this study were members of an extended canoe expedition; they came together from within a loosely organized community of paddlers. Allowing the group to form under normal conditions was important to respecting and understanding the diversity of skill and abilities within an expedition team. Each participant had at least the basic canoeing skills needed for an expedition, practical outdoor recreation experience, and theoretical knowledge in physical education, recreation, and/or leisure studies through post-secondary education. Most importantly, the participants were willing and able to engage in critical self-reflection. Three participants were skilled canoe guides and educators, one was an experienced outdoor educator with intermediate skill in canoeing, and two were relatively new to canoe tripping. The six research participants ranged in age between 19 and 35 years and were all of Euro-Canadian heritage. Three research participants were female and three male.

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<sup>61</sup> Paddlers comment on sentient ecology when, after watching someone run a difficult rapid, they state that she or he “really knows the river.” By using that phrase, an observer underscores the paddler’s embodied capacity to engage and respond to the river in a skilful manner.

Inspired by Sumara (2001), the research was embedded within the expedition and was designed as a commonplace journey along which participants and the researcher worked together through ten recurring cycles of practice, individual reflection, and group discussion. These cycles of praxis were structured around prompts that integrated Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective and provided a common focus for observation, reflection, and discussion throughout the trip (see Chapter Two: *Commonplace Journey Methodology*). Most importantly, the prompts encouraged participants to consider alternative interpretations of their experiences and surroundings while they were lived.

Data collection involved participant observation, journaling, and semi-structured group discussions that lasted between two and three hours. I participated as a member the expedition, and used my knowledge of Ingold's (2000) theory and the cues of *skill, place, interrelationships, self, and stories* to guide observations throughout the trip (Crotty, 1998; van Manen, 1997). Journals and waterproof field notebooks were used by the researcher and participants to record their day-to-day and immediate observations and reflections regarding their lived experience (van Manen, 1997). Each participant was given a designated research journal to be maintained separately from a personal journal, and returned to the researcher following the trip. Some participants chose to mix research and personal entries in the same book, and returned only the research entries. Following the expedition, the research journals or photocopies of journal entries were mailed back to the researcher. The group discussions were tape-recorded and later transcribed using techniques described by Gumperz and Berenz (1993), Palmer (2005), and Tedlock (1983). One of the strengths of the commonplace design was that the recurring cycles of praxis allowed the participants to share and shape their observations as the context of the trip changed along the route. Sparkes (2002) urged reflexivity about data and its interpretation in ethnographic accounts; for this study, data collection methods were designed to enable the researcher and participants to actively work together in reinterpreting environmental relations lived during canoe tripping.

Analysis after the trip focused on narratives from the transcriptions and journal entries, which Palmer (2005) and Sparkes (2002) assert can reveal facets of a speaker's experience in and relationship to landscapes and activities. Analysis progressed through multiple readings for emergent themes related to Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective and was guided by van Manen's (1997) approach to focusing on participants' lived experiences of space, body, time and relationships. Narratives with dissenting voices and pragmatic implications were also identified. Using the commonplace journey, participants generated insights about the expedition that have been brought together here to re-interpret the socio-ecological relationships that participants lived through their canoe tripping practices.

### **Results**

During the *Big Sky* Expedition participants used their whole bodies and all of their senses, to pay attention to specific elements in their surroundings that were salient to their outdoor living and travel skills. Participants' attention to and understanding of their environment was broadened and deepened as they learned and practiced outdoor living and travel skills. The education of participants' attention was self directed but also supported by a community of practice (Wenger, 2006) within and beyond the group.<sup>62</sup> The emergent understandings and promising possibilities for canoe travel addressed in this paper focus on the ways in which participants' ecological knowledge and relationships were embedded in their technical outdoor living and travel practices (Shooter, Sibthorp, & Paisley, 2009). The results are presented as an analysis of map use and wayfaring, paddling, and food and water getting, as well as the cultivation of skills and knowledge within a community of practice. Three key understandings emerged: a) that an outdoor activity is comprised of multiple skills and tasks (food provision, paddling, river reading), b) that skills structure how participants attend to, interact with, and therefore *are* and *become* in relation to their surroundings,

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<sup>62</sup> Wenger (2006) described a *community of practice* as a group of people "who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

and c) that individuals develop and share their skills within communities of practice through which they cultivate activity-specific ecological knowledge.

**Route finding: navigation and wayfaring.** Map use was pervasive throughout the *Big Sky* expedition. Maps were used in advance of the trip to plan the route that would be followed on a macro scale (see p. 146). While on the river, participants used maps to orient themselves along their route by referencing specific elements of their surroundings that appeared on the map. Participants knew they were approaching a rapid, for example, because the map indicated that one was located two kilometres downstream from the nearby hill, which they could locate on the map. Map use, therefore, was considered an essential safety skill for canoe travel, a skill that facilitated entry into landscapes that were unfamiliar to participants. Steph was one of the participants with less canoe tripping experience, she commented that:

Steph: I found myself needing to know where we were because I felt very much in this HUGE OPEN landscape and having everything so overwhelming: Where are we? Where are we going? How long is it going to take us?... That map is something I've been drawn to because it allows me to orient myself in something that's completely, completely new.

[pp. 43-44, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

Clearly, being able to use the maps helped Steph place herself, find direction, and reassure her movement in a landscape that was, for her, “completely new.” Reading a map involved more than identifying a physical location, it aided in knowing and being able to anticipate certain affordances and impediments to travel. Using maps, therefore, focused participants' attention on elements in their surroundings as present-at-hand, identifiable on the map, and salient to the expedition.

Map use was routine for more experienced participants who, in fact, used maps strategically given the group's concerns, which were governed by the demanding itinerary of the expedition.<sup>63</sup> James described that:

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<sup>63</sup> There are, however, other long-established ways of guiding travel, such as the use of song and stories (Feld & Basso, 1996).

James: Once we had the cabins dotted along the map, that became our point, our destination... I find the map makes me focus on a DISTANT point.... We come to an island and I would know which way to go around it because of the map and I know we want to go the shortest way around it, or the way that's got a creek because I want to get to the cabin sooner or we need water and there's no more water until the cabin which is another thirty-five kilometres or whatever.

So it has this strange effect for me of bringing really far away things REALLY close up... The stuff that was right in front of me—it's not that I didn't notice it or I couldn't pay attention to it—but certain problems never even came up... If I didn't have a map it would mean that I would really have to think about it a lot more. With the map it was a no-brainer, the creek's on the right or it's shortest on the left. You just go that way. [pp. 42-43, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

By identifying a destination and representing the intervening landscape, maps enabled strategic routing decisions without participants having to attend to and experience their immediate surroundings (by watching, feeling, and listening for other clues). The presence of the cabin was drawn closer into James' experience, attention, and concern through map use that brought “really far away things REALLY close up.”<sup>64</sup> As a result of this de-severing (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 139) through map use, James was able to act and take direction in response to the cabin even as it remained geographically distant. The destination-orientation described by James and facilitated by the maps framed paddling as transport, travel *across* the landscape from point to point, that was focused on minimizing the time and effort needed to arrive at a destination (Ingold, 2007b). Map use helped the members of *Big Sky* to arrive at camp, find water, and complete the route while optimizing their limited time, food, and energy. Indeed, this quality of map use can be invaluable during difficult travel conditions or in case of an emergency.

James' narrative also shows that map use has costs in terms of knowing the river environment. The notion of bringing distant places close up also nicely captures the lived experience of using maps to “know before you go” (Ingold, 2000). This quality of map use helps make travel “efficient,” but the traveller is beholden to the map, the interpretation of which becomes the focus of the

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<sup>64</sup> Such an experience is precisely what Heidegger (1927/1962) calls *de-severance*. James' use of the map de-severs the cabin “over there” and brings it into his experience “here.”

paddler's skill development. Interpreting the map circumvents the need, as James described, to explore the twists, turns, and braids of the river and, in so doing, develop abilities to perceive and interpret the surroundings. Using maps, the group's specific path was guided more by the map and James' ability to use it, and less by participants' ability to discern meaning from the local conditions as they went along. With the map, routing decisions were "no-brainers," and so "certain problems never even came up." For the most part, the value of expedient travel superseded "thinking a lot more" in order to learn to discern salient information from the surroundings.

During the trip, more experienced participants recognized the value and limits of map use as well as the necessity of cultivating wayfaring skills to complement navigation skills. That is, while navigation was important, canoe travel also required experience, skill, and judgement in negotiating, as ready-to-hand, dynamic conditions such as currents, winds, and rapids that maps could not be sufficiently represent. In response to the limits of navigation identified by James, he suggested that the group try travelling without maps for a portion of the route in order to overcome their dependence on maps and more-fully experience the landscape through wayfaring. The ensuing discussion was long and contentious; travelling without using the maps raised numerous logistical and safety concerns among participants. In the following excerpt, Liz reiterated the importance of map use for safety; in contrast, James and Robert emphasized the importance of using wayfaring skills; finally, Steph emphasized the interpersonal implications of such a move. Before putting the maps away, Liz suggested that:

Liz: I'd have to look at where the waterfalls are, like the big class five [rapids] on the Coppermine. I don't want to be-

...

James: we'd have to [scout them] anyways.

Robert: for me, if we decided to [go without a map] on a rapids section we're still going to use our judgement and our heads.

James: and boy, it would make the sound of the rapids much more noticeable for me.

Robert:...you'd pay attention.

James: yah, because who knows what it's going to be? Whereas the map says it's four sets of rapids, or one.

Steph: I just think for me to watch and to know where we are on the map brings a whole lot of comfort to a very uncomfortable environment and I don't know if that is anyone else's – I don't know if you guys have that right to take that away from me if it brings me that much comfort.  
[pp. 81-82, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

The link between fore-knowledge, safety, and map use was so strongly valued and engrained in practice that Liz, a highly skilled participant, suggested *using maps* to identify a reach of the river along which to travel without maps and experiment with wayfaring. Other experienced participants, however, emphasized different skills; James and Robert anticipated upcoming rapids by carefully monitoring the sound of the river and by scouting ahead. More-experienced participants learned the sights and sounds of rapids through training and multiple trips that fine tuned their perception and guided their attention while on the move (Ingold, 2000).<sup>65</sup> James contrasted the limited quantitative information on the map, which “says it’s four sets of rapids, or one,” with a qualitative assessment through scouting unknown surroundings in the moment: “Who knows what it’s going to be?” Travel and safety involved more than paddling, first aid, and rescue skills. The exchange shows that among the group members there was constant attention to socio-environmental factors that could influence the progress, health, or wellbeing of the group and its members.

More-experienced participants were able and relatively comfortable attending to their surroundings in multiple ways, which was clearly not the case for Steph. Steph’s lack of experience with adventure canoe tripping did not allow her to deal with the situation as it emerged. For this, she relied on other members of the group. During the trip, and at this point in her development as a paddler,

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<sup>65</sup> In the chapter *Stop, Look and Listen! Vision, Hearing and Human Movement*, Ingold (2000, pp. 243-287) argued that vision and hearing are used together to attend to dynamic surroundings and prompt responsive action. Vision and hearing enable the paddler to purposefully engage the river and monitor for specific features they were approaching with, hopefully, enough time to make and enacting routing decisions in dynamic river environment. Some rapids are difficult to hear and see, and are, therefore far more dangerous because paddlers do not have the time and space to react and position themselves in response.

Steph needed the comfort of knowing where she was, which the maps provided. Steph was attending to her own wellbeing, and she demanded that the group support her and do the same. She was very clear that the group has the responsibility to allow her to use the maps. As she puts it, “I don’t know if you guys have that right to take that away from me if it brings me that much comfort.” Map reading and wayfaring skills negotiated a setting that was at once environmental and social; the acquisition of these skills by participants was a long-term developmental process that occurred through experience and guidance within these socio-environmental contexts. The group did in fact accede to Steph’s request, which allowed her to continue to benefit from the cues that the maps provided.

We never did travel without using maps. Throughout the trip, participants used a complementary combination of foreknowledge in navigation and sensual perception in wayfaring. As demonstrated by the above exchange, the demands of the environment informed participants’ use and development of navigation and wayfaring skills, their experiences of place, and their social group dynamics.

A final example related to navigation and wayfaring skills illustrates how reduced map use might open opportunities for alternative skills to flourish and deepen participants’ understandings of elements within the river environment. As seen in the above quotes, the participants on *Big Sky* continually tried to balance a tension between map use and wayfaring. Ingold (2007b) cautioned that an over-reliance on maps risks dissolving “the intimate bond that, in wayfaring, couples locomotion and perception” (p. 78). Map use structured the senses and depth or keenness with which participants attended to their surroundings: the features and processes participants learned to see, hear, and feel as meaningful and salient to travel. As James described, the information on the maps reduced the need for participants to find meaningful information in their surroundings. Liz, a highly experienced tripper, provided an example from a past expedition during which a former trip partner monopolized map use, exacerbating a group dynamics issue, and leaving Liz to explore other ways of route finding.

Liz: I started doing my own [wayfinding], like often my own intuitive “I want to go that way” was more accurate than her “we’re going to go

over there” because of the nature of the landscape through which we were travelling, partly because you could see currents, you could see the land going, see the elevation loss, you could get very distinct markers that I started seeing after I wasn’t able to follow the map. It was a forced situation; it was just kind of something that happened.

[p. 85, BS 1, June 16 (Day 39): Fort Chipewyan, UTM: VA9207 on 74L, 1974]

During *Big Sky*, Liz passed her wayfaring skill on to Chris, an intermediate paddler. During the trip, they had worked together on examining the height of land as a way of discerning where a lake would give way to a river. When asked about his education of attention, Chris described how Liz had directed his attention to key environmental cues that helped him enhance his own wayfaring skills.

Chris: A couple of days later I didn’t have the map and I [used] the cues that Liz had pointed me towards about scanning the sky line and trying to look at very slight variations in elevation. I thought it was one particular area, and looking at the map pointed that that was the way to go, even though it was NOT obvious. That’s an example for me of where the education of attention worked.

Phil: do you feel like the map was inhibiting that or supporting that?...

