

Teachers for the Earth: Profiles of Inspired Environmental Leadership

By

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B. A. Malaspina University College, 2000

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**ABSTRACT**

This research project is about listening to and learning from the stories of committed environmental leaders in order to gain insight into the formative experiences that may have contributed to creating and fostering environmental leadership. Thick rich descriptions of the life experiences of environmental leaders will help attain that insight and may provide environmental educators with knowledge resulting in designing curriculum that can recreate the richness of those meaningful life experiences. There has been substantial research carried out on the formative experiences of environmental educators, however, there have been fewer research projects conducted on how those experiences may have contributed to the development of environmental leadership. This was a case study that involved the use of environmental autobiographies, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire.

Recommendations are presented for further research as are recommendations for the implementation of the findings.

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## Foreward

Once upon a time, a woman of an indeterminate age applied for admission to a graduate program in Environmental Education at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Her background in Anthropology, combined with a passion for environmental concerns and life-long learning experiences, won her a seat in the program. However, to this day she wonders if the recounting of moments shared with a pod of orca whales in Dodd's Narrows three summers ago played a role in determining her educational plans.

Her daughter, possibly more pragmatic, disagrees heartily. In her mind it is the time her mother, escorted by six Samburu warriors just outside of Marasbit, Kenya ran through the scorching bush to attend a traditional wedding. She arrived, disheveled and panting, covered with "wait-a-bit" thorns to drink camel-milk tea in the women's hut. The days in memory were those magical days, seemingly brief moments in time lasting an eternity; filling both the heart and soul with memories of a beauty so poignant and spirituality so intense that they become the oasis on dry desert days. It is the heady stuff that forms the basis for a myth or narrative; the stories of the ancestors that are passed on for generations. It is proof that the "bliss" that Joseph Campbell speaks of can be attained, but only through experiencing of man's place in the natural world (Campbell, 1988).

Three years into the Master's program, besieged by decreasing bouts of lucidity and increasing episodes of hot flashes, the woman curses those whales and warriors, the "tail" she recounted and the chaos that has resulted in the struggle to complete the quest; the development and defense of the mystical, seemingly unattainable thesis. Her "pod" for the next three summers is a group of high achievers, comprised mainly of

environmental education educators. Those in the group who are not formal teachers have extensive environmental experience gained from backgrounds in various government and community agencies. They are an intriguing, outspoken, highly motivated group; the kind of people who challenge the status quo, invoking lively and thought-provoking conversation.

One of the first assignments in the Environmental Education Master's program was the assignment of a written "Environmental Autobiography" submitted by each graduate student at the end of the first summer session. The essays were organized around five topics allowing each graduate student an opportunity to reflect on their environmental backgrounds. A review of my own autobiography provided some valuable insights, particularly in the idea for a thesis proposal. I had never really thought about or conceptualized my own environmental concerns as stewardship because they are so much a part of who I am. I also realized that stewardship was somehow connected to leadership, but was unsure how the threads were connected.

This passage from my environmental autobiography reaffirms my belief that caring for the earth is intergenerational:

I have always found solace in the continuity of nature. As Wata Joseph an elder from Alert Bay so poignantly pointed out, at her lowest point in life, it was her favourite dog that licked away her tears. What do I believe about the environment now? I have always believed fervently that everything is connected and that everything has a spirit or an energy force. It is our sacred duty to look after and nurture the Earth and our responsibility to pass on these duties to those that come after us. It is our duty to be grateful. We are not thankful. Our culture operates out of avarice, greed and convenience. As I reflect on my own childhood, I do not remember the things that we owned. I remember always the "places" I have been. I remember the skies I have seen, the birds that called me and the waters that calmed. Indigenous cultures worldwide embrace this

type of relationship with nature and pass on this worldview to the next generation. I believe they might call it earth time and it is our time to do the same. (Personal communication, EE Course, Summer 2001)

There it is, written two summers ago – my passion - and it has not changed. I cannot think of anything more rewarding or more purposeful than this desire to instill in people, especially young people, the sacred respect and obligation to care for the land. Looking at my new “pod” I see not one leader but many skilled leaders who, despite witnessing and experiencing environmental degradation around them, continue to motivate and inspire those whose lives they touch. Our future may seem uncertain, yet they manage to dig deep into a reservoir of hope reassuring, reaffirming and sharing their feelings of optimism and faith. They are not above using caustic humour to diffuse a tense situation and the art of laughter has pulled most of us through many an otherwise bleak situation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Prologue

This notion of saving nature and protecting the Earth has been a lifelong commitment and, upon reflection, I do not believe this passion was initiated or prompted by the science or biology courses I took at school. I look instead to those environmental leaders who, over the years, shared with me their knowledge and passion. As I entered the graduate program, I had the idea that developing a thesis exploring the experiences that created and contributed to environmental leadership was a worthy and meaningful project.

My background in Anthropology exposed me to many Indigenous world views based on wisdom and a practical learning that was grounded in a respectful relationship with nature. It was a privilege and an honour to spend time among the Samburu people of Kenya and the Quecha people of Peru learning about their way of life. The Samburu, pastoralists in an arid land, revere and honour cattle that are an integrating force in all ceremonial life, including birth, death, circumcision and weddings. The cattle reinforce beliefs in the ancient cycles of birth, life and death while ensuring at the same time that power, social position and political organization are not random, but organized and structured.

The Quecha people practice ancient rituals that express their love and respect for *Pachamama* or the Great Mother during Pukllay an eight-day festival. The Andean people believe that all aspects of nature live, feel and breathe (Bolin, 1998). I, too, felt this and it was reassuring to know that I was not alone in my belief that all things in nature had a life force. The Samburu and the Quecha were dramatically different in

many ways, but their innate knowledge of local areas and respect for and knowledge of the land was remarkable. It was, in fact, astounding and reaffirmed another concept much discussed in Environmental Education today. Local people, because of their knowledge, history and attachment to place often know what is best for their own communities and surrounding natural places and can offer viable solutions and sensible recommendations.

By the end of the third summer of graduate school, the idea for a research project had been resolved. I would develop a thesis proposal based on the formative life experiences of my cohort group in order to explore the development of their environmental consciousness and continuing social responsibility; in essence, their continued commitment to environmental leadership.

#### Rationale

Contemporary cultures continue to change and exploit the environment, at what some see to be, an irreparable rate (Orr, 1994; Weizsacker, 1994; Suzuki, 1998). It is not a secret, and therein lays the paradox. In an era besieged by information and where a heightened awareness of environmental issues should be a clarion call to action, a type of social paralysis exists, fuelled, in part by lethargy and lack of motivation (Berryman, 1999). Weizsacker (1994) notes "it is not possible for the vast amounts of energy, water, land, air and other natural resources currently consumed by ten percent of the world's population to be matched by the remaining ninety percent without total ecological collapse" (p.8). He urges a new set of values; a new culture based not solely on economics, but in a new political system grounded in earth politics. He is, in fact, calling for environmental leadership.

Leadership is about change and environmental leadership is, to some degree, about challenging and changing current values (Weizsacker, 1994). Viewed in that light, one of the goals of environmental leadership must be to initiate a shift to the world view that humankind is a part of nature, not above or below nature; that the state of nature's health is inherently connected to our own health and ultimately, our survival. According to Cajete (1994) one way to begin this shift is to relearn and understand the interconnectedness of the earth's natural rhythms and role of humankind in that relationship. Gordon and Berry (1993) conclude further that if environmental leadership is to be effective today it must comprise an even wider knowledge base producing leaders who are experienced in areas of economics, politics, mediation and non-confrontational methods of attaining sustainable and realistic environmental goals.

The Bruntland report, released in 1987, defined sustainability as an economic activity "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (cited in Mathews, 1991, p.16). Environmental Educators understand the importance of this balancing act between humankind and the environment, yet there is no consensus on the best way to introduce an effective environment educational program into the classroom. This is in part, I believe, due to the somewhat illusive nature of what constitutes environmental leadership and also because environmental education is usually taught as a subject detached and remote from a real world context.

The struggle within Environmental Education is the result of opposing paradigms. The present school system is based on a modernist view that encompasses the ideals of an industrial society and is in direct opposition to those moving towards

the postmodernist vision that Hammond says espouses the values of diversity, cooperation, integration, harmony and holism (1997). In contrast to those values, an industrial society encourages individualism, personal accumulation of wealth and competition (Orr, 1994). The competitiveness that is encouraged in school sports, drama festivals and essay competitions, for example, is a value that fits into a capitalist economy (Podolefsky & Brown, 1993) and does not encourage or promote the values of cooperation and sharing that is so important in the post modern view.

David Orr (1991) argues that “all education is environmental education” and asserts that education toward the natural world must be grounded in values, consciousness, questions and conscience. With that knowledge comes the responsibility and obligation to use that knowledge in a responsible manner so that the biotic community is not harmed. I believe Orr is talking about learning a stewardship ethic where the steward has a moral obligation to care for the earth as a whole. Many school programs incorporate stewardship solely in the context of water studies. This is only part of the story of environmental stewardship and because the values of stewardship are compatible with environmental leadership, stewardship needs to be addressed within an environmental education context that is connected to life outside the classroom.

Environmental Education requires leadership that believes in the creation of an active informed citizenry who can make moral choices based on the evolution of an environmental ethic that acknowledges the existence and dialogues of non-human forms (Weston, 1996). I believe successful leaders are those who are “awake” having experienced the personal transformation and undergone the shift in consciousness that

has enabled them to find and understand their place within the natural world (Kovan, 2003). This personal transformation, coupled with the courage to lead, can indeed transform society (Peavey, 1986).

Intensive coursework had provided an introduction to the academic world of Environmental Education, but it was the lived experiences of my cohort group that would teach me what Environmental leadership was really all about. More importantly, the stories would reveal who is leading and in what ways. It is important that those who have lived the life are offered an opportunity to tell their story in their own words. Fortino (1997) asserts that “while there has been substantial research conducted on the “why”, “what”, “where” and “how” of Environmental Education, only a few studies have focused on the “who”. This means that research must shift from an object based paradigm to one that explores and acknowledges people. Fortino is not alone in her view that environmental education research must place more emphasis on listening to the narratives and stories of the people who are actively engaged in the field (Fien & Rawlins, 1996; Hart & Nolan, 1999; Lemons, 1995).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis was, through the life experiences of a select group of environmental education leaders, to discover how a culture of environmental leadership evolved and under what circumstances it was sustained. For each of the participants, their leadership had evolved and developed during a lifetime of rich and varied experiences and I believe it is the kind of leadership that must be a goal for all Environmental Education teaching programs.

I feel it is crucial to introduce a model of environmental leadership in schools, universities and at the community level so that local citizens and communities can claim ownership of their own environmental problems and take the first steps in solving local issues. This creation of a motivated active citizenship can be realized when a model of environmental leadership is created that can be embraced by all citizens at any age at any time. The enthusiasm of a kindergarten child releasing salmon fry for the first time is no less meaningful and important than the Raging Grannies who combine humour with song to create political awareness about environmental issues. In my mind, these are both examples of powerful active citizenry and environmental leadership.

It was anticipated that the cohort groups' rich mix of life experiences would provide insight into the world of environmental leadership. The eclectic mix of dynamic personalities, combined with the individual and group attributes of leadership, ensured a rich descriptive narrative of their life experiences. Three years of close interaction with the group had provided a foundation for my belief that the ethics of stewardship had played a role in forming the culture that united the cohort group. However, I felt there was much more to learn from this group of leaders.

### Research Question

The research will centre around one key question:

How is a culture of environmental leadership created and sustained?

In order to answer this question, it was necessary to have a working definition of the term culture and, therefore, in an anthropological context, culture "refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experiences and generate social

behaviour” (Spradley, 1979, p.5). A cultural anthropologist looks beyond the everyday experiences and tries to discern the patterns and meanings that lie behind that world. For instance, to some of us a car might be seen simply as of mode of transportation. Yet, to a cultural anthropologist the model, size, manufacturer, colour, extras and price all contribute to telling a story about the individual who owns the car. The car is much more than a mode of transport. It also symbolizes that individual’s status by revealing the social, cultural and economic standing of that owner.