Chris: It inhibits, because it’s such a slight variation in the environment and because I have such limited experience with identifying those cues. Having that pre-knowledge decreases my certainty about what I’m seeing...

But for where I’m at, the map is a valuable tool in confirming my hunch, because I don’t have the miles or I don’t have that level of experience which allows me to say that yeah, that truly is the height of land...

[pp. 180-181, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

As the above comment shows, at certain levels of proficiency or at certain points during skill development the use of a map can be a help or a hindrance. However, Chris recognized that the map helped him confirm a hunch, thus it provided important feedback and aided in Chris’ education of attention and acquisition of wayfaring skills. For the most part, navigating meant correlating features represented on a map with features of our surroundings. Maps drew our attention to static features of the landscape and left little need for Chris to discern dynamic clues such as current lines and subtle elevation changes. Now that Chris recognizes these qualities, however, he could use maps strategically or judiciously

to help cultivate his own and other's perceptual abilities for wayfaring. As Chris described, affirming this kind of subtle perception is difficult as it requires continued practice and refinement "over the miles."<sup>66</sup> Importantly, Chris framed his education of attention as part of an ongoing process through which he could develop wayfaring skills and have them become habitual; a process that was influenced by tools and technologies and which occurred over time and through travel.

**Paddling: the physicality of travelling together.** Not surprisingly, technical paddling skills were important on a 100-day canoe trip that covered more than 2000 kilometres. Paddling was not only a mode of transport used to follow a planned route; it also shaped the day-to-day experience of the surroundings, it was a way of inhabiting or being in relation to the socio-ecological environment. As noted above, the participants brought different levels of paddling skill to the *Big Sky* expedition. As the following narratives show, the processes of learning and practicing paddling skills involved participants in embodied relationships with their equipment, paddling partners, and environment; these relationships shaped paddlers' individual and collective growth along their trip. Acquiring skill was, at times, uncomfortable. James, for example, described his difficulty learning the River J stroke and the particular elements of his surroundings that demanded attention:

James: Today I worked fairly consistently and with concerted effort on my River J on my left side again...and I was getting Chris [to] switch sides like every ten strokes.

Robert: We saw you and we were like "what the hell are they doing?"

James: I was TRYYYING to figure out how to do a River J as effortlessly [as] on my right side where I don't even NEED my bottom hand.

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<sup>66</sup> This also presented challenges for the researcher. Such embodied knowledge is difficult to represent in a set of data. Furthermore, while participants may claim certain abilities, these are difficult to confirm except if the researcher has similar or superior skills, or the participant can be observed in similar circumstances over an extended period of time. I often had to rely on participants' descriptions of these abilities and wait to see if they could be confirmed in practice. Being present throughout the trip helped by allowing for observation, but the more finely-tuned perceptual abilities were very difficult to assess. Such abilities need to be studied further, in a more-structured way.

One day on the Athabasca... I was SO MAD by the end of the day because I kept banging the paddle on the boat when I went forward to plant it. I couldn't River J for the life of me. [The paddle] slid all over the place, I whacked my THUMB, I was splashing Chris in the front of the boat, I was raking the back of my knuckle across the bolts on the seat at the gunwale. I just COULDN'T get it right! And I couldn't paddle on the other side, because of the wind I had to paddle on my left side. I feel out of place doing that.  
[p. 251.BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

Later in the conversation James referred back to this story and commented that:

James: The other day with Chris when I was trying to learn the River J I thought you know... I'm not a paddler today it's just not coming together, it's not working. ...It's nowhere near as effortless as it usually is. It's taking more mental concentration than it should and I felt all "gibbled"... Sometimes I look around and think: "well, why is it that everybody else is going four times as fast as I am at half the effort that I'm putting out."...

And it happens very infrequently when I'm working with kid groups because their skill level is SO much further below. Even if I am all "fubar" I'm still better than them, whereas with a group of peers like this, differences are much more pronounced.  
[p. 271.BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

Clearly, the acquisition of a new paddling skill involved the total person in relation to the boat, water, partner, and wind. James' performance engaged physical relationships with the paddle and the boat as well as social relationships with his paddling partner and group, all within and responsive to environmental relationships with the wind and the water. These various relationships were deeply entangled. James was explicitly concerned with improving his paddling skills; because of this, he attended to the coordination of these various elements in an overt and analytical way.

Most importantly, James' comments underscore the feelings that can result as participants strive to acquire or perform the skills needed to travel in particular conditions and within the constraints and demands of a trip's structure, such as the itinerary of *Big Sky*. Participants had planned *Big Sky* to be a recreational trip for experienced participants who were expected to have paddling skills ready-to-hand

and not require time for skill instruction or development. The structure of the trip was such that James felt he had to press on, even as the conditions and his performance made his experience frustrating. James interpreted his attempts at learning the skill as a struggle that required undue concentration and effort. The difficulty of James' performance highlighted various elements for him, including his body, as present-at-hand (Heidegger, 1927/1962): The paddle would not go where he wanted, the canoe got in the way, he whacked his thumb, and he was not moving as fast as he thought he should. Rather than making time for his skill development, James and the other group members expected skill development to fit within other priorities of the trip such as "making kilometres" – covering distance and getting to camp.

Moreover, while it is normal to struggle with skill acquisition, James's own expectations, and those he perceived within the group, meant that he negatively valued the learning situation. He did not enjoy the challenge, and his performance on that day was not how he wanted or expected to be in relation to his surroundings "as a paddler." In fact, he identified and measured problems with his performance through physical feedback (scraping knuckles), in comparison with his interpretation of the "effortless" performance of his peers, and his perception of their expectations of his performance. Socio-environmental conditions and the trip structure strongly contextualized and influenced James' learning and performance of the skill. His resulting growth included cognitive, emotional, social, and physical strands in relation to these contexts. A skilled performance was a way of inhabiting his surroundings "as a paddler," which on this day eluded James and resulted in him feeling out of place. In a sense, James "fell out" of the relations that placed him as being-on-trip in the way he felt a paddler should.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> James also juxtaposed experienced and inexperienced groups relative to his own performance and sense of belonging. James wanted his performance to belong within the performance of the group, which was easy for him when leading a novice or less-experienced group of participants, but difficult within a high-functioning group in which inability or mistakes became, in his view, more pronounced. Belonging within the performance of the group, James' narrative suggests, involves a combination of skill level relative to environmental conditions as well as the performance of travel companions. James measured and assessed his own skill relative to both his social and environmental situation.

Liz, Robert, Chris, and James—all experienced participants—consistently described that they felt “in place” when they were able to move together with the group and in accord with the environmental conditions (see also Chris’ narrative on p. 166, and James’ narrative on p. 98). For a contrasting example to James’ negative experience with the River J, he recognised that:

James: I feel IN place most often when I’m engaged in a skilled activity where I know what I’m doing or I know what to expect and I perform to a level that I think I am capable of, that I feel good about. Sort of like Chris was saying when you’re paddling and it kind of comes together and doesn’t feel monotonous.

...

I’m more fully aware of my presence in those activities.

...

I feel more connected to the MODE that I was in while moving in those places

and my feelings of being in place or out of place have much more to do with that [mode] than a static geographical location.

[pp. 251-252.BS 5, August 3 (Day 87): Redrock Lake, UTM: PC3665 on 86G, 1988]

In the earlier narrative James felt out of place when the conditions exceeded his ability to perform; his skill, equipment, and body presented themselves as present-at-hand and in need of focused cognitive attention that frustrated his intent to travel efficiently, resulting in physical pain, emotional distress, and a lack of attention to his surroundings. When performing skilfully, however, all of these elements “came together” effortlessly and were ready-to-hand for James, who was freed to attend to and be present in his surroundings through his activity. Skilled performance enabled an effortless (but not unskilled) engagement with and attention to the surroundings. James came to inhabit, to *be-in*, the environment through his paddling practices and equipment.

James clearly positions his paddling within the social and physical context of the other members of the expedition. Each member had to effectively perform and coordinate their complementary paddling, portaging, wayfaring, and navigation skills to facilitate senses of connection to their surroundings and belonging within their group. More precisely, skilled paddling required partners to perform within a set of concurrent processes in order to synchronize their strokes and travel comfortably and efficiently while sharing the effort (see Figure 5-1).

These processes had rhythms and cues for the paddlers that became evident or present-at-hand for the participants only once they were asked to describe the sensation of paddling. Participants were prompted to try paddling blindfolded. Participants coordinated paddling within a system of relations using multiple senses and sensations, which changed along with the strokes. Paddling blindfolded in the bow of the canoe (where he would not normally see his partner) Chris described that:

Chris: if it was a power forward I could hear the [water] trickling on the return, and then on entry it would be only the sound of my paddle pulling versus when our timing was off I could also hear the other person's paddle entering the water.

There's just a nifty... difference in the rocking if we're in synch we both pull at the same time. It's as if only my paddle is pulling the boat, there's not the sensation of two paddles in the thrust. And that's even more apparent when using... less body rotation and more back and forward kind of stroke.... That one very much feels like a surging of the boat much more strongly, and a single surge timed... to when I feel my blade in the water.

[p. 181 BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

The paddling partners joined in a pattern of action. Participants were connected within a shared environment through their shared equipment (the canoe), and attended to combinations of visual as well as auditory and kinaesthetic cues such as the sound of water dripping, the rocking and surging of the hull, and the synchronized (or not) rhythm of their strokes. Paddling partners attended, responded, and adapted to one another and their environment using all their senses and abilities. Their paddle blades in particular provided loci of action within this system.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The hull of the boat is also an important locus of action for paddlers; trim (fore and aft, and from side to side) can significantly alter the movement of the canoe. Tilt of the hull is especially important for engaging and disengaging river currents in moving water. When surfing a wave, for example, paddlers inhabit a balance of forces they maintain through very subtle adjustments with their boat and paddles in coordination. The possibility of inhabiting this space depends on river conditions, river morphology, participant skill, and canoe design.



*Figure 5-1.* Participants paddled together. Participants felt most “in place” and engaged with their surroundings when their paddling was coordinated with their partner and with the other boats so that they collectively negotiated lake and river currents, winds, landscape features, and mosquitoes and black flies (as indicated by participants’ bug jackets). Photograph courtesy of the author.

In this situation, Chris’ skilled performance was coordinated with, and became part of, his partner’s performance (and vice versa). Coordinated paddling improved the stroke efficiency and resulted in a synergy through which the boat moved more efficiently and with more comfort and enjoyment for paddlers. On such a long trip, synchronized paddling conserved energy, shared workloads, and contributed to a harmonious group dynamic. As the above anecdotes show, finding a comfortable rhythm for both partners that could keep the boat “moving well” for long periods was a considerable challenge.

Most canoe trippers likely recognize the challenge and importance of effectively coordinating skill levels within the group, the expected environmental conditions, and the purpose of a trip in order to engage their surroundings and group optimally. Moving well was a crucially important part of *being-on-trip*, experiencing one’s self as engaged and attentive within the group and surroundings in a way that was lived, embodied, and ready-to-hand. Moreover, such skilled and coordinated performances were deeply personal expressions of ability, belonging, and identity within the group and broader community of practice. James’ performance in relation to his surroundings—including his fellow

travellers—brought him in and out of being a paddler, as evidenced by his comment that “I’m not a paddler *today*.” The length of the *Big Sky* expedition provided time for participants to settle into different ways of being, which were influenced and accentuated by the diversity of conditions and landscapes through which the group travelled. Canoe travel allowed the participants to *be* in a way not available to them without the skill; it allowed them to inhabit a socio-environmental milieu continually re-generated through practice.<sup>69</sup>

James’ narrative about the River J suggests that social and physical circumstances can overwhelm a participant’s skill development and result in detrimental learning experiences that produce little, and even negative, sense of connection to the surroundings and fellow participants. Therefore, learning situations require careful facilitation to establish and engage settings that allow participants to develop their skill and educate their attention, important processes that enable effective and enjoyable inhabitation of these socio-environmental relations. Most importantly, the degree to which participants are placed within and understand these relations needs to be understood by researchers and practitioners as changing with time, practice, ability, and the structure of any one trip.

Participants (and the landscape) came to embody the socio-environmental relations embedded in paddling, portaging, and life on the river as they progressed along their path of becoming. On day ninety-five of the trip, Chris and Robert responded to a prompt about the stories they would bring home. Both participants

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<sup>69</sup> From this perspective “put-ins” and “take-outs” are places where a person transitions from one way of being to another, between everyday life and being-on-trip in life on the river. Participants can inhabit and be fully at home in both. The put-in and take-out do not have to represent thresholds of “civilization” where the paddler departs into or returns from exile in a wilderness area. Moreover, for a wayfaring canoeist, camp sites are not so much destinations as they are places for pause and rest. Being-on-trip is about travel, as such each such pause “is a moment of tension that—like holding one’s breath—becomes ever more intense and less sustainable the longer it lasts” (Ingold, 2007, p. 77). Participants on Big Sky certainly felt this way while being wind bound, for example. Many paddlers probably also feel the same way about extended periods of time they spend “back home,” looking forward to their next trip. Indeed, Ingold noted that the wayfarer “has no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes on, there is somewhere further he can go” (p. 77). Wayfaring, however, has strong implications for family and social life “back home.”

recognized physical changes in the conditions their bodies and paddling equipment as part of the story of their trip:

Chris: Speaking about hands, there's a story that hands tell... They are dry, they're cracked, [and] there's lots of calluses where usually there aren't any. So then my interactions with people, in shaking their hand, that will be a very physical reality in greeting people back in the city.

Robert: and not just the story of your hands but the story of your whole body. There are scars, I can remember the day that I got it...and it's now long healed, right? Like, we've been out here so damn long that my body tells the stories of a hundred days worth of physical exertion.

Chris: or the story our gear tells us: my shoes that have fallen apart, all the scratches on the bottoms of the boat, the barrel handles that have popped off, the repairs that you did on the packs, the wear and tear on the zippers, the hole in your tent, the mould in your tent, the duct tape on the pants.