It represents, too, on a larger scale the values of the society that the individual is a part of. For example, it is common knowledge that car emissions and gas burning contribute, by some means, to global warming and climate change. However, for some people, the individual loss (walking, inconvenience, job loss) is not worth the gain (clean air for future generations). Still others happily ride the bus, take a train or ride a bicycle because they believe a small sacrifice now ensures that future generations will inherit a healthy planet. A cultural anthropologist then, may look for evidence of altruism (individual sacrifices for the good of the population) in such a culture in order to determine if and why a cultural shift is taking place within a segment of the population.

To place the group’s leadership in an Environmental Education context the following questions were asked:

- 1) What kinds of significant experiences lead to the development of environmental leadership?
- 2) What were the experiences and perceptions of these environmental leaders during an experienced based graduate program in EE?
- 3) What are the characteristics of environmental education leaders?
- 4) What are the recommendations for developing graduate programs in Environmental Education that foster leadership in EE?

An understanding of the concept of stewardship was necessary because of the group's belief in this ethic. At its most basic level stewardship is described as an intergenerational concept of caring for the earth. The following interpretation leans towards anthropocentrism, but serves to introduce the basic concept of stewardship and the ethics on which it is based:

Stewardship is an individual belief in the connectedness of all things in the natural world. Its adherents seek continuously to improve their knowledge and understanding of this connectedness, in order that they may act to affect positive environmental and social change. Stewards are driven to do this by their love of the Earth and their sense of responsibility to preserve its wealth for future generations (DeMoranville, 2000, p.6).

#### Participants and Study Site

The group comprised of seventeen adults, including the researcher, with various backgrounds in Environmental Education. They (*we*) all came from university backgrounds and were in the process of completing a Master's Degree in Environmental Education at the University of Victoria located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. Geographically, Vancouver Island is the most southwesterly part of Canada and is blessed with some of the world's most magnificent and ecologically sensitive areas. Vancouver Island covers an area of 12,500 square miles and enjoys a rich and diverse ecology (Smith, 1971) and the island provided an inspirational backdrop for those interested in preserving natural spaces.

Along the drier headlands twisted garry oaks and peeling arbutus trees compete for precarious toeholds on rocky shorelines. Ancient cedars and towering Douglas Firs brood silently in the dense forests where, according to the Kwagul First Nations People, Dzunukwa lies in wait to snatch and kidnap unwary children (Jonaitis, 1991). The

magnificent coastline varies from the rugged and unprotected west coast to the calm white sandy beaches on the southeast coast. Salmon, numerous seabirds, marine mammals, otters, and eagles are all dependent on the sea and the rich bounty it offers. For islanders, the magic, majesty, and scent of the sea is both familiar and tantalizing, changing seasonally, never the same, and yet constant.

From my experience in interacting with the cohort group at Alert Bay that first summer it was clear that the research participants shared a passionate interest in environmental concerns, particularly for the rich and diverse marine environment. They were united by their ambition and commitment in teaching people how to live respectfully by leaving the smallest possible ecological footprint, which is a form of stewardship. While the group shared many similar values and ideologies, they were also a very diverse group who at times were outspoken, argumentative and opinionated and were, for the most part, respectful of differing viewpoints.

#### The Graduate Program in Environmental Education

The graduate program was specifically designed to attract a diversity of environmental leaders and one of its aims “was to educate future citizens to make wise decisions regarding long term sustainable communities and environments” (Vision Statement, 1999). This thrust to educate future citizens was directed at enticing environmental educators/leaders with a proven track record into a unique program that was designed to challenge and satisfy their professional development goals. Course work was completed over three consecutive summers. The program sought graduates with experience related to indigenous communities, environmental education and/or

nature interpretation. Objectives of the graduate program and outlined in the Program Description (2001) were:

- 1) To promote field research and studies in environmental education using research methods drawn from the philosophical and methodological frameworks that guide interpretive inquiry.
- 2) To determine what knowledge and skill all students should have to deal effectively with sustainability and specific resource issues.
- 3) To initiate research, in collaboration with First Nations elders, to determine what knowledge and skills aboriginal students in a home community should have in order to deal effectively with sustainability and environmental issues and specific resource issues (e.g. fisheries, forest, mining, tourism).
- 4) To study relevant themes of current interest including: introduced species interactions; ethnobiology (including ethnobotany; traditional environmental knowledge; fish, forest, and marine habitat requirements, endangered species; and restoration ecology.
- 5) To ascertain, in collaboration with First Nations elders, what teaching strategies and evaluative techniques are most appropriate for teaching First Nations students.
- 6) Potentially, to develop curriculum materials and programs for First Nations students living in a home community.
- 7) Potentially, to develop a B. C. or Pan Canadian curriculum for all students related to traditional ecological knowledge, western science, sustainability and resource issues of mutual concern.

- 8) Potentially, to develop museum and park interpretation programmes or community projects related to nature interpretation, TEK and long term sustainability.
- 9) Potentially, to develop programs and curriculum materials related to local ecosystems and resource issues for students in a home community.
- 10) To recognize the global influences affecting peace, the environment, economic development and human rights of all peoples all over the world.

The first summer included the Alert Bay Field School and this is discussed under its own heading below. Graduate students also participated in attending the National Marine and Aquatic Association's annual conference held at the University of Victoria July 16 – 20, 2001 where opportunities were provided to explore the latest in marine and aquatic techniques. Issues such as sustainability, traditional ecological knowledge, First Nation's heritage, salmon issues and sense of place were examples of sessions that graduates were encouraged to attend during that first year of graduate school. Students were expected to analyze, debate and begin solving complex issues relating to community, culture and the environment.

The following two summers saw the graduate students honing their skills and knowledge in a variety of areas related to Environmental Education such as Community Education, Aboriginal Education, Global Education, Museum Education, Field Based Research, Curriculum Development and Interpretive Inquiry. The program provided "a unique interdisciplinary starting point for development educational programs and curriculum materials" (Graduate Program in Environmental Education, March 2001).

### Alert Bay Field School

The Alert Bay Field School was an off-campus graduate level summer course that took place in July 2001 on Cormorant Island situated off the northeast corner of Vancouver Island. This beautiful indigenous fishing village is nestled in an area of spectacular scenery dominated by images of shifting mercurial seas and jagged coastlines. Sometimes the eye is drawn to a surprisingly pristine stretch of white shell beach discreetly tucked away in sheltered coves. The scenery is nothing short of magnificent and allows nature to be seen as a powerful entity with each ecosystem intimately linked, dependent and connected to the other.

Alert Bay is the home of the Kwakwaka'wakw people who have occupied these lands for close to 12,000 years. The Kwakwaka'wakw people are known for their lavish potlatches and ceremonies and their powerful intricate wood carving. These unique art forms, combined with story telling and a complex mythology depict the close relationship the people shared with nature and the supernatural world around them (Jonaitis, 1991).

The aim of the program as outlined in the Graduate Program Vision Statement was to “draw people from diverse backgrounds to work together in learning about the forest and ocean environments, respecting culture of Aboriginal people, and educating future citizens to make wise decisions regarding long-term sustainable communities and environments” (Vision Statement, 1999). To facilitate meeting this goal, primary historical documents on Kwagalth history combined with stories from the Elders focused on topics that dealt with community-environment relationships, values, current issues and intellectual property rights. Access was provided to the U'mista Cultural

Centre, the Marine Research Centre and the North Coast Natural Resource Centre. The courses consisted of *Community and Culture* taught by John Corsiglia, *Ethnobiology of British Columbia First Nations* taught by Dr. Brian Compton and *Environmental Education* taught by Dr. Gloria Snively.

A course outline on each of the above courses is attached as Appendix B.

Kwagulth culture and Kwagulth environment were not considered separately and were treated holistically in an attempt to impress upon the graduate students the connectedness of the Kwakwaka'wakw speaking people to their environment (Snively, 2005). It was anticipated this cross-cultural experience would offer the graduate students another way of viewing their connections to their own communities.

An example of the enriched hands-on learning experience during this field school was a three day outdoor field camp on Hansen Island where day hikes allowed for the observation, collection, identification and drawings of plants and other specimens under the direction of an ethnobiologist. Culturally modified trees were identified and the graduate students observed first-hand the results of a carefully tended forest that served as an example of an ancient sustainable practice employed by the First Nations people who walked these lands so many years ago.

Visits to the Orca Research Lab and Robson Bight Ecological Reserve contributed to an understanding of the complex role that killer whales play in the web of life that co-exists in the ocean. It was a marine biology course with the ocean as the teacher. The haunting songs of killer whale recordings captured from the underground microphone systems were primal music that nourished the soul and fed the imagination.

My only thought was, and it was a sentiment expressed by other graduate students, is that these whales must always be allowed to sing.

At the Orca Research Lab, the graduate students were exposed to volunteer researchers from around the world who competed for an opportunity to work with Dr. Paul Spong and his lifetime commitment in learning about the habits of resident killer whales. The research was non-invasive because it was conducted from the shore and the sensitive environments of the whales were not disturbed by homo sapiens' quest for knowledge. It was an unusual and respectful way to conduct a research laboratory and offered the students an introduction to a new way of gathering scientific data.

The field school component of the graduate program introduced and created an awareness of other kinds of knowing, introducing and validating story telling as a viable source of knowledge. Teachers from the Alert Bay community included elders, healers, an indigenous plant expert, a hereditary chief and an elected chief; all sharing their experiences with a candor that was both profound and inspirational. An opportunity was provided for the elders to share their traditional ecological knowledge and in sharing that knowledge afforded outsiders a rare opportunity to observe and learn how another culture views nature and how their traditional technology helped sustain both the environment and the community.

Two elders, who had grown up on nearby Village Island, led the graduate students to see the abandoned site of their village, Mamalelequla, where they had lived as young girls. It was the first time they had returned home since villagers were forced to leave in the 1920's. Led by prayers in the Kwakwaka'wakw language and accompanied by powerful drumming, two elders led twenty-four graduate students and

returned to their home place for the first time in over fifty years. It was a powerful and transforming experience that reflected both the importance of sense of place and the values placed on community by a people who called this place home. This place did not require a physical presence to connect it to the people who left so abruptly many years ago; it was forever connected by memory, story and song.

### Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature and was specifically an ethnographic case study. The data was gathered in four stages: a three-year observation period, an environmental autobiography, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. Chapter Two discusses methodology in greater detail. One of the goals of ethnography is to “discover cultural patterns that make life meaningful” (Spradley, 1979, p.227) and using multiple methods of data collection afforded the best opportunity to gain the rich data that would expose cultural patterns.

### Limitations

Time was always a consideration. This was a group with demanding full-time jobs and I imposed on what little free time they had. Full schedules, a busy summer session, no summer holidays and limited free time could easily inhibit the quality of information gathered. At all times the researcher made concessions to be accommodating and this research was designed to work in conjunction with the time-constraints imposed on the cohort group.

Lack of experience within the education field could be perceived to be a disadvantage, however, it was also an advantage because the information gathered was not compromised by any previous knowledge of the Environmental Education field. As

a result, it was hoped the data interpretation would have a freshness and vitality that would be captivating and applicable to the field of Environmental Education.

A meaningful addition to this study would have been inclusion of the stories and narratives of the elders from Alert Bay. These elders had a powerful impact on the environmental leaders during the field school and figured dominantly in the Environmental Autobiographies and the narrative interviews. In the same light, interviews with the on-campus instructors, environmental leaders in their own right, would have provided information on environmental leadership at the university level. However, the initial purpose of this research was to explore a culture of environmental leadership within a select group of, heretofore, unrecognized environmental educators.

With qualitative research the tendency to over-generalize cannot be overlooked. It is not the intent of this research to generalize or relate these findings to other groups. The findings in this research are the result of working with a specialized group of highly individualized environmental leaders who became a group only because of their involvement with a Masters' program. Other than that circumstance, they may never have met. What is unusual about this group of individuals is the unique culture that binds them and the vision that continues to inspire them, both individually and collectively.

### Outcomes

It was hoped through a collective history of the experiences and actions of inspirational environmental leaders that a written record of their rich and varied stories would validate and honour the lives of seventeen leaders who have worked tirelessly to provide inspirational environmental leadership to those around them.