[pp. 330-331, BS 6, August 11 (Day 95): Stony Creek, UTM: NE3658 on 86N, 1990]

Participants were keenly aware of how their bodies changed in response to their activity and surroundings. Perhaps the most telling phrase is Robert's: "My body tells the stories of a hundred days worth of physical exertion." For Chris, Robert, and their acquaintances, the physical changes in their bodies and equipment embodied the journey and provided evidence of life, travel, and experience on the river.<sup>70</sup> Participants had to learn to cope with and respond to mosquitoes and black flies that fed on their blood, the rivers that kept their feet constantly wet, and the terrain that exacted muscular-skeletal injuries. Bodily changes resulted from the *process* of canoe travel subject to the terrain, insects, and elements. Chris and Robert's narrative can be interpreted as accounts of macho "war stories" in the production of gendered identities within a historically masculinised activity (McDermott, 2000b). Nevertheless, the physicality of canoe travel and skill development are crucially important processes through which participants can explore, express, resist, and cultivate various identities (McDermott, 2004; Newbery, 2003; Warren & Loeffler, 2006).

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<sup>70</sup> The same journey and movements result in socio-environmental traces such as portage trails, paint scrapings on rocks, ephemeral disturbance of lakes and rivers, garbage and waste, collected fire wood, and the stories lived and shared among group members. Indeed some of these traces, and therefore the journey, live on in the landscape and have meaning for other travelers (see Chapter Three: *Living Stories*).

The process of self-becoming through skilled adventure travel is important to sustainability and senses of place because it centres a malleable and enacted self as growing in relation to various social and environmental elements encountered along a journey. A relational and growth-oriented approach to self is distinctly different from the Western notions of individualism and nature that predominate in wilderness recreation (Fox, 2000). More than their individual and collective physical effort shaped participants. Participants became attuned to and worked with air and water currents that shaped their lives and travel along the river. Skilled canoe travel was a way in which participants' cultivated lives that interrelated with their surroundings. By extension, this implies that choices among skills and teaching techniques influence who, and in relation to what (ecologies, genders, histories, ideologies), a participant becomes. The canoe and paddle provided James and others a way to live and become in relation to the rivers. As a wayfarer, the paddler *was* his or her travel. Using examples of Inuit hunters and English seafarers, Ingold (2007b) argued that a wayfarer "presses on in an ongoing process of growth and development, or of self-renewal" (p. 76). In addition to negotiating the forces of winds and rivers with canoes and paddles, the members of the expedition also exchanged substances of water and food. Sustenance practices enmeshed participants with various environments, near and far.

**Water and food: exchanging substances for sustenance.** Outdoor living skills are technical skills involved in camping, sustenance, travellers' well-being, and environmental impacts (Shooter, Sibthorp, Paisley, 2009).<sup>71</sup> Exchanges of substance, particularly of water and food, directly supported the lives and travel of participants throughout the *Big Sky* expedition. Participants gathered water and supplied food that enabled a particular style of travel and at times, intimately involved them in their surroundings and issues of sustainability.

Participants came to the *Big Sky* expedition trained to practice and value an ethic of "pack it in, pack it out" and the idea of "self-contained" outdoor living

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<sup>71</sup> These skills are also referred to as *backcountry* living skills. I use *outdoor* living skills so as to not assume a geographic boundary in which they can or should be employed.

and travel. Four participants had received formal Leave No Trace training as part of their careers in outdoor education. These particular outdoor living practices are intended to be “light on the land” and minimize the amount of harvesting and waste in backcountry areas, particularly in heavily used areas or those judged to be fragile or “pristine.” Self-contained travel also enables long trips away from human settlements through unfamiliar landscapes without participants needing to practice or learn subsistence skills or knowledge for harvesting local resources. From the dwelling perspective (Ingold, 2000), this style of outdoor living skill can be interpreted as deliberately reducing exchanges of substance between participants and their immediate surroundings.

Due to the extended nature of the canoe trip, the participants had many opportunities to learn about and engage in a wide variety of socio-environmental situations. Many of these situations led participants to re-consider how their outdoor living skills framed their environmental relationships and engaged them in issues of sustainability. Most importantly, these experiences encouraged self-reflection among participants and suggested a diversity of valuable practices and ways of being in relation to the surroundings.

***Placed in water.*** Participants continually sought sources of fresh water and evaluated its potability, which they tried to ensure by deflocculating, filtering, boiling, and/or treating with chemicals. Through these practices, participants came to understand their own health and that of the watershed as interrelated. As participants paddled down the Slave River, having already encountered the oil sands industry on the Athabasca River, Robert connected his need for hydration to the questionable quality of the water. He observed that:

Robert: You can look out here and say the water’s got a bit of sediment in it, but if we use alum it’ll be fine. Except that the Slave River collects a huge amount of Canada’s bloody water! The whole Athabasca, the Peace, everything into Lake Athabasca all those invisible pollutants are coming through here right now and we’re drinking it!  
[p. 52, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Robert identified his place within a broad hydrological system involving various landscapes, environments, communities, and industrial practices. Like Robert,

James identified the wider flow of pollutants within the hydrologic system as an important consideration overlooked by his current practices. James observed that outdoor living skills often focus on mitigating observable locally generated human impacts:

James: Well there is an ecological component too, if you see a Quaker oil thing floating in the lake you think: oh look at all the oil, I can see the sheen on the lake, right? But I'm not sure, maybe there're heavy metals in this water, but we can't see them, and so we ARE drinking this water. Would I be willing to drink the water with the oil that I can see? I don't know.

[pp. 51-52, BS 1a, June 24 (Day 47): Cabin by Long Island, UTM: UC8839 on 85A, 1988]

Through exchanges of substance, Robert and James interconnected their own health with the ecology of the rivers, creeks, and springs of the watersheds through which they travelled. The expedition members had collected drinking water while paddling through industrial landscapes, farmland, and towns. Throughout the trip, participants searched out and judged the quality of water for drinking: They assessed sediment load, colour, clarity, temperature, flow rates, and possible upstream land uses. By having to drink water of questionable quality, participants came to understand that their water treatment skills, knowledge, and technologies provided limited ability to cope with pollutants, such as heavy metals, which they might ingest from their position within a wide meshwork of waterways (see Figure 5-2). Even in very remote areas, participants almost always treated the water in order to mitigate exchanges of undesirable substances (viruses, pollutants, sediment) so as to not *become* sick and jeopardise their journey and health.



*Figure 5-2.* Encounters and exchanges of substance along the way. Participants' well-being depended on clean water but also on agriculture (via food preparation "back home"), which were in conflict here. Such encounters naturally raised concerns of personal health, water quality, and watershed management. Photograph courtesy of the author.

While Robert and James became aware of their hydrological entanglements in relation to pollutants, Chris reflected on the group's reticence to accept when and where water might be clean enough to drink untreated:

Chris: Filtering water is a very concrete action....We talked about making the decision that we're far out enough that we judge the water safe to drink without filtering. I was tired yesterday and just fed up and I just drank the water.

I thought it was interesting this idea of "far out enough," from where? Needing to filter water implies both that we shouldn't trust what's out here—we need to process what's out here—and... the underlying assumption that humans, as an abstract category, have managed to pollute every single part of the world.

And it's abstract, so it's not directly ME that's polluted this water or it's not directly the Inuit in the north that have heavy metals accumulate in their fish. But humans as a general category have impacted the environment in such a way that it's no longer a safe thing....

In [Eastern Canada] we always filter water, for the most part its common practice...When I started working for [an international outdoor education

organization].... they don't treat water whatsoever once they get out of the valleys, and they haven't had any cases of water-borne illness [there] in fifteen years. It was really nice to be able to do that, carry less water and you drink what you find.

[pp. 140-141, BS 3, July 10 (Day 63): Fishing Lake, Sandy Portage, UTM: 395195 on 85O/8, 1975]

Like Robert and James, Chris related water quality to personal and ecosystem health and sustainability. As Chris alludes, participants judged water quality by attending to their position in a watershed and away from human settlements: being “out of the valleys” and “far out enough.” Chris acknowledged that these indicators are imperfect and that unwanted elements exist, circulate, and concentrate in remote areas.<sup>72</sup> For Chris, having dealt with poor water quality reinforced the significance of times and places where he could drink directly from a lake or river. Chris resisted assumptions that he should treat his water, partly for pragmatic reasons but also because of the type of relationship he sought with his surroundings.

Chris valued the experience of drinking unfiltered water and he critically questioned presuppositions of ubiquitous contamination and assumptions that, for safety's sake, *all* water must and could be treated effectively before drinking. Chris felt and resisted an anti-modern and possibly misanthropic environmentalist perspective that “humans, as an abstract category, have managed to pollute every single part of the world” and that paddlers “shouldn't trust” the river and “need to process what's out here.”<sup>73</sup> Such an antagonistic perspective frames the exchange of substance negatively and neglects the life-giving qualities of water.

For Chris, this antagonism leaves no space in which he and the river can live and come together without fear of harm. In response, Chris' narrative attempts to filter out the anti-modern sentiments. He encourages judicious attention to specific water quality issues, indicators, and processes such as the

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<sup>72</sup> See Semkin, Mierle, and Neureuther (2005) on hydrochemistry and mercury cycling in a High Arctic watershed.

<sup>73</sup> This experience of place through water treatment is consistent with dominant approaches to outdoor adventure travel that frames wild nature as both threatened and threatening (Braun, 2002). Treating water to remove anthropogenic pollutants reaffirms for participants that their natural surroundings are indeed endangered by civilization, fragile, and therefore in need of protection. At the same time, treating water to remove naturally-occurring pathogens reaffirms for participants that their natural surroundings are dangerous, risky, and needing control.

circulation of pathogens, but he also remains open to accepting that ecological processes can provide water of a quality that does not require treatment. From the dwelling perspective, each exchange of substance presents an opportunity to engage specific local circumstances and issues of sustainability: the chance to drink unfiltered water; encounter pollution, or understand the bioaccumulation of mercury in fish. Participants lived meaningful, if ambiguous, relationships with their surroundings through water treatment practices used to negotiate their physiological need for hydration with the changing possibility of illness. By exchanging substances that are available along the way, such as water, participants' health and journey become entangled within local socio-environmental conditions and, therefore, issues of sustainability (see Figure 5-2).

Having to make informed decisions about sources of water highlighted that participants' wellbeing was directly related to elements within their immediate surroundings. Robert, James, and Chris' narratives show that gathering water can be an opportunity to learn about why *this* water does (or does not) require treatment because of *that* up-stream source of contamination or *my* position in the watershed. In pursuing and teaching sustainability, practitioners and participants may want to carefully consider the values, objectives, and knowledge that drive the selection of skills and techniques used to engage and find meaning in the surroundings.<sup>74</sup> The rivers sustained participants through water collection and consumption practices, which intimately involved the paddlers in the health and wellbeing of the river and an entire region.

***Calories for kilometres.*** Food and water fuelled participants' journey. The group collected water periodically along the way in order to make travel more expedient. Food, in contrast, was "packed in" and carried over long distances. Food getting and preparation occurred "back home" in urban areas and involved a detailed process of researching and planning a menu with specific calorie content, nutritional values, and portion sizes. Food was purchased at grocery stores and perishable goods were dehydrated; meals were re-packaged in air and watertight

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<sup>74</sup> Practices related to water also open educational linkages to traditional knowledge, local land use practices, as well as fresh water ecology.

plastic bags and carried in large sealed barrels. Along the route, food preparation involved using a camp stove to re-hydrate and cook a chosen meal. Any waste was carried with the group until it could be disposed of in a town.

The degree to which these practices relied on urban socio-environmental and economic relations became clear to me during a school visit in the town of Kugluktuk, at the end of our trip. An Inuit girl asked how the group got our food. I explained that we had bought and dried food in Edmonton and carried it for fifty days over 964 km of the Barren Lands from Yellowknife. “Why?” she asked, “You saw caribou, didn’t you have a gun?” Her response plainly illustrated how *Big Sky* was supported by urban-based practices and relationships, and that group members including myself lacked the skills to engage, experience, and understand the environment in ways that she took for granted.

James had more than 15 years of experience leading canoe trips on which he carried pre-packaged food. James compared and contrasted an experience eating moose meat, which the group had been given along the way, with his experience of eating pepperoni, which the group had carried from home:

James: We had moose meat twice now, that we’ve been given, and each time I’ve been MUCH more conscious of the meat itself as something I’m interacting with way way more emotionally, psychologically, mentally aware. I feel like I’m consuming the land at a very visceral level, and it’s a gift at multiple levels right? It was given to us by these people, and it was given to those people by the land. Because we have to process it now, I’ve been looking at Robert take the hair and fat off. And so I had images of the moose itself as it’s walking through the forest while I’m eating the thing, and I’m actually saying thank you to the land and to the people who gave it to us while I’m eating it. It’s not like “oh I must remember to say thanks.” It arises out of the eating of it without me even trying to do that.

Then I think about the pepperoni sticks and the conversations we have around the ‘roni and it’s COMPLETELY different. [laughter]. Nobody says thanks to the pigs. It’s a very very different experience for me.... It engages me with different relations that are predominantly non-human and very powerful yet something that I don’t think I’ve ever experienced in an outdoor ed program, not REALLY.

[pp. 134-135, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

In addition to physical sustenance, the acquisition, preparation, and consumption of the moose involved a heightened emotional, psychological, and mental

awareness of the surroundings shared by James, other inhabitants, and the moose. The paths of expedition members, local inhabitants, and the moose “walking through the forest” came together and intertwined in support of the participants’ journey. James’ overriding sentiment was an acknowledged and embodied appreciation of the moose as a gift from the land and people at a “very visceral level” that “arises out of the eating.” To be clear, the consumption of both the pepperoni and the moose meat entangled James and the group in socio-ecological relations. Engaging local human and non-human relations along his path, however, was a powerful experience for James that stood in stark contrast to the dominant practices on *Big Sky* and other outdoor education programs. The length and route of *Big Sky* allowed James and the other participants to interact with local inhabitants, many of whom were Aboriginal, and in doing so the paddlers were provided experiences of their surroundings as a productive force that supported them and their journey. Such opportunities for learning and engagement, limited as they were during *Big Sky*, had not emerged on James’ other canoe trips. This example shows how diverse social interactions can enable diverse ecological interactions, both of which come together when practicing and learning outdoor skills.