Environmental leadership that is grounded in a stewardship ethic can be learned and practiced by all citizens in all age groups in both formal and informal educational systems. It was anticipated that the formative experiences of these passionate environmental leaders would inspire and encourage individuals to make a difference environmentally within their own communities.

### Significance of Study

It was hoped that this research will be significant because the descriptive case studies could serve as a catalyst for schools, communities and teachers by inspiring them to introduce the holistic ideals of stewardship into their own schools and communities. Practicing stewardship in local communities is empowering and hopeful because it provides experiences that may lead to environmental leadership. In today's society, constrained by time limits and jobs, environmental issues are often pushed to the back of many peoples' minds. There are as many reasons for inaction as there are kinds of people. It is vitally important that the stories of hope and success are not only heard, but practiced and passed on, in spite of all the dark stories about environmental issues.

This study will be significant, not only to Environmental Education teachers and their students, but to those who hope for a better greener future. For this research to be truly empowering, it must first and foremost be written so it will appeal to a wider audience. While Jickling's fear of "dumbing down" has credence, he also suggests that there is room for alternative models for thinking and writing (1996). History has ensured a place for the stories of the rich, the powerful, the upper classes, the educated and governments and these stories are already recorded in the box called history. What

is seldom recorded there, however, are the stories of ordinary people who, because of gender, social class, ethnicity or vulnerability, are denied access to the “box” (Palys, 1997, p. 150).

This research is particularly significant because it offers an opportunity to view environmental educators in a different light. Environmental educators are the leaders in environmental education and should be acknowledged as such. They are in the trenches and, as advocates of change, are instrumental in ensuring that today’s students are able to reflect and, through thoughtful action, transform their local environments. If that is not environmental leadership, then what is?

## CHAPTER TWO

### Research Methodology

Research must, first and foremost, always be “meaningful and honourable” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 21) and is a collaborative venture allowing the participants to share deep and inner thoughts; provided a relationship of trust has first been established. The role of power in a relationship cannot be overlooked in any type of research and oral histories, biographical accounts and personal life experiences are particularly vulnerable to the nuances of power play resulting in research that can be flawed (Yow, 1994). Within the qualitative research design paradigm are methodologies that help the researcher answer broad-based questions such as “Why and how did this phenomena emerge?”

Traditionally, in the field of Anthropology, the ethnographer worked with a culture and, through observations and interviews, attempted to reconcile the stories and lives studied so that some kind of understanding about an aspect of that culture was reached. Three years of close observation, within the context of the university site and off-site, provided rich detailed observations, stimulating conversations and poignant memories of time spent with these environmental leaders.

An ethnographic case study design was selected because it would best describe, analyze and interpret the shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2002). According to Creswell, the key characteristics of an ethnographic design are:

- 1) an exploration of cultural themes drawn from cultural anthropology,

- 2) the study of a culture sharing group
- 3) an examination of shared patterns of behaviour, belief and language
- 4) a collection of data through fieldwork experiences
- 5) a description and analysis of themes about the culture-sharing group
- 6) a presentation of description, themes, and interpretation within the context or setting
- 7) a reflexivity by the research about her or his impact on the research site and the cultural group ( p. 489).

This research project is an exploration into the cultural conditions that may have contributed to creating and sustaining environmental leadership within a select group of people and, therefore, falls within the parameters described by Cresswell. It is my hope that, through this case study research and its retelling in simple language, a rich story of environmental leadership will evolve, providing a memorable record of lives lived in a field that has recorded few such stories.

As both researcher and member of the cohort group, my own experiences and reflections were a part of this research. We were in this together and, for this group of inspired leaders, the research was also emancipatory because they (we) had all experienced aspects of marginalization and for many, their environmental efforts were being acknowledged and recognized, possibly, for the first time.

### Group Profile

Seventeen graduate program participants, including the researcher, agreed to be a part of this research project. Eleven of those participants (including an elementary school vice-principal) were full time educators in the school system working long and

exhausting hours. Affected by financial cutbacks, increasing and over-crowded classroom size and curriculum demands, they are faced with the daunting challenge of educating and inspiring future generations. Collectively they teach at private and public high schools, elementary schools and adult education schools in urban, suburban, and/or remote areas.

They taught students from First Nations backgrounds, European backgrounds and students whose first language was not English. The ages of the students taught ranged from the early elementary age level to adult learners. This diverse mix of students reflected that even though the eleven formal educators shared some similar values, they were, first and foremost, individuals with complex personalities and very different life stories.

The breakdown of the graduate backgrounds is as follows:

- 1) Urban high school – First Nations Study 12 – Victoria
- 2) Suburban elementary school teacher – Kelowna
- 3) Urban high school teacher – Grade 11& 12 Biology - Victoria
- 4) Urban elementary school teacher - Victoria
- 5) Elementary school teacher – Sunshine Coast
- 6) Vice-Principal elementary school – Kamloops
- 7) Middle school science teacher – New Denver
- 8) Suburban high school science teacher – Nanaimo
- 9) High school teacher – Bella Bella
- 10) Alternative school teacher – Montessori
- 11) Elementary school teacher – Echo Bay (one room schoolroom)

- 12) Instructor Eco-Education - Vancouver
- 13) Instructor B. C. Green Team - Vancouver
- 14) Interpreter Parks Canada - Quebec
- 15) Interpreter – Richmond
- 16) Anthropologist – Nanaimo
- 17) Informal adult environmental educator - Victoria

Two participants were Parks interpreters; one with Parks Canada and the other at a municipal Nature Park. A lack of funding to Parks at both the provincial and federal level has resulted in massive cutbacks to Parks interpretive programs. As a result many Parks have limited and, in some cases, no Park interpreters to provide the rich learning experience that park visitors have come to expect.

The two youngest members of the group worked for a variety of environmental agencies dependent upon federal, provincial and municipal funding. Recently, much of this funding has been discontinued and future employment as informal environmental educators is not optimal. Resilience and optimism has allowed these educators to accept short-term employment contracts without leading to loss of hope and despair.

The remaining two leaders (myself included) are active within their communities volunteering and supporting various environmental agencies as time, energy, employment and finances permit. One with a degree in architecture works in the family business and has a history of environmental community work entering the field of environmental education, partly because of an early ethnobotany undergraduate course that led to his direct involvement in re-establishing indigenous plants in his community. My own background in cultural anthropology re-affirmed my belief that

western countries could learn much from those contemporary indigenous people who still live the ways of the ancestors. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge in this Master's program was a deciding factor for me.

#### Introduction to Research Instruments

The three summers of graduate school allowed for a unique opportunity for observation to take place during the Alert Bay Field School and subsequent summer sessions at the University of Victoria campus which I believed enhanced the richness of the data collected. Observations were recorded during the Alert Bay Field School and after the semi-structured interview. Each instrument was designed to gather as much data as possible about the culture of environmental leadership and what may have been inadvertently missed in one instrument was, hopefully, present in another.

#### Environmental Autobiography

Ethnographic case study research allows for a variety of data collection methods that includes the use of written artifacts (Cresswell, 2002). The written artifact selected for this study was an environmental autobiography written by each of the graduate students. These environmental autobiographies had been assigned by Dr. Gloria Snively and Professor John Corsiglia and were a partial requirement for Ed. E. 574 (Environmental Perspectives) and EDUC 431 (Community and Culture). Each autobiography averaged fifteen to twenty pages and was organized around the following topics: Sense of Place, Environmental Hero/Heroine, Culture, and Educational Applications. This assignment was an exercise designed to elicit reflection on the part of the graduate students in an effort to determine their roots of environmental interest and activism. The use of these environmental autobiographies,

combined with my own autobiography and personal reflections, provided a rich description of experiences and knowledge that contributed to the unique culture of environmental leadership evident within the cohort group.

Environmental autobiographies are extremely useful because they provide valuable insights into personal experience, while at the same time providing images of the themes that have resonated through a person's life (Corocan, 1999; Hammond 1997; Wilson, 1995). Each participant was asked to provide the researcher with a copy of their environmental autobiography that provided, in written form, rich detailed data about the formative experiences they felt influenced their lives. The task description below was taken from the course outline that described the assignment:

An environmental autobiography is an essay describing your personal environmental history. You are to describe significant experiences, no matter how small, which you feel have in some way influenced your concern with the environment and environmental education. It is important to try and remember childhood experiences in particular. Once you have remembered and described significant experiences, the next step is to examine the extent to which those experiences are reflected in your present personal and environmental preferences.

The purpose of environmental autobiographies is to "heighten people's awareness of their own environmental histories and to alert them to how settings of the past affect their current environmental preferences and values". (Cooper Marcus, 1978, p.35)  
(EE Graduate Course Pack, 2001)

Permission was granted by the instructors and the cohort group for the environmental autobiographies to be used as part of this research. Reading the journals revealed the processes by which ordinary lives somehow became extraordinary. Quiet voices rang with fervor and passion, sometimes pain and just as often, joy. Loud voices softened with fond remembrances and recollections of past events and people long gone.

The environmental autobiographies came from the heart, honed to a fine art through the medium of written language. They were the culminations of deep reflection as emotions and memories were organized into a more structured and less plastic application. It was anticipated that the autobiographies would provide detailed information about mentors, life events and family histories enhancing the information obtained from the narrative interviews and questionnaires.

#### Semi-structured Interviews

The second stage of data collection comprised of one open-ended, semi-structured interview that lasted approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. As the interviews progressed, it was evident that this group had a lot they wanted to say about their lives, the environment and how the two were connected. The stories and experiences they shared about events, places and people, as they spontaneously remembered them, was important because the strength of the semi-structured interview was in the natural flow of information.

The interviews took place during the final summer session of graduate school and were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Most interviews averaged between eighteen and twenty-two typewritten pages. During this time a journal was also kept by the researcher recording personal reflections and observations as the research process progressed. Personal reflection would play a critical part in the final stages of the research results because the researcher is also a participant.

The original intent was that the interviews for this project would be semi-structured, however, as the research process progressed more of a narrative approach emerged and I felt that as a researcher this development would benefit the research

project. This format allowed the leaders to reveal their experiences as they remembered them without interruption or prompting from the researcher. The tales they recounted were experiences and memories that they, the participants, felt were significant to the direction their lives had taken.

This narrative approach allowed for the uninterrupted flow of thoughts as the participants used a form of oral history or autobiographic memory to tell their stories. Telling and listening to stories is one way we can make sense of the world around us because stories are an effective and memorable way of exchanging experiences and knowledge (Yow, 1994). Listening to the stories of the cohort group and by not asking direct questions allowed each person to shape the stories in their own way without interruption (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

Through the narratives, themes and patterns emerged and these themes and patterns were used to identify formative experiences that played an important role in environmental leadership. The use of the narrative in qualitative research is a shift to the view that human experiences, as relayed through case studies, biographies, autobiographies or life histories, have relevance in that they shed light on the values, beliefs and motivations that are the precursors to actions (Hart, 2002) and Langness & Geyla (1981) note that “personal actions have much to do with the form our future society takes” (p. 154). The process of narration is an effective tool because it allows the person to share his/her story without direction from the researcher (Cresswell, 2002).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and after three readings each paragraph was coded using a single word or brief phrase that provided a snapshot of the

paragraph. By applying Creswell's visual model of coding approximately thirty-five to fifty codes per interview resulted (2002) with each code word or phrase recorded separately on an index card. In order to reduce the data, code words that were similar, identical or overlapping were grouped together reducing the codes, in most instances, to approximately twenty to twenty-five codes for each interview. The code words or phrases were copied on to index cards (with the participant's name) and the process of sorting and organizing the codes into categories resulted in a series of approximately fifteen themes or patterns for each participant.

The emergent themes for each participant were initially recorded separately and then transferred to a spread sheet where dominant themes became evident. A total of thirteen dominant themes emerged; seven major themes originating from early experiences and six major themes originating from adult experiences. These thirteen themes were drawn collectively and were identifiable in most participants as having a dominant influence in their lives. These themes were then cross-checked with the environmental autobiographies in an effort to determine whether the themes were found throughout the data.