Rather than incorporating food into their wayfaring practices, expedition members practiced food *transportation*, which enabled them to maximize efficiency and self-reliance and, crucially, minimize ecological impact *in the backcountry*. By transporting food and cooking equipment, participants did not need to exchange substances with and gain sustenance from their immediate surroundings. Participants did not have to harvest plants, animals, or firewood along the route. Through their food practices, participants built, understood, and relied on socio-environmental relations “back home” rather than “along the way.”<sup>75</sup> For the most part, food on *Big Sky* provided calories for kilometres, and the land was not engaged or experienced as providing sustenance for participants. These food-related practices supported relatively rapid travel that could be

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<sup>75</sup> Figure 5-2, however, shows an encounter along the way with participants’ own urban-based food supply. This photo highlights the entanglement of the river and participants’ health, participants’ lives “back home,” and the food sustaining participants’ being-on-trip.

independent from local human and animal populations while not consuming relatively pristine nature.

Sustenance is an area ripe for extending teaching and learning related to place and sustainability. Of course, it is not feasible or necessarily desirable to promote harvesting of local resources by adventure travellers who are unfamiliar with the land and in competition for resource with local inhabitants. In fact, transporting food is a response to a history of starvation and calamity in Arctic exploration and recreational canoe tripping (Jacobson, 2005). Indeed, participants on *Big Sky* resisted such fundamental changes to their activity (see Liz and Robert's narratives on p. 153). Liz, for example, stated that:

Liz: to travel like a canoeists is very different than the way that people who are [hunting and fishing do] ... In terms of the schedule that we're trying to achieve, or the destination and how many kilometres a day we have to go."  
[p. 129, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Discussing fishing as a subsistence skill, Steph, Robert, and James described that:

Steph: It seems to be more of a pass-time. And even our luxury of catching [a fish] and being able to throw it back, I think is a huge – it's afforded us because we have the food that we bring with us.

...

Robert: We didn't ask when we decided to go on a trip like this "do we have those skills?" which are an entirely different set than what we do have as present-day outdoor educators.

James: I think it's a bit of a farce to say that I KNOW the wilderness in a way, because I travel through it in such a little bubble of protection, of safety.

[p. 131, BS 2, July 1 (Day 54): City of Yellowknife, UTM: PK3627 on 85J, 1997]

Carrying food, Steph pointed out, meant that catching and eating fish became a luxury that incurred unnecessary environmental impact, rather than a skill through which the river supported participants' lives and travel. Perhaps it is understandable, then, that participants lacked skill and knowledge related to fishing and did not consider these skills essential for the trip. Indeed, Robert framed subsistence skills as perhaps necessary for past generations, but not to part of the skill sets of "present-day" outdoor educators. James cited a focus on risk

having led to a “bubble of protection and safety,” that he experienced as taking priority over, and isolating him from, lived human-ecological understandings; as he said: “I think it’s a bit of a farce to say that I KNOW the wilderness in a way.” James *knows* the wilderness in terms of safety and hazards, in terms of navigation and paddling, and in terms of social isolation and group dynamics, but he does not know it well through lived ecological relationships for food.

James’ and Roberts’ comments raise broader implications for adventure travel. James’ comment about knowing the wilderness is particularly intriguing in that it highlights that his practices shaped not only his knowledge *of* his surroundings but also *how* he knows them, in multiple ways. Living, participating, and interrelating with his surroundings through food-getting provided James with understandings of himself and his place that were different than those provided when James was passing by as a visitor or spectator. Rather than framing human-environment relations in terms of negative impact, Ingold’s (2000) notion of exchanges of substance helps frame human-environmental relations as valuable two-way processes in which participants and their surroundings come together in multiple layered and entangled ways. Together, Robert’s and James’ comments highlight the interplay among the objectives and structure of a trip, the types of skill that participants are assumed or required to have, and participants’ resulting experience and knowledge of place. Hence, participants’ skill sets and, therefore, environmental interrelationships should respond to the purpose of a trip as well as the nature of the environments through which they travel.

James is correct that his knowledge and skill in the wilds are shaped by contemporary outdoor travel practices, training, and values such as safety. However, his comments also show the need to reflect on why certain practices have emerged in the field, the values these practices reflect, and the limitations they present. According to Turner (2002), the creation of a “bubble” in outdoor recreation is directly related to the adoption, since the 1970s, of technologically dependent Leave No Trace practices and ethics that explicitly characterise travellers as visitors, not inhabitants, in order to justify outdoor recreation as a tool for wilderness preservation. Wilderness preservation has historically focused

on *removing* human ecological relationships from landscapes.<sup>76</sup> Leave No Trace practices serve to reduce, remove, and/or distance exchanges of substance from contemporary travellers' lived ecological relationships in wilderness landscapes and environments.

The outdoor living skills of participants on *Big Sky* reflected and enacted certain values: efficient use of time for travelling, focus on safety, social isolation, and minimizing local evidence of human travel. In terms of relationships with place and environment, dominant outdoor living and travel practices supported a "wilderness experience" of the landscape that supposedly excludes consumption. Consumption at home and on trip, however, is a crucial practice for life through which environmental relations, and therefore issues of sustainability, are lived and enacted. Clearly, there is a tension here between dominant Leave No Trace skills designed to protect wilderness from travellers, and an emerging sustainability paradigm intended to help travellers understand and take responsibility for their social, economic, and ecological entanglements on a wider scale and over the long term. This tension speaks to the need to develop, share, and reflect on outdoor living skills that embrace and enable various lived socio-environmental relationships with places, landscapes, and environments.

The preceding narratives show that outdoor living practices and skills fundamentally shaped participants' situated understanding, experience, and role in environments. At the same time, these skills shaped the role of the environment in the lives of participants and, therefore, altered the meaning and relevance of various environmental constituents for travellers and inhabitants alike. If experiences and learning opportunities such as the one James described about eating moose are a priority, then the structure of a trip needs to change. Even partial engagement of local resources is possible; paddlers could support local inhabitants' hunting, fishing, agricultural, and outfitting practices, for example, by

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<sup>76</sup> Many Indigenous communities, for example, have been relocated and/or their practices curtailed in the name of wilderness protection (Binnema & Niemi, 2006; Guha, 1998; MacLaren, 2007; Sandlos, 2005). Using the example of Banff National Park, Binnema and Niemi showed that his type of exclusion made way not just for an uninhabited wilderness, but for game conservation, sport hunting, and tourists. Leave No Trace can be interpreted as an attempt to keep tourism alive as a driver for conservation and wilderness preservation, but remove the lived local ecological relations within the various tourist activities.

purchasing, trading, and bargaining in support of their expeditions. Supporting a trip in this way—even partially—would build (rather than avoid) local social, economic, and ecological relations. To support a sustainability paradigm, communities of adventure travel practice will need to learn, teach, and use such approaches and skills.

**Knowledge within a community of practice.** I have focused on how route-finding, paddling, and outdoor living skills structured how and whether participants attended to and grew in relation to elements of their surroundings. All of these skills had to be learned. Ingold (2000) discussed education of attention as an explicit process that is part of enskilment involving both a learner and a mentor in an exchange of knowledge about elements of their surroundings. This process occurred during *Big Sky* and is evident in the example Chris gave about Liz helping him to notice elevation changes (see p. 245). Education of attention during *Big Sky* was also more diffuse than a standard leader-follower or mentor-mentee relationship; it was shared among numerous people, mostly within the group of travellers, but also with groups and individuals beyond the *Big Sky* expedition. The range of adventure travel skills or competencies within the group of paddlers allowed the more-experienced members to work with the less-experienced members in their acquisition of certain skills and their education of attention to particular elements of their environment.<sup>77</sup> Participants learned and developed the ability to interpret meaning within their surroundings and anticipate possible consequences of their actions. Dana, a less-experienced expedition member, described an example:

Dana: another example that was poignant was when we were lining later in the day and Chris stopped us all and was like “guys what are we getting ourselves into?” I was totally just: “yeah, oh, let’s get this done!” one last one ‘till were done. If we would have lined up to where we were

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<sup>77</sup> A diversity of skill, expertise, and experience is important within self-supported expeditions because members bring with them different and valued abilities to perceive, judge, and act in their surroundings. This distributed and complementary approach is different from institutional programs that, understandably, tend to centre such skills with guides and (co)leaders. Differences in activity-specific environmental knowledge and meaning based on skill and role in a group suggest that approaches to adventure *education* might benefit from comparative analyses across degrees of specialization in adventure *recreation* (Bryan, 1977; Dyck, Schneider, Thompson, Virden, 2003; McFarlane, 2004; Oh & Ditton, 2006).

headed, we would have been stuck. I thought: “oh, okay, yeah, be more aware of what’s happening and what’s around me.”

[p. 202, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

Dana’s narrative highlights an instance in which Chris drew the groups’ attention to an obstructed view and the need to look further for features in the landscape that would prevent lining the canoes. The importance of paying attention to the surroundings in this way arose from the activity (as a cluster of skills with particular equipment) being travel-oriented. Attention would be different if, for example, participants were “staying and playing” at one rapid or wave in the river. The activity and intention framed the meaning of the landscape and shaped the way in which participants had to attend to their surroundings. As a result, Dana widened her perception and tried to ensure that her actions not only accomplished the details of a task at hand, such as guiding the boat around a rock, but that the performance and order of such tasks responded to the features in the upcoming landscape. The preceding narrative provides an example of one group member, Chris, calling the collective attention of the group to a particular aspect of the landscape. The following narrative provides an example of one group member, Dana, learning by watching the group collectively interpreting their surroundings. Dana reflected on her education of attention in river reading:

Dana: ...When I’m watching you guys decide whether you want to line something, or whether we’re running it, or are we going to portage...it might seem like I’m outside of the process, but I’m just watching, and now I can see when I look at a rapid: “oh okay do I think it’s linable? Well yeah, there’s that big huge rock there, but I wonder if I could squeeze the boat in there and, well, the current’s going that way, and it seems really strong at that point.” So now I sort of have those skills too, to be able to read it somewhat. At the start of the trip I would have never been able to tell you what would be linable and what wouldn’t, and which way you want the nose of the boat to point around which rocks.

[p. 202, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

The shift in Dana’s attention towards negotiating a set of rapids required her to distinguish and find meaning in the elements of the rapids (rocks, eddies, swifts) so that she could make travel decisions relative to her own skill level. She did this by working with and learning from the more experienced participants. Crucially,

Dana was motivated to learn how to read the river and line her canoe, and not to simply follow directions. Moreover, the other members of the group encouraged her involvement in river reading and decision-making. While Dana described being apart from the group, group members had worked with Dana to point out significant features to which she needed to pay attention, which also became apparent through her experiences performing the skill. Dana learned by watching other paddlers interpret the river and execute the skills, and then practicing these skills with their guidance. In this narrative Dana situated herself within an ongoing learning process that occurred along the way during *Big Sky*.

Education of attention also occurred among more-experienced participants and within a community of paddlers encountered along numerous trips. Liz, for example, reported learning about how to travel in the barren lands through discussions with people she had met on previous expeditions. Her narrative actually engaged the group in an education of attention:

Liz: So last summer we met these German guys and between them they had ...thirteen four-month trips in that area so they had a wealth of information... that they shared....

I just wrote some specifics:... generally you have three weeks of really hot weather in July - so for us that would have been the first week in Yellowknife and then the two weeks out here that were really stinking hot. Um, then it starts to get less predictable, sometimes more weather like we're having now and during this time people start to travel on the big lakes when its calm at night...not so much portaging, but paddling the big lakes. The bugs come out in mid June and they are bad for about three weeks to a month. The black flies come out earlier...

Most of my knowledge right now comes from careful observation...

[pp. 194-195, BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

This narrative shows a chain of exchanges of knowledge along multiple trips taken by Liz and others. Liz learned from the Germans, whom she trusted because of their reported level of experience within the same activity and environment.<sup>78</sup>

Combining this knowledge with her own experience and “careful observation,”

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<sup>78</sup> The issue of trust of this type knowledge is crucial. Evaluating the validity of such claims can be difficult. Information gained through such an exchange of knowledge can be evaluated through practical application until the participant either dismisses its usefulness or comes to trust it as “tried and true.” Alternatively, information can be corroborated through discussion with other people, trippers, and non-trippers who have extensive experience inhabiting or travelling through an area.

Liz drew other participants' attention to features within their shared environment that were pertinent for canoe tripping: wind, the surface conditions on big lakes, the presence of mosquitoes and black flies, and daylight hours. Liz suggested ways of negotiating or using these environmental features for safe or more effective travel. A community of practice accumulated and shared this knowledge through experiences with a particular activity and environment over time. Attentive practice, education of attention, and exchange of knowledge added to and shared this body of knowledge through continued practice in situ.

The narratives by Liz, Dana, and Chris, among others, display a type of local knowledge that is pragmatic to, gathered by, and shared among a canoe tripping community. This knowledge was rooted in landscapes and environments, but was not necessarily specific to places; it was specific to the activity of canoe travel. Participants on *Big Sky* expressed, shared, and developed what Ingold (2000) has described as a sentient ecology related to life and travel on the lakes and rivers. As seen in the examples related to route finding and sustenance, the skills and practices that structured life on the river gave rise to and limited participants' sentient ecology.

### **Discussion**

The central question addressed in this paper was “*how might the practice of outdoor skills shape environmental perception of participants through an ‘education of attention’?*” Consistent with Ingold's (2000) description of the process, education of attention during *Big Sky* did occur between individuals travelling together along the canoe route. In the context of *Big Sky*—a recreational expedition among peers—education of attention was also distributed amongst and beyond the group. Travel, as an inherent purpose or concern of canoe tripping, also guided participants' attention.

While travelling, participants attended to their equipment and salient parts of their surroundings (the current, rapids, and the sight lines) as ready-to-hand. Participants found their way through their surroundings using maps and wayfaring skills that gave meaning to various environmental features (landforms) and flows (the river current). Ingold (2007b) drew a distinction between routes and paths,

equating them with transport and wayfaring.<sup>79</sup> Canoe travel, however, shows a blend of these modalities. A canoe route is at once a path of others, planned as a route for transport, and navigated from point to point, but it is also negotiated as a wayfarer out in the open, attentive and subject to the ever-changing surroundings. Moreover, participants used navigation strategically to develop wayfaring skills. Chris used this strategy in learning to see elevation changes, and Liz proposed the same in order to experiment with travelling without using maps.

When paddling skills were performed well, and in coordination with others, participants felt engaged in place and enjoyed their performance within a shared system of relations. Skills and equipment became a focus of attention, present-at-hand, when environmental conditions were overly demanding for participants or an individual's performance was not coordinated with other group members'. The process of learning and practicing route finding as well paddling skills shaped participants' bodies and perceptual abilities as they adapted to their activity and environment. The paddlers came to inhabit their surroundings and develop a sentient ecology.

Water consumption further entangled participants in their surroundings. Paddlers attended to their own physical health within a hydrological meshwork in which drinking water had ambivalent meaning: It was a source of life but also a health concern for participants. Water treatment, when performed blindly, masked issues of water quality, but for the most part water treatment opened opportunities for participants to engage issues of water quality and recognize the limits of their equipment. Participants' food getting practices largely limited this form of integrating with and knowing their immediate surroundings. Through interactions with local inhabitants, select opportunities arose for participants to glimpse the possibility and power of local ecological relationships through food. Through route finding, paddling, and outdoor living skills, participants were instruments of

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<sup>79</sup> Ingold (2007b) described that "this distinction between trail-following or wayfaring and pre-planned navigation is of critical significance. In brief, the navigator has before him a complete representation of the territory, in the form of a cartographic map, upon which he can plot a course even before setting out. The journey is then no more than an explication of the plot. In wayfaring, by contrast, one follows a path that one has previously travelled in the company of others, or in their footsteps, reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along. Only upon reaching his destination, in this case, can the traveller truly be said to have found his way" (pp. 15-16).

perception, attention, and action within their surroundings; moreover, they worked as a group to do this. The practices and skills through which participants engaged and understood their surroundings were taught and shared within and among groups of paddlers.

Learning to live and travel outdoors involved the environment not simply as a background context for transport or group development that distracted from nature. The environment was an active object and agent of learning and engagement. Participant's engagement of their environment was more than simply a binary process of "paying attention" to the landscape that was either happening or not. Participants *lived* and *became* in relation to life on the river. The degree and duration to which this occurred was both facilitated and limited by their chosen practices. The dwelling perspective suggests that environmental engagement during canoe tripping is an ongoing process shaped by the skills and practices through which participants interact with a web of social, ecological, and economic relations extending through various environments and landscapes. The development of canoe tripping skills shaped how participants engaged, understood, and grew in relation to various socio-environmental elements, processes, and conditions.

Two fundamental implications arise that are related to each of Heidegger's (1927/1962) attitudes of attention. First, travellers can build and grow through lived relationships to landscapes and environments ready-to-hand through the practice and development of technical skills. Secondly, travellers, practitioners, and scholars can critically examine the socio-ecological relationships embedded in certain skills and equipment, as present-to-hand. Scholars, practitioners, and participants can combine lived practice and critical reflection into a form of praxis dedicated to developing sustainable sentient ecologies that could be tailored to particular destinations, program objectives, or environmental conditions. Developing customized styles of practice could provide unique experiences, insights, and impacts on local socio-ecological realities.

**The complexity of relations lived through technical skill.** Human-environment interactions are complex. Learning to travel and live on the river

*required* interaction with specific environmental flows (wind and water), features (rapids), and constituents (wildlife and humans). Wattchow (2007, 2008) found that senses of place changed with paddlers' skill levels in relation to the demands of sections of a river. Constituent technical skills within an activity can also play a role in shaping and responding to senses of place that differ with participants' levels of experience. Map use, for example, provided comfort in bewildering surroundings for novice participants and shaped the practice of wayfaring skills for more-experienced participants. Most importantly, skilled activities provided a context in which elements of the surroundings became relevant and meaningful to participants. Learning to read a rapid provides an example of how a participant's nascent sentient ecology developed into an intuitive understanding through skill, experience, and mentorship. Interpreted from Ingold's dwelling perspective, an activity is more than a way to occupy and witness a landscape; the activity enables and structures involvement in landscapes.

Higgins (2009) suggested outdoor experiential educators engage larger-scale issues and contexts in order to begin tackling sustainability; skilled practices can help move in this direction. Through participants' exchanges of substance, such as food and water, various landscapes and environments, near and far, contributed "to the very substance of their being" (Ingold, 2000, p. 144). These exchanges shaped participants and the landscapes and environments engaged. *Desverance* (Heidegger, 1927/1962) was seen in participants' use of maps and their transport of food; both practices brought geographically distant objects and relations close into the experience of participants, while allowing things in the immediate vicinity to remain experientially and ecologically distant. The experience of participants on *Big Sky* suggests that this process influences the intimacy with which a paddler experiences but also impacts his or her surroundings. A tension between intimate understanding and ecological impact exists in outdoor adventure travel and deserves further research.

Notions of ethical practice become complicated when placed in contexts that extend beyond participants' immediate surroundings. Adhering to a "pack-it-in, pack-it-out" rule, for example, preserves certain aesthetic and ecological

qualities of the destination landscape and may be necessary in high-use areas or fragile ecosystems. However, Ryan (2002) argued that, applied broadly, the ideology of leaving no trace is incompatible with sustainability and human belonging in the more-than-human world.<sup>80</sup> The dwelling perspective raises the possibility that relying on exchanges of substances and equipment brought from elsewhere shapes and may reduce participants' understanding and growth in relation to the landscapes through which they travel.

Re-thinking exchanges of substance from a position of belonging along a path of becoming (rather than as a negative environmental impact) opens an additional realm through which participants engage, learn from, and be-in their surroundings.<sup>81</sup> Conceptualizing travel as a path of becoming means explicitly recognizing that environmental elements actively contribute directly to program outcomes. There is value, therefore, in developing alternative skill sets, engaging local socio-economic networks, learning so-called traditional outdoor living skills, and collaborating with people who are knowledgeable about the health of local ecosystems and resource use, as seen in the example of pollution and water treatment. On a broad scale, learning to use local resources carefully is consistent with teaching and achieving sustainability.

The dwelling perspective also provides nuance to popular notions of outdoor adventure activities as being “human-powered.” Energy was exchanged between the river, wind, and participants using canoes, paddles, and ropes. Participants relied heavily on the current of the river to assist their travel. Terms such as “human-powered” fail to recognize the influence of the river and wind. Travel by canoe, from the dwelling perspective, is a negotiation of waterways and winds through skilled paddling, wayfaring, and navigation practices that physically shape travellers. This negotiation also shapes a pattern movement through and engagement with landscapes and communities. Few recreational

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<sup>80</sup> Ryan (2002, 2008) has argued that notions of minimum impact and Leave No Trace apply a negative value judgement on human-induced environmental change that is based on Western ideals of wilderness, but is couched in out-dated and problematic ecological theory and terminology, which is then used to discipline the behaviour of outdoor travellers.

<sup>81</sup> Exchanges of substance “go both ways” in that humans draw on their surroundings, for food, fire wood, and water, for example; but travelers are also impacted by their surroundings in positive and negative ways that influence their health and travel.

paddlers, for example, choose to paddle against the current. This pattern has economic implications for a town like Kugluktuk, situated at the mouth of the Coppermine River. Kugluktuk serves as a take-out for river trippers who require air transport, but probably not canoe rentals or provisions. Thus, environmental flows and processes again situate paddling experiences and their associated socio-economic impacts.

“Interpersonal” and “technical” skills intersect and overlap. The dwelling perspective shows that skills crosscut social and physical realms that underlie problematic “hard” and “soft” typologies and are incongruous with participants’ lived experience of adventure travel, according to Seaman and Coppens (2006). The acquisition and practice of a skill such as tandem paddling, for example, occur within and influences a context that is at once physical and social. Three interconnections among the interpersonal and technical realms emerged: First, that performance of technical skills influenced participants’ senses of belonging to place and the group; secondly, that technical and interpersonal efforts combined in efforts to coordinate group performance; and thirdly, that technical skills were cultivated through mentorship in a community of practice.

Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective provides scholars and practitioners of outdoor adventure travel and education with specific constituent concepts that position skill as central to theories and outcomes related to human-environment relations. These concepts include education of attention, exchanges of substance and knowledge, lines or paths of becoming, and the development of sentient ecologies (Ingold, 2000, 2007b, 2008). Ingold’s notion of skill provides a way to understand travellers as belonging within their environment while influencing and being influenced by their surroundings in multiple and subtle ways. Many scholars have called for such an approach in their critiques of wilderness and desires for sustainability (Beringer, 2004; P. Martin, 2004; Nicol, 2002a; Nicol & Higgins, 2008; O’Connell et al., 2005; Payne & Wattachow, 2009; Williams & Soutar, 2005). The dwelling perspective enables a pragmatic approach to human-environment relationships that embraces and contends with mutual growth and becoming. Short-term programmatic outcomes need also to be understood within

broader processes of enskilment and becoming. For example, map use may provide entry into an activity, but an over-reliance on maps may limit the future development of a participant's wayfaring skills and attention to the dynamics of an environment.

Tripping practices opened up meaning in the surroundings for participants, and placed travellers and their chosen activities in larger social, ecological, economic contexts and issues. Educators can use these connections explicitly to address issues of sustainability in ways that participants can experience deeply. Clearly, exchanges of substance and skill development shaped participants' engagement with place and sustainability during canoe tripping experiences. Insofar as participants engage flows and substances to live and travel outdoors, they enact their routes as paths of becoming, trails along which they grow entangled with various landscapes (Ingold, 2008). The degree to which practitioners and participants acknowledge these entanglements and pursue sustainability and place-connections remains questionable, politically entangled with issues of social justice, and requiring of further research.

The findings suggest that adventure activities are complex with multiple threads of engagement that result in heterogeneous experiences of place that change with participants' skill level and experience. Mentorship and education of attention provided ways of coping with differences in skill by building and sharing activity-specific socio-environmental understandings "through practical, 'hands on' experience" (Ingold, 2000, p. 291). Skilled activity, rather than simply distracting from environmental learning, provided a context in which elements of the surroundings became meaningful for participants through mentorship in the development of their sentient ecology.

**Selecting among and developing skills.** In Robert's narrative about fishing he observed that the group never questioned *which* skills were needed to engage their surroundings. To a large extent, the same can be said of the theory and practice of adventure travel and education, in which technical skill, according to Baker (2005), Nicol (2002a), Seaman and Coppens (2006) and Thomas (2005), is presented as neutral for participants, monolithic for instructors, antagonistic to

environmental education, and used primarily for personal and social outcomes. As a result, many authors have suggested de-skilling outdoor education to re-focus on nature (Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Payne, 2002).

Ingold (2000) provides a theoretical basis for valuing and understanding skill as central to participants' lived relationships with places and surroundings. Skilled practices open opportunities for travellers to engage and live with the realities of environments and landscape. Sustainability and place-responsiveness can be accomplished by re-skilling rather than de-skilling. Doing so requires concerted efforts by communities of practice, outdoor leaders, and tripping programs to value these connections and make them clear. Evaluating outdoor living and travel practices in terms of embedded exchanges of substance, attention, and holistic understanding of an environment adds complexity and nuance to factors such as trip duration and distance that are thought to influence recreation outcomes, environmental knowledge, and place connection (Hammitt, Backlund, & Bixler, 2006; Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2007). Ingold provides a pedagogical approach to educating attention and engaging surroundings through skilled performance that enables informed choices about the socio-ecological relationships cultivated, normalized, and lived through the practice and development of a skill set.

Close examination of the ways in which skills shape participants' growth, attention, and being in relation to their surroundings provides opportunities to adapt and select among skills, given the values of participants and the purposes of outdoor programs. For example, Lewis (2000) found that rock climbers in the United Kingdom physically came to embody their relationship with vertical rock and used particular styles and ethics to preserve a desired relationship with the rock face. Canoeing can also be practiced and taught in various ways that establish and reveal different relationships among participants and their surroundings, and which reflect diverse values, ecological conditions, and communities of practice. The experience of participants on *Big Sky* suggest that skills, practices, and equipment play a crucial role in fostering environmental

relationships and that these practices and relationships are cultivated, normalized, shared, and challenged within and between communities of practice.<sup>82</sup>

Practitioners and participants within a canoe tripping community can evaluate, use, and develop outdoor travel and living skills that contribute to intimate ways of being that strive for sustainability and/or meaningfully engage social, economic, and ecological realities of landscapes, environments, and places implicated in their trips. The selection of specific skills depends on local circumstances and program objectives. A purposeful use of skill requires careful evaluation of the congruence among (a) intended experiences and outcomes for participants in relation to their environment, (b) the practices, tools, and technologies used to reach outcomes, and (c) how practices and settings relate to broad socio-environmental issues and contexts. Engaging local realities also raises the possibility of collaborating with other communities of practice, such as hunters and guides within a region, in order to learn, benefit from, and/or value diverse skills and different ways of being in relation to the land. These partnerships can be brought together in support a canoe trip, experiences of place, and other peoples' livelihoods. The following questions emerged during analysis of the data; they can guide the development and selection of skills, as well as provide directions for research:

1. Where does this skill direct participants' attention and how does attention shift with skill development?
2. What parts of the landscape become meaningful within the practice?
3. What alternative source(s) of information and meaning (e.g. for route finding) exist in the landscape?
4. What social and physical settings are best suited to cultivating and mentoring skills?

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<sup>82</sup> See also Ryan (2002) on the discursive field within outdoor recreation concerning the use of technology as both the cause of wilderness destruction and a method of leaving no trace. See MacEachren (2004) on notions and uses of craftsmanship as ways of engaging and coming to know one's surroundings.