As a researcher new to the field of Environmental Education, I could not predict what themes might emerge; I worked from the raw data and the quotes selected confirm the origins and validity of the themes. Data analysis, particularly in qualitative studies, is unpredictable because the researcher is working with people, not numbers. According to Tesch (1990, as cited in Creswell, 1994, p.135) "the process of data analysis (in qualitative research) is eclectic; there is no 'right way'.

I began each interview with the following structure adapted from Kirby and McKenna's (1989) *Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins*.

I would like you to tell me something of your life story, some of the events and experiences that were important to you. Start wherever you like and please take all the time you need. I will listen and record your story. Sometimes it is helpful to think of your life as a journey, so you might think of your life in those terms. (p.36)

These interviews were often intense and in order to conclude the interview and provide closure for both the participant and researcher the following questions were asked.

- 1) What causes you great joy?
- 2) Are you doing now what you always thought you would be doing?
- 3) How would you like to be remembered?

For many of the participants, this was the first time anyone had showed an interest, in not only listening to and recording their stories, but also in putting their stories, experiences and memories on paper. One leader commented: "It is such a neat feeling that somebody wants to listen to me..." (Interview #1). The majority of leaders involved in this research found the narration process easy once it was explained to them and the desired level of comfort was attained.

Two of the leaders, however, found the narration process difficult and were comfortable with the researcher taking a more participatory role in the interview. This was accomplished by the researcher contributing comments, when appropriate, during the interview. These two interviews evolved more as a conversation resulting in a meaningful exchange of stories. It was the respectful and honourable thing to do because this research is for and about the leaders. I believe at all times, as a researcher,

the emotional, physical and mental capabilities of the people involved must be considered more important than the academic requirements of the researcher.

### Questionnaire

The final stage of gathering data consisted of a questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that would give the researcher access to the specific kinds of information that may not have been evident in the environmental autobiographies or the semi-structured interviews. The autobiographies were an exercise in deep reflection and self-discovery that resulted in rich, insightful memoirs and the narrative-style interview allowed for an uninterrupted flow of memories and experiences in an oral tradition. It was a unique combination of written and oral history. The questionnaire was designed in order obtain additional information that would be helpful in addressing the research questions regarding environmental leadership.

Samples of the questions asked are as follows:

- 1) From where do you derive hope and inspiration?
- 2) How would you describe your role as a teacher in EE?
- 3) What do you think motivates you to promote EE in your classrooms?

A copy of the complete questionnaire is attached (Appendix C) and was organized around four types of information: worldview, background and training, affective (personal meaningful impact) and leadership. This questionnaire was distributed during the final summer of graduate school.

### Bias

Research is about “starting from others’ lives to develop less partial and less distorted accounts of nature and social relations (Gough, 1993). These lives are diverse and yet similar. All studies are biased from the beginning because the researcher already has a world view that is reflected in the research and writing of the paper. My own experiences and knowledge have shown me how I fit into the world around me. I have an understanding of how things work together in the world that makes sense to me.

My understanding is that we and all the *others* on this earth are irrevocably connected and tied to each other and that all things have a right to exist simply because they are. I respect and honour all living things, yet occasionally, I choose to eat meat. So how do I make sense of that? How does killing an animal fit into my world of respect and honouring all living things? If I lived in the village of Chillihuani, high in the Andes of Peru, as my llama was being slaughtered I would cradle its head, feed it coca leaves and implore the mountain gods to return the animal spirit as a newborn (Bolin, 1998). I cannot do that, so I choose to eat organic meat because I believe that animal has been treated fairly with some measure of dignity and respect prior to finding its final resting place on my dinner plate.

Bias or “conceptual baggage” accompanies all research projects and should be acknowledged as part of the research process. Acknowledging and recording through the use of reflection, one’s own views and thoughts, adds another much needed dimension to the research process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). It also serves to place the research in context, because the researcher’s views are known.

The researcher's world view is often reflected in the topic, the research question and the research design methods. The research cannot shed his/her world view; it is a part of the self that cannot be denied or hidden. According to Merriam (1988) in case study research all observations and analyses are filtered through the world view and values of the primary instrument – the researcher. The most important thing that researcher can do is to attempt to be aware of their own world view or beliefs and know that it will impact the research. In this particular instance, the group and I do share a similar world view. Accordingly, I took care to ensure that this did not negatively impact the research or blind me to themes and patterns I might take for granted. This was accomplished by the use of extensive quotes in support of themes used in the final analysis of the data.

However, a researcher who is detached from the participants creates a abyss between the researcher and the participants impeding the quality and depth of information gathered. Participants are intuitive and instinctively sense whether or not the researcher is researching from the heart. Researching from the heart ensures a powerful connection is made based on a caring, respectful exchange of information. Bonds of trust and respect are forged from a close relationship immersed in reciprocity and honour. The researcher was a member of the group being researched and, therefore, was not detached from the dynamics of the group (Smith, 1993). To that end, personal observation, reflections and journal entries became part of the thesis.

Being an “insider” allowed me to gain the trust and confidence of the cohort group because of the close relationship we experienced during and after the graduate program. This relationship was not established instantly and matured over the initial

three year graduate program and it was only after the coursework was completed that several good friendships developed. I remember thinking at the Alert Bay Field School, as meals were being prepared in a somewhat chaotic communal kitchen, what an odd group I was about to study with. As the group culture was created and alliances formed over three years, I believe it was my lucky position as an “insider”, that resulted in the rich, personal stories and narratives that otherwise may not have emerged. In many instances they bared their souls and that kind of truth is the highest compliment paid to a researcher.

A potential perceived source of bias or conflict is the working relationship between the researcher (a student in the graduate program) and the thesis supervisor who was also the developer, coordinator and instructor of the graduate program. This descriptive analysis of my peers is being completed under the supervision of Dr. G. Snively, who is, unwittingly, placed in a position of power. This research is not about evaluating the success of the graduate program, but is about the perceptions and experiences of that group during the graduate program because those experiences are part of the story they are going to share with me. The dynamics of power cannot be underestimated, but I believe good research can be achieved when all concerned understand the importance of boundaries and the obligation of respect practiced on each side.

### Ethics

Ethics and morality are a necessity in the research process. The researcher is aware it is a privilege and an honour to be allowed into the lives of others. To ensure that respect was built into the research process, the researcher attempted at all times to

be honest and accurate in validating and honouring the stories and lives of these inspired leaders.

In this research project, the question of validation is addressed on two levels. First, the interviews became narrative in nature because the leaders themselves guided the interview process and the themes that emerged were based on the word-for-word responses of the participants. Validation was also achieved by choosing multiple methods of data collection with each instrument gaining strength and momentum from the other (Merriam, 1988).

Understanding and gaining insight into a culture offers valuable lessons that can be passed on and cultural borrowing or transmission is a common way of acquiring new knowledge. "Culture as lived by the individual represents the ultimate inside view" (Blackman, 1990) and the cohort group graciously allowed me so much more than a glimpse of their culture.

#### Concluding Comments

As a researcher it is important to remember "the research itself is a form of learning and that research reporting is a form of teaching" (Wagner cited in Gough, 2002). This thesis is written and researched on the premise that peoples' stories are valid because they are testimonies of life's experiences. How those experiences fit into the larger context of that person's life reflects the way a person orders or fits new knowledge into their daily lives.

It was anticipated that the collaborations of combined stories and experiences would revitalize and validate the environmental efforts of this outstanding group of leaders by offering an opportunity for empowerment through self-discovery (Smith,

1993). A celebration of collective action and hope, sprinkled with humour and sometimes cynicism, illustrates the remarkable ability of this group to maintain their culture of environmental leadership. Social science research methodology itself “is an enriching process leading to enhanced possibilities of making sense of the human world and to a loosening of interdisciplinary and methodological strictures” (Connole, 1993, p. 19) and it is hoped that this research has contributed to making sense of the culture of environmental leadership.

During our three years as graduate students we exchanged anecdotes, life stories and experiences. We became a part of each other’s lives and our stories intermingled creating, what I believe to be, a unique view of what creates and sustains environmental leadership. I am not alone in my belief that a life story can teach life’s most valuable lessons, offering an insider’s view of how people make meanings and connections in their lives (Atkinson, 2002).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Literature Review

This chapter is divided into four sections sections. The first section consists of an overview of four leadership models: moral, servant, shared and authentic leadership. The first model, moral leadership, is discussed in an educational context, although it is not specifically focused on environmental education. The three other models of leadership were selected because they share characteristics of leadership that could easily work within an environmental education paradigm and because certain characteristics are evident in all three models.

The second section introduces the concept of environmental leadership and reviews current leadership programmes within an environmental context. The role of culture and world views are explored as is the role of values within an environmental context. The third section consists of a brief discussion on the role of significant life experiences in the lives of environmental educators. An exploration of environmental leadership would not be complete without examining it in a cultural context and the impact of significant life experience on life choices and underlying values cannot be underestimated and this is an area where much Environmental Education research has already been conducted.

The final section describes six current environmental research projects selected for their methodology and findings specific to the development and sustainment of environmental leadership. Of note is the fact that only one of these studies referred to the participants as environmental leaders, yet all participants were committed environmental leaders as confirmed by the studies.

### Overview of Leadership Models

The current literature on leadership suggests that the culture of leadership is changing and evolving. The old leadership models based on authoritative and dictatorial methods have less relevance today and the literature indicates that recent leadership models focus on authenticity, enlightenment, empowerment and an awareness that leadership can and should be shared (Oakley & Krug, 1991; Stanfield, 2000; Terry, 2001). A review of these leadership models will provide knowledge and insight into the kind of leadership practiced by the cohort group.

### Moral Authority

Different situations call for different kinds of leadership. Schools, as moral institutions, require a different style of leadership than do the top down models of the corporate business world where morals are usually governed by the generation of corporate profits. Sergiovanni (1992) defines moral authority as “leadership in the form of obligations and duties derived from widely shared values, ideas and ideals (p. 31). According to Sergiovanni (2000) “school leadership is built on moral authority which is the building of a covenant of shared values, that bonds in a common cause and transforms an organization into a community that cares about each other” (p. 15).

An example of a successful model that encourages moral leadership at the community level is Hammond’s Action Learning Triangle (1997) where students and teachers take personal responsibility and engage in responsible action within their own communities. The Foxfire Outreach Program is an example of a community model based on the learning triangle that encompasses the practice that “connections between the classroom work and surrounding communities and the real world outside the

classroom are real (Bowers, 1995, p. 186). In other words, what is learned inside the classroom should connect to life outside the classroom because as Orr observes the separateness that is taught in schools does not transfer well to a world where all things are connected (Orr, 1994).

According to Bowers (1995) it is only by renewing ecological community traditions that the seventh generation will be sustained. This particular community model also encourages that teacher and student collaborate together in the learning and teaching process so that leadership is a shared process finding its roots in a stewardship ethic that includes needs of the community. A similar model at a small school in Alaska has been extremely successful resulting in greater student self-esteem, a deepening appreciation of the community and broader knowledge of the natural environment around them (Rowe & Probst, 1995). These learning models were not curriculum driven and were dependant on teachers accepting a leadership role in implementing and initiating the programs.

#### Servant Leadership

The use of the word “serve” may seem an odd choice to those who understand leadership only in the corporate or political sense where one powerful person makes a final decision that affects many. It is a curious paradox, this concept of leadership and servitude, but by carefully examining the relationship between paradoxes, one can begin to understand how the two seemingly polarized images are linked. Servitude and leadership are intimately connected because according to Greenleaf (1998) a truly great leader is a servant first. This connection between leadership and servitude is truly

enlightening because the literature reveals that leadership is a form of service that cooperatively meets the needs of a community (Sergiovanni, 1992).

With servitude the need for power, reward and self-satisfaction are diminished. Leaders cannot guarantee results and as a result servant-leaders continually question, reflect and either continue the course or change direction (Greenleaf, 1998). Leaders who follow this model are flexible and open to the changes that the journey of life offers (Demoranville, 2002) and some do not realize they are leading at all (Knapp, 1999; Ross, 2003). According to Sergiovanni (1992) respect for others is a form of empowerment and respect is a crucial component of the servant leadership model because it invites responsibility