5. Do the skills or practices carry pre-existing socio-cultural meanings related, for example, to gender, romantic nature, or anti-modernism that make the lived-experience more complex and require facilitation?
6. Which socio-environmental attributes, realities, histories, and/or knowledge are engaged, shared, ignored, brought close, or distanced? How does this occur?
7. Does the practice involve exchanges of substance and knowledge?
  - a. What ecological knowledge and understanding is imbedded?
  - b. What social, economic, and ecological impacts are incurred?
  - c. Where are these impacts incurred, who do they influence, and how?
  - d. How is participant growth related to local resources and economies?
8. Does instruction cultivate knowledge about local and/or distant landscapes, environments, and socio-ecological issues?
9. Does the skill enable the environment to influence travel and life during the activity?
10. Does skill instruction support ongoing involvement in the activity?

As a caveat, evaluations of participants' attention to meaningful surroundings and use of particular skills should not be equated with, or confined to, expressions of particular qualities of primitivism or a wilderness experience. Fox (2000) has described that such qualities are valued, normalized, and privileged within dominant traditions of nature-based recreation.<sup>83</sup> Wattachow (2007, 2008) has shown that such universalized and culturally expected notions are problematic for place-responsiveness because they shape expectations and become central to participants' recollections. To explore and improve

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<sup>83</sup> Borrie and Roggenbuck (1996), for example, drew on the uniquely American writings of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir and Aldo Leopold for inspiration. Borrie and Roggenbuck emphasized humility, oneness, primitivism, timelessness, solitude, and care as "profound insights that are intrinsic to the wilderness experience" (p. 42). They argued that "while we must ensure safety in our activities, we should consider shifting our students' attention away from the activity itself, such as learning technical rock climbing skills, onto feelings of harmony, humility, and relationship with the natural environment" (p. 42). Feelings that are promoted in relation to wilderness are almost always framed as positive.

sustainability in outdoor recreation and education, participants must engage with and recognize serious issues such as pollution, forced eviction, and diverse histories that are present in landscapes.

Finding ways to negotiate life and travel as a participant in one's environment implies sustainability and, so, has ethical, political, and ecological implications. Showing the way is a matter of mentorship, leadership, and guidance from people inside and outside a community of practice. Outdoor leaders, educators, and participants in a community of practice share, normalize, and resist outdoor travel and living practices. Ryan (2008) showed how outdoor recreation has normalized and enforced out-dated understandings and practices related to ecology; McDermott (2004) and Newbery (2003) showed how gendered canoe tripping practices have been normalized and resisted.

Rather than framing the landscape as present-at-hand, as an “inanimate background object against which we as subjects can act as separate beings” (Brook, 2005, p. 36), Brook argued for accepting that “the reality of our situation is being envired, being engaged in an embrace, not as an optional extra—a lifestyle choice—but just how it is” (p. 361). Taking a relational approach to self, place, and sustainability allows researchers, practitioners, and participants to examine and question lived encounters between self and environment as distinct from, but possibly influenced by, desires for romantic or metaphorical connections to nature. Identifying drivers for the adoption of particular practices requires further research but participants on *Big Sky* noted desires for romantic wilderness experiences, technological innovation, safety, legal liability, and institutional traditions.

Being able to recognize the positions of participants within ideological histories (such as wilderness preservation), processes of enskilment, and communities of practice is crucial to understanding and mentoring place relationships, and to tailoring skill development directed towards sustainability. Positioned within the context of ongoing enskilment, environmental understanding through practice involves multiple sensual ways of attending and is cultivated and embodied over the long-term. This positioning is not to discredit

individual trips, programs, or events as significant life experiences. Rather, such positioning places individual trips and experiences as significant (or mundane) within the broader contexts of participants' lives, the evolution and sharing of skills and understandings within and between generations of practitioners and communities of practice. The development of a sentient ecology over time presents an additional mode through which participants engage with and find meaning in landscapes and environments.

### **Summary**

Ingold (2000, 2008) has provided a genuinely lived-with and positive approach to human-environment relations that places skilled action as central to knowing and relating with dynamic surroundings that can inform outdoor recreation research and experiential pedagogies concerned with place and sustainability. Education of attention (Gibson, 1986; Ingold, 2000; Reed, 1988), exchanges of substance and knowledge (Ingold, 2000), and the development of a sentient ecology (Anderson, 2000; Ingold, 2000) were brought together and used to show limits and opportunities to integrate environmental learning with skill development through embodied knowledge. Given calls for "lived-with" approaches to the human-environment relationship in outdoor recreation research and practice (Beringer, 2004; Hull, 2000; Nicol & Higgins, 2008), this paper dealt with sustainability, rather than wilderness preservation, as the significant context for environmental learning and ethics in outdoor adventure travel and education (O'Connell et al., 2005). Importantly, this theoretical approach re-frames the debate regarding skill and socio-environmental relationships in adventure travel. Showing that skills and practices embed particular environmental relations moves the debate away from a false dichotomy in which practitioners must choose between technical skill development and attention to nature.

*Big Sky* was a unique, useful, and limited case in a number of ways. Chiefly, the research was embedded throughout a highly involved and self-supported recreational expedition, rather than occurring pre-, post-, and/or intermittently around an institutionalized program. In addition, rather than participants having relatively-similar skill, experience, and role in the group,

members of *Big Sky* ranged in skill level from novice to experienced outdoor travellers and educators, and brought complimentary skills to the expedition. Moreover, all participants were conversant in recreation and leisure theory, and highly self-reflexive and critical. The duration and difficulty of the trip moved participants beyond romantic interpretations of nature and canoe travel, emphasized the realities of life on the river, and provided unique opportunities to engage and reflect on environmental relationships across different landscapes.

As the findings show, adventure travel out in the open altered participants and their environments. The ways in which participants practiced canoe tripping structured and expressed their lived social, economic, and ecological relationships and knowledge. Approaching sustainability and connections to place through skill and activity provides researchers, practitioners, and educators with rich opportunities to understand how these phenomena are lived by participants through outdoor recreation. Conversely, research in outdoor adventure recreation and education concerned with environmental and place-based knowledge should clearly contextualize findings in terms of participants' skill, expertise, and role in the group.

The study suggests four significant implications that warrant and require further research. First, skilled adventure activity involves acquisition, expression, and sharing of environmental knowledge through participants' performance and education of attention. Secondly, in a recreational context this process is dispersed among group members depending on the variety of skills and experiences. Thirdly, re-conceptualizing skills and environmental learning in this way highlights opportunities for participants to connect with place and pursue sustainability. Finally, outdoor skills and practices, as ways of being in relation to the surroundings, have ethical and political implications in terms of the socio-environmental relationships they enact.

During a trip, participants can attend to the environment as present-at-hand or ready-to-hand: The environment can be some thing(s) that participants learn about, and/or it can be the context, flows, and things in and with which someone lives, learns, and becomes. My concern with de-skilling outdoor

education in order to focus on nature is that such a notion appears to presume that participants ought to attend to “the environment” as an object present-at-hand. Outdoor travellers cannot fully live with their surroundings by attending to them only as present-at-hand because doing so contributes to the ontological distance that proponents of de-skilling seek to overcome: namely, the separation of human being from that of the environment. Nicol and Higgins (2008) argued that objective study of the environment externalizes it as “‘out there’ and not ‘part of us” (p. 236), and will therefore not lead a person to act sustainably. Outdoor recreation scholars and practitioners seeking a lived-with approach to human-environment relations must, therefore, be willing to value and explore their environment as ready-to-hand; this is a precondition, not preclusion, to engaging the environment as an objective study. Moreover, such lived relationships with diverse landscapes are distinct ways in which outdoor adventure travel, recreation, and education contribute to environmental education (Nicol & Higgins, 2008).

Crucially, the theoretical assumption that meaningful environmental relationships result simply by “being outside,” occupying the environment, is limiting. An ecology of skill moves to explore the complexity, limits, fullness, and potential of particular socio-environmental relations lived through outdoor adventure travel. Skills provide valuable *ways* of being-in and understanding certain parts of the environment; they shape *how* and *to what* a person interrelates. Scholars and practitioners need to ask in what ways participants meaningfully experience themselves as part of their environment and their environment as part of them. Many people who travel by canoe for recreation and/or education do, I believe, deeply recognise, value, and embrace the particular lived relationship of being-on-trip, even if it is not well-represented in the scholarship and theory of the field.

Recreational canoe travel, being-on-trip, emerges from this analysis as a skilled creative process, a dance with environmental constituents and inhabitants out in the open, all participating in the ongoing life of the land and environment. Skills and practices allow participants to engage, negotiate, and contribute to life out in the open. Just as paddlers participate in the environment, canoe travel is a

way of allowing the environment to participate in the lives of paddlers in particular ways. Participants adapt to the land, as it adapts and changes in response. Sometimes the environment and landscape can be too much, the dance uncoordinated, or the participants' responsive skill and ability inadequate, resulting in discomfort, risk, or danger. Nevertheless, some adventure travel participants become deeply familiar with their surroundings through their dance, which is unique to each activity-in-environment and is an expression of self. The critical question of sustainability on a broader scale becomes in what ways individuals and communities contribute to life, and for how long can they participate in the dance.

### **Conclusion: Examining the Connective Tissue**

I took up this research project because I was dissatisfied with the ability of risk and wilderness-based theories of adventure travel to address contemporary socio-environmental issues (Cronon, 1996; Haluza-DeLay, 1999). Moreover, I was troubled with suggestions that technical or “hard” adventure travel is non-environmental and not concerned with place (Payne, 2002; Weber, 2001). The original question of this research project asked how practicing an outdoor activity influenced the meaning of landscapes and environments through which a participant travelled. Adventure travel literature has predominantly addressed skill through typologies and in the context of leadership abilities (Priest & Gass, 2005). I focused on skill as informing an ecological approach to adventure travel within a sustainability paradigm that is emerging in response to the socio-environmental challenge facing the field. I have tried to show, through example, the research potential and pedagogical importance of attending closely to the detail, complexity, and performance of adventure travel. As is the intention of exploratory research, this project raised numerous questions and possibilities for research as well as some of the initial assumptions and limitations of this project, which demand attention in the future.

The meaning of landscapes were shaped by participants’ intended experiences, the overall pattern and structure of the trip, and the webs of relation established through skilled practices that contributed to place making and personal growth along the journey. Intended experiences reflected and resisted educational discourses, popular media, national myths, and dominant narratives within communities of practice. The archi-texture of our activity established and mobilized resources that enable particular experience and in so doing structured participants’ engagement with the social, economic, and ecological realities of particular regions. Skilled practices positioned participants in webs of relations that contributed to and were shaped by participants’ growth and becoming along the route. The pursuit of sustainability and of a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel suggests that practitioners acknowledge and possibly adapt the intentions, structures, and practices of their trips.

In the theoretical approach I described skill, based on Ingold (2000, 2008), as an intentional ability to create and/or maintain a product, experience, or relationship that is imagined in advance but only realized through embodied perception and action involving the whole organic being(s) within a web of particular relations extending throughout and shaping an active environment that includes other beings. I suggested that tools, technologies, and equipment could shape skilled performance, which was cultivated through training and experience in situ and with direct guidance from others and indirect guidance through stories of various types. Furthermore, enskilment resulted in familiarity with salient elements of the environment but not necessarily awareness of all the relations contributing to and affected by practice. Finally, skilled performance was powerful: Skill was a form of self-expression but it also acted upon various beings, their surroundings, and their ways of dwelling.

By way of conclusion I revisit elements of this description of skill and highlight what they suggests about canoe tripping as fostering meaningful relations with surroundings in the context of sustainability. In doing so, I touch on various threads that have emerged as a connective tissue running through this dissertation. Threads of travel, place making, self-becoming, and learning interconnect through the central cord of skilled performance in an active environment. Moreover, the threads suggest critiques, limits, and promising possibilities for theory, research, and practice of adventure travel. In the tradition of architecture—of taking pause in dwelling to imaging how to build—I conclude by offering an image, suggestion, or reinterpretation of adventure travel from an ecological approach centred on sustainability.

### **Intentions of Travel**

I described skill as an intentional ability of an individual or group to create something imagined in advance. Participants' intended or imagined experience shaped the meaning they found in the surroundings. Whether individualistic challenges of wilderness or learning about sustainability and human-environment relations, participants' experiences were shaped by stories and myths (such as the

glorification of European exploration, the ills of urban life) that inspired and helped to make sense of participation in the activity.

The explicit intentions or “outcomes” for participants on *Big Sky* were two-fold: to complete their chosen route and to use the trip as an opportunity to explore alternatives to the wilderness paradigm. Over the trip and through analysis it became clear that a more fundamental intent of participating in canoe tripping, at least for the more experienced paddlers, was to inhabit or dwell in a particular way: *being-on-trip* emerged through and existed in participants’ practice. Within participants’ tradition of practice, being-on-trip meant being present in the here and now, socially isolated, focused on group cooperation and conflict, physically engaged with and responsive to environmental rhythms, self-supported and ecologically benign, and attentive to an established itinerary. Participants had learned to be-on-trip; the physicality of working together and being in relation to particular elements was rewarding for them, it was distinct from their being-in-the-city, and it was expressive and supportive of an imagined wilderness experience. As evidenced by participants’ reluctance to visit towns, travel through rural areas, and use the satellite phone, participants’ intended emergent experience of being-on-trip conflicted with the group’s explicit intentions of their chosen route and search for alternatives to the wilderness approach. The archetypal canoe trip, for these participants, provided an experience of being-in-wilderness and thus it meaningfully excluded towns, rural areas, industrial activity, consumption, and other people.

If canoe tripping is intended to explore sustainability as a way of being (at home, on trip, or in society) then places, activities, tools, and communities become relevant and meaningful as sites of human-environment interaction and need to be coherently incorporated into participant experiences. Despite explicitly acknowledging the need to address sustainability and move beyond a wilderness approach, participants on *Big Sky* had limited access to stories, myths, and imagined experiences to support and make sense of canoe tripping and their surroundings in any other way, or as relevant to sustainability.

The introduction of Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective through the commonplace journey provided concepts and language that were essential to enabling participants to begin reconceptualising their practice, experience, and surroundings. Doing so was crucial to elucidating a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel. The commonplace journey provided a way to interrupt, interrogate, and reintegrate participants' practices and coherence systems (Linde, 1993). Careful examination of participants' practices in relation to their narratives about those practices brought forth congruities and incongruities that suggest changes to both theory and practice. The importance of embodied knowledge, senses of movement, and skilled performance in adventure travel suggest the value of research designs and methods that include field-based observation. In particular, observation as a participant provided a way for me to understand the lived experience of adventure travel as well as the meanings of language and narratives that participants used to describe their experiences. The commonplace journey allowed participants and me to examine and compare what we did to produce an expedition, how we described the expedition, and how we might reinterpret our activities.

The Western nature-culture dichotomy provided an organizing principle for theories, stories, and ethics that enabled participants to imagine being-on-trip as experiencing wilderness. Conversely, imagining being-on-trip as exploring sustainability demands theories, stories, and ethics that examine how and to what affect participants and those around them enact socio-ecological interrelations. In practice, learning to be-on-trip in a sustainability paradigm may, for example, mean questioning the glorification of European exploration while including stories of stewardship and/or political action. It may mean understanding human involvement in creating and maintaining "pristine" wilderness while also valuing landscapes obviously worked by humans. It may mean encouraging participants to interact with and understand how their environment supports and shapes their lives and journeys, and is limited in its capacity to do so. In addition, a sustainability paradigm likely means participants will need to learn to enact

journeys and share stories of human-environment interaction rather than—or perhaps related to—risk, challenge, and wilderness.

### **Structuring Embodied Perception and Action**

The intended outcomes of skilled practice (which include ephemeral emergent experiences such as being-on-trip) were realized through performance of embodied capabilities of perception and action. Participants enacted being-on-trip as a wilderness experience by using normalized practices of planning, travel, and social interaction that enabled them to find, experience, and reinforce regions of pristine nature as supposedly isolated and distinct from their own and others' personal as well as societal ecologies. Participants were taught outdoor living and travel skills and they adopted equipment to suit and support travel through landscapes and environments that they understood and engaged with as wilderness.

Despite participants' resistance to transience as fostering environmental knowledge, senses of movement were experientially and biographically significant for participants. Through skilled travel out in the open, participants attended and responded to certain features and flows within and among landscapes, places, and environments. Doing so, travellers became intuitively familiar, attuned, and adapted to particular patterns of movement facilitated by their chosen activity in association with wind, water, and trails of regions and ecozones. Far from ignoring place, participants on *Big Sky* experienced canoe tripping as a rewarding, if at times challenging, way of relating with environments and landscapes.

Because sustainability is a way of *being*, and archi-textures and skilled practices shape how participant *are* in relation to their surroundings; the actual structure of trips as well as the learning and performance of specific skills needs to be adapted to make adventure travel congruent with learning about and acting for sustainability. The nature and extent of participants' understanding and involvement in landscapes appears to depend, in part, on the patterns of practice as well as the specific skills, tools, and technologies they use. A need exists for further analysis and critique of the ways in which practices (such as pre-

packaging all of the group's food at home) and equipment (such as satellite phones and canoes) shape how participants attend to and interact with their surroundings, and whether the interactions and the outcomes are consistent with personal or programmatic intentions and ethics. I have suggested the archetypal wilderness trip is problematic for sustainability because it creates the impression of bounded and separate spaces of "society" and "wilderness" and positions the participant as an ecological outsider in both spaces. The wilderness approach has uses and value, but should not be normalized or accepted as the only way of doing adventure travel. Multiple archi-textures enable travellers to position themselves in ways consistent with their intentions, ethics, and desired experiences of being-on-trip. Moreover, many authors have called for adventure travel to be responsive to contemporary socio-environmental concerns (Beringer, 2004; Higgins, 2009; Nicol & Higgins, 2008; O'Connell et al. 2005).

Participant-environment interactions and understandings were structured within broad travel patterns and enacted through specific skilled practices. Participants on *Big Sky* challenged dominant archi-textures by starting their route close to home, travelling through diverse landscape types, and by visiting towns and people along the way. Altered travel patterns and practices exposed participants to diverse landscapes, ways of life, and socio-ecological issues that began to become familiar. Visiting towns and people highlighted how the group's "self contained" approach to travel enabled a particular style of travel that did not need to rely on local resources, settlements, and communities, and which freed participants from engaging in such relationships. The archetypal wilderness approach to tripping actually and rhetorically marginalized towns and settlements.

### **Enacting Webs of Relations**

Based on Ingold (2000), I described skill as being cultivated within particular webs of relations. Rather than connecting with nature or "the environment" as a unitary realm, the specificity of skilled practice establishes crucial links between embodied knowledge and specific issues of sustainability by placing participants within an intimate web of relations to threads, flows, and landscape features. The specificity of person-setting interactions through skilled

performance in a recreational activity (like canoeing, mountaineering, or sailing) suggests that travel practices shape opportunities for environmental learning. Participants on *Big Sky*, for example, began to understand that the wellbeing of the rivers and regions they travelled and the inhabitants they encountered interconnected with the paddlers' own homes, lifestyles, and wellbeing along the flows of air and water, through land management policy, and resource extraction practices, for example.

While embodied environmental knowledge and impact through any one skill are limited, these limits present opportunities to participate in specific relationships and the possibility to further develop or diversify skill sets. Recognizing this specificity and these linkages to sustainability presents options for researchers and educators to create archi-textures that suite various intents and purposes, including playing with activity-landscape combinations that might situate canoe trips in rural, industrial, and/or urban areas.

**Shaped by tools and technologies.** During canoe travel, like many forms of adventure travel, participants' tools, technologies, and equipment enabled, shaped, and limited their skilled performance in various ways. Indeed equipment like canoes and paddles fundamentally enabled participants to inhabit rivers, lakes and the hydrology of a region in particular ways, but also placed participants in relation to globally significant issues, such as industrial and manufacturing processes linked to the oil sands development. Other tools and technologies, like maps, GPS units, and satellite phones placed participants in their surroundings by enabling, shaping, and negating social and environmental relationships and skill development. There is a need for further research exploring and clarifying differences between various tools and technologies in terms of their mediating influence on human-environment relations, environmental knowledge, and users' abilities to perceive and act in their surroundings. Other studies might take up the social, ecological, and pedagogical implications of an increasingly commercial and technological outdoor travel industry (Ryan, 2002).

**Engaging local realities.** The specificity of environmental relations through skilled practice also suggests that scholars and practitioners can assess

and tailor ways in which recreational activities and expeditions contribute to the wellbeing of travellers, other inhabitants (human and non-human), and their shared surroundings. The paddlers on *Big Sky* came to understand that the resources that sustained their trip and wellbeing (such as food and equipment as well as route advice) provided opportunities through which they could meaningful engage local socio-environmental realities and inhabitants. Food getting, for example, could do much more than provide calories for kilometres; it could build social relationships, ecological awareness, and support (or compete with) local land-use practices. Participants could employ local guides to help with route finding, as a second example, and to learn more about the surroundings, people's livelihoods, and the histories in a region. Such practices might enhance participants' experiences of and contributions to a region.

**Sustainable archi-textures.** Embodied action not only shapes the actor but also affects the socio-ecological environments and communities in and through which she or he acts. Food, water, and equipment manufacturing enable skilled practice, and skilled practice itself leaves traces and makes places. The reconciliation of a tension between an emerging sustainability paradigm, on one hand, and normalized ethics and practices of Leave No Trace, on the other hand, requires further research and scholarship. Suggesting that participants ought to and can "leave no trace" is to ostensibly deny or ignore human corporeality and ecology; at the same time, accepting human corporeality does not justify unsustainable human ecology and behaviours. Rather than a universal ethic or etiquette of practice, a sustainability paradigm for adventure travel requires practices that can respond to, address, and potentially ameliorate local social, economic, and ecological realities. Moreover, ethics of sustainability cannot be limited to individual travellers' behaviour as though they are lone actors. Ethical considerations of sustainability must extend to the archi-textures, practices, pedagogies, equipment, and institutions that structure adventure travel and participants' ecological relations.

Archi-textures that create a liminal space for enjoyment, escape, resistance, and learning have been, and will continue to be, an important part of

adventure recreation, tourism, and education. Adventure activities can provide a liminal space in which participants can *be* differently, as Lewis (2000) showed with climbers' experience of modernity, and McDermott (2004) showed with women's experience of physicality on gender-specific canoe trips. Such spaces are also potentially problematic within a sustainability paradigm and from an ecological approach to adventure travel when trying to grapple with interconnections among landscapes and lifestyles. Efforts to use adventure travel to alter participant values and behaviours beyond the recreation, education, or touristic context suggest a judicial approach to the use of liminal spaces. The tension between distance and engagement needs still to be addressed, and might be resolved by framing distance not as a disconnection but, rather, as a repositioning in order to understand interconnections within (rather than apart from) the travellers' environment.

**Being-in wider contexts.** Not only do skilled practices occur in patterns and enable interactions with local environments, but the biological and social processes that enable adventure travel also draw on and position participants within webs of relations that extend far beyond the local landscape of travel. Travellers may not be familiar with the influence of these webs. Further research is needed to consider the how adventure travel positions participants and incurs impacts within broader socio-ecological issues, contexts, and scales. Adventure travellers occupy position of privileged that allow them to shift and disperse social, economic, and ecological resources and impacts among regions; doing so is inherently an issue of socio-environmental power and justice in place making. Discussions of environmental ethics in adventure travel, including this study, have not yet adequately dealt with these deeper ethical considerations of practice. To support a sustainability paradigm, practice must become responsible for the positive and negative roles adventure travel plays in shaping socio-ecological communities and populations (both human and non-human) beyond those who participate directly. Research can help identify and suggest potential positive and negative impacts as well as the processes through which local changes occur, potentially suggesting management techniques to increase sustainability.

Ingold's (2000) conceptions of education of attention, exchange of substance, exchange of knowledge, web of relations, and lines of becoming (Ingold, 2008) open avenues for researching, evaluating, and building different archi-textures, skills, and practices in relation to participants' socio-environmental understanding, engagement with local realities, as well as social, ecological, and economic sustainability on wider scales. Exposure to and personal involvement with issues of unsustainability along salient socio-environmental flows, processes, and with inhabitants may be a starting point for pro-environmental action within wider contexts of participants' lives. The limits of direct experience and skilled travel as ways of knowing, however, suggest that additional skills will be needed in ecological assessment, effective communication, and civic and political engagement, for example, for participants to better understand and bringing about sustainability on a wider scale.

### **Familiar ways of Being in an Active Environment**

Despite honestly valuing the various possibilities for altered practice, different learning, and partnerships with local inhabitants, the participants on *Big Sky* also resisted change to their canoe tripping practices. Participants felt traditions and experiences of being-on-trip, senses of movement, and particular ecozones were deeply relevant to their lives and biographies as canoe trippers. Performance and coordination of outdoor living and paddling skills within the group of expedition members contributed to their sense of being-on-trip. Individuals' performance within and relative to the collective performance contributed to participants identifying with and sensing their belonging in "the group" and a broader community of paddlers. Such identification and connection with senses of movement relative to other participants and particular ecozones requires further research, but show promise in terms of care for and connection to landscapes, people, places, and activities through the development of a shared, if limited, sentient ecology (Anderson, 2000; Ingold, 2000). Personal attachment to modes of travel, particular practices, and dominant rationales (for safety or group cohesion, for example) will likely also present significant resistance to shifting

paradigms and tripping styles should they alter elements of the experience that are fundamentally familiar to seasoned participants.

Further research into place attachment and activity specialization might benefit from examining the ways in which family structures and traditions are involved in cultivating long-term involvement (Boniface, 2006). Participants may also identify with local traditions, histories, regions, and communities of practice. Indeed, further insight into the social structures and functioning of climbing, canoeing, cycling, and snowmobiling clubs could elucidate how skills are cultivated and mentorship occurs; such research could highlight how traditions and values of practice are developed and shared. Moreover, these clubs often advocate politically for activity-specific resources. Such research might bring forward issues of inclusion, exclusion, discrimination, and barriers to participation that contribute to the exclusivity of adventure travel.

Intuitively understanding an environment through skilled practice suggests that participants' environmental interactions are far more varied and multifaceted than simply paying attention to nature or an element thereof as present-at-hand rather than ready-to-hand, as the activity-environment tension suggests. Fostering a participatory ecological approach to human-environment relations requires scholarship and pedagogy that makes room for sensual pragmatic involvement and understandings of social and physical environments through the whole body as valid and integral to other forms of learning and knowing. Experiential education appears to be well suited to holistic approaches to education; theoretical and pedagogical connections between experiential education and dwelling perspective (Ingold, 2000) remain to be established. Concepts such as the education of attention might provide insight into facilitation and mentorship regarding environmental issues during outdoor experiences; lines of becoming would seem to provide a promising metaphor for extending and linking together educative experiences.

The specificity and malleability of environmental learning based on differences in skills, tools, and technologies, suggests that claims and descriptions of environmental knowledge and learning require further clarity, specificity, and

diversity. The webs of relation established through adventure travel practices involve participants in socio-environmental issues, traditions, and realities, as I have described, which when acknowledged and encountered can become relevant within participants' lived experiences of place and personal growth. In this way, learning about environmental issues or historic events can be incorporate into the salience of adventure travel activities.

Travel is more than transport to and through a region or destination. The findings of this research suggest that paths of travel allow participants to engage with landscapes and environments in particular ways. Over time, participants make and understanding places, landscapes, and environments along these paths. Such intuitive familiarity and place making highlight the importance of wayfaring and travel "in the open" that is physically enacted by participants working with and in dynamic surroundings. Cultivating embodied knowledge and familiarity of an environment happens incrementally with participation. "One off" experiences or "trips of a lifetime" may have a limited ability to foster enduring relationships, even though they can inspire further involvement or hold meaning as, for example, significant life experiences. Research, recreational, commercial, educational programs concerned with environmental and place relationships should consider addressing the long-term duration of participant involvement and skill development (Boniface, 2006). In addition, this study has taken the perspective of travellers moving through landscapes; studies addressing how the comings and goings of travellers and residents shape particular places or regions over time would contribute significantly to understanding the role of travel in place making.

### **Skill, Enskilment, and Power**

The sensuality of skilled performance is crucial to an ecological approach to enskilment. Rather than teaching "interpersonal" and "technical" skills as social and physical techniques, an ecological approach to enskilment requires that participants have an appropriate environment in which to grow and cultivate their abilities of perception and action within specific sets of social and ecological interrelations. Instructors, guides, and other participants, therefore, do more than

teach the technical execution of a J Stoke, for example, they mentor and habituate participants in becoming responsive to the flow of the river, the play of their paddle, movements of their paddling partners, the rhythms and norms of group work, as well as (dis)engagement with communities beyond the group. Traditions cultivated and sustained among paddlers, guides and clients, as well as instructors and students contribute to normalizing styles and regions of practice, thus contributing to the growth and becoming of places, participants, and wider communities. The ability of skilled learning and performance to position participants in relation to their surroundings in particular ways raises the possibility of educational partnerships across different traditions and communities of practice. Travelling and learning together may provide insight or interrupt stereotypes, for example, of Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings and relationships to the landscape, environment, and inhabitants.

Environmental connections do not “just happen” they are cultivated, at least in part, through enskilment and educations of attention. This project has remained in a tradition of focusing on ethics of practice, but the processes of enskilment and issues of ethics are clearly political. That participants cultivate, embody, and share environmental knowledge in situ through a process of enskilment demands further critical attention and research concerning the influence of institutions (such as guide schools), socio-environmental trends (such as globalization), and popular discourses (such as anti-modernism) on skill, environmental knowledge, and the impacts of adventure travel. If skills and practices structure participants’ engagement with their socio-ecological environment, for example, then a sustainability paradigm must also address the ways in which institutions establish standards and pedagogies of practice and normalize universal or malleable archi-textures and skills.

Ingold’s (2000) dwelling perspective has focused on the intersection of biology and culture and resolving nature-culture dichotomy by examining supposed distinctions between Western and Indigenous human communities and between animals and humans as organisms-beings. Feminist theories have also challenged the dichotomy between biology and culture; they appear well suited to

remedy a lack of attention in the dwelling perspective to power relations and difference through enskilment and skilled practice (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Biases and differences in the processes of enskilment for males and females, for example, could be examined as an avenue through which gender norms are enforced, embodied, expressed, and resisted (as McDermott, 2004, and Newbery, 2003, have done). The ways in which gender intersects with archi-textures of adventure travel, experiences of being-on-trip, and the resulting meanings of landscapes and environments clearly requires further attention.

### **Arriving at Our Take-Out**

A generous team of expedition partners and I worked together to practice and imagine canoe tripping in a way that could live with and respond to the many valid critiques facing adventure travel while, at the same time, support participants' personal attachments to and learning from their own adventure travel experiences. Using Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, we re-interpreted how adventure travel fostered social, economic, and ecological interrelations. Canoe tripping for Chris, Dana, James, Liz, Robert, Steph and I was a way to participate in the lives of certain environments, landscapes, and inhabitants (including each other) and for these environments, landscapes, and inhabitants to participate in our lives. Canoe tripping allowed participants to follow, emulate, and challenge stories that had resulted from other trips, to allow places and people to shape our impressions of them, and to share these impressions and our stories with other people. Thus, canoe tripping became a mode of travel that involved creating and shaping places and people. Recognizing such involvement, we began to engage landscapes, environments, and inhabitants in more sustainable ways.

Many elements remain to be explored, but Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective can clearly help refigure skill and human-environment relations in adventure travel. My interpretation of participants' narratives portrays their canoe tripping as a way of individually and collectively inhabiting, negotiating, and maintaining—through skill—a particular socio-ecological milieu that is constantly in flux. Canoe tripping was a way of being-in-relation to their surroundings and other inhabitants. Being in this way allowed participants to

shape and be shaped by their world, and in so doing express themselves and their relationship to this milieu while becoming more familiar with their surroundings and to their fellow inhabitants. To participate in canoe tripping is to participate in particular flows, flux, and features of an environment, and therefore to encounter, incur, and grow through interconnections with immediate and extended socio-ecological contexts. Through traditions of practice, participants learned over time how to mobilize and inhabit this milieu, to characterize it through language in particular ways, and to recognise and ignore their own various socio-ecological interconnections. These traditions are multiple, and they can change.

To move beyond a romantic search for long-lost connections to nature and wilderness, I have suggested a participatory ecological approach to adventure travel based on Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective. This approach allows scholars and practitioners to consider ways in which travellers do dwell and could dwell as well as how they damage, care for, and enjoy their socio-ecological environments in various ways. Phenomenology is well suited to such research because it attends to people's lived experience of being-in-the-world. To recognize human ecology, embodiment, and skill as fundamental to human being is not to justify ecological degradation or social inequity, but to acknowledge an inextricable human-environment interrelationship and begin the difficult work of examining how, specifically, adventure travel activities and different ways of life are involved in, supported by, and impactful on various people and environments. Such is the work of striving for sustainability, and much of it remains.

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### **Appendix A: Prompts used during Big Sky**

Copied from versions written out in field research notebook.

Note: not all were discussed or written about by participants.

#### **SOC1: Prompts discussed May 14 at camp along Athabasca focus on attention to time and surroundings.**

1. How are members of the group measure, talking about, use and attend to time (use of watches side real time, social or task time, through rhythms, hunger)? What effects do these have on the group? Our attention to surroundings?
2. How are members of the group, including students, attending to their surroundings in regards to their plans for the day and the decisions they make regarding travel and stopping?
3. How does attention to surroundings change with leadership? (How) does this happen for students and student-leaders? Listen to student comments, ask them, and watch them. How do habits and behaviours change?

#### **SOC 2: Prompts discussed May 24 at Confluence of LaBiche and Athabasca rivers with focus on leadership.**

4. Describe levels or aspects of macro and micro navigation and wayfinding you see, hear, feel. How can you help students to learn these? (How) do navigation and wayfaring relate to one another? Describe examples.
5. What are some of the things that you notice while leading that students and student-leaders do not notice or vice versa? How (from who, what experiences, in what context) do you think you developed these perceptual skills?
6. Describe your most powerful learning experiences a) as a leader, b) in attending to the environment and landscape, c) as a teacher and instructor.
7. How are towns experienced, what apparent influences do they have?

**Big Sky 1a: Prompts discussed June 16 in Fort Chipewyan focused on attention to surroundings.**

8. What roles do towns play on this trip and in your experience of this journey?
9. How do you see navigation and wayfaring skills (macro and micro route finding skills) playing out and influencing your perception of our surroundings?
10. Consider the influences of technologies such as sat phones, GPS, on your canoe tripping experience vis-à-vis your surroundings, the people here and at those home.

**Big Sky 1: Prompts discussed June 24 focused on interactions with inhabitants and others along the way.**

11. What roles does the human presence (cabins, ruins, hamlets, towns) play in your experience?
12. Do you see or feel you are different in this regard from others participants on the trip? Why, why not? Is this different from past trips you have done, how? How not?
13. What kinds of interactions do you have with people in our “rural” surroundings? What has been the role of these interactions in your experience?
14. How does our recreational activity frame communities? Does and how does it contribute to or detract from communities?
15. Does this trip help you understand this landscape and environment?
16. What stories influenced your decision to come on the trip and your experience on trip?
17. What role do trips like this, and this one in particular, play in your senses of self and/or senses of identity (social, personal, national, professional)?
18. How do your skills and the skills of other group members position us relative to one another?

**Big Sky 2: Prompts discussed July 1 focused on towns, transitions, technology as an influence on our fields of relations.**

19. Discuss our transition in the city of Yellowknife from one leg of the trip to the next, moving from Slave and Athabasca rivers to Boreal Shield and Barren Lands, or back home to the city.
20. Discuss our resupply and other activities in the city of Yellowknife. How do they influence our relations?
21. How will a change in our activity (for example: portaging, paddling against current) alter our relations to our surroundings?
22. How might a change in the landscape (for example: moving from the mud and wide rivers into the rocky silt-free rivers) shape our activity?
23. The final leg of our trip will be our most remote – are we moving from a “road trip” to a “canoe trip”?

**Big Sky 3: Prompts discussed July 10 focused on transition to different landscape.**

24. How have changes in landscape, or this particular landscape, influenced group interaction, behaviour, and our travel?
25. Do you feel more or less at home in this landscape? Why? Does this relate at all to your past experience and/or identity?
26. How has our new task of paddling up river and lake hopping influenced or changed the meaning of the river, land, water features (currents etc.)?
27. If the presence of towns enabled our attention to “life back home,” then what structures or features move us further away from these relations, and give you a sense of being “remote”?
28. What subsistence practices could we include in a trip such as ours? What are enabling and limiting factors? What would need to change? Should our practices change?

**Big Sky 4: Prompts discussed July 22 focused on sense of place and movement, education of attention.**

29. What sort of dialogue do we have with our environment?
30. When have you felt “out of place” or “in place”?
31. Describe significant places along the way and why they were important to you or meaningful to this trip.
32. Reflect on your weather logbook in relation to the passage indicated on p. 335 in Ingold (2000) regarding *kairos*: the moment that must be seized in skilled work when human action meets a natural process.
33. Try blind paddling, describe how you know when you’re in synch or not? See Ingold (2000, p. 413-414) on perceptual awareness through technology, art and craftsmanship.
34. Explain and explore the following terms: out there, in the present, back home, real life, the North, remote.
35. Ingold (2000, p. 37) describes an “education of attention.” Do you see a similar process at work in outdoor recreation (as distinct from outdoor education)?

**Big Sky 5: Prompts discussed Aug 3 focused on self and identity.**

36. How did the gun alter or position you in relation to the bear? More generally, consider our interactions with animals and how they are mediated by technology.
37. Thoughts on mirrors, sense of self, and how you encounter your world while on trip as compared to home life.
38. What sort of relationships does outdoor recreation promote or disable in your sense of self?
39. Where or when do you feel in place or out of place?
40. Describe your personal history, your identity and the level at which you relate to: canoeing, outdoor recreation, outdoor education, and expeditions.

41. Discuss the terms: paddler, technology outdoor educator, dependant or independent while on trip.

**Big Sky 6: Prompts discussed Aug 11 focused on influence of stories.**

42. What are the roles that your stories, artwork, slideshows etc. play in the larger public?
43. What stories, whose stories are we following in the field? How do they influence our experience?
44. What stories have you heard on the trip and how have they influenced you?
45. What stories will you tell and why? What stories are significant and why?

**Big Sky 7: Prompt discussed Aug 16 focused on influence of the research.**

46. How has the research influenced your/our experience on the trip?

**Big Sky at home: prompts given to participants for their reflection and writing before departure from Kugluktuk**

47. Open-ended thoughts, impressions, and experiences.
48. What sights, sounds etc do you notice at home, what do you miss about being “on trip” and what have you had to cope with during your transition following the trip?
49. Will the story/stories of this trip continue for you in your home life? In what ways?
50. What role has the trip played in your life back home?
51. Which stories do you find yourself telling, which not and why?
52. Describe your impression of our activity and landscapes of travel during *Big Sky*. How do these compare with the impression others have of these places and activities?

### **Appendix B: Key to Transcription**

The style of transcription draws elements from Gumperz and Berenz (1993), Palmer (2005), and Tedlock (1983). Tapes were transcribed word for word. The techniques and symbols used (see Table B-1) were chosen to present speakers' words and stories as faithfully as possible, maintain the voices and patterns of speech (cadence, emphasis, pauses, hesitation, and interruptions) that communicated meaning and context, and represent the dynamics of conversation during the semi-structured group discussions. Because all speakers' mother tongues are English, I use English punctuation when possible. For inclusion in the text, transcriptions were edited to improve the clarity of the speaker's voice and story. Contextual, referential, and implied meanings within a discussion or extended narrative can be lost or rendered unclear during transcription and/or when parts of a conversation are isolated. I have tried to provide this context in text for the reader within the transcription but more often by describing the context and allowing the speakers words to remain unchanged. Each narrative presented in the text is accompanied by a reference, for example:

[pp. 185-186 BS 4, July 22 (Day 75): Greenstockings Lake, UTM: 945235 on 86A/3, 1988]

This code locates the narrative within the transcription pages and meeting number (p. 185-186, Big Sky meeting number 4), then the date and day of the trip on which it was recorded (July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, day 75 of the trip), and finally an indication of where the conversation took place using a place name (Greenstockings Lake) followed by a six digit UTM grid coordinate (945235) on a map sheet (86A/3) with the date of the datum used (1988).

Table B-1

*Symbols Used in Transcription*

Symbol	Representation
New line	Pause of even length, cadence of the speaker (Tedlock, 1983); or continued from preceding line if it reached the right hand margin.
Blank line	Longer pause in speech (Palmer, 2005)
2 blank lines	Even longer pause in speech (Palmer, 2005)
-	Truncation (what ti- what time is it?) (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
?	Question, final rise
.	Period, final fall
'	Slight rise as in listing intonation (more is expected) (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
Whaaaat	Repeat letters to lengthen segments, number of repeated letters corresponds to time.
...	Trail off, or, if preceding word, recorder was turned on in middle of a word.
<b>CAPS</b>	Accented, given prominence (Tedlock, 1983)
<u>CAPS</u>	Accented, given extra prominence.
[	Conversation overlap from this point (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
( )	Unintelligible speech (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
{ }	nonlexical phenomenon, vocal and non vocal, that overlay the lexical stretch
[ ]	Nonlexical phenomenon, vocal and nonvocal, which interrupt the lexical stretch. Also used for orientation notes, not part of the conversation. (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
Di(d)	Good guess at unclear segment (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
(did)	Good guess at unclear word (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993)
[ <i>break</i> ]	Tape recorder was turned off, and on again at this point (Palmer, 2005)
“ ”	Used when paraphrasing own thoughts or someone else's words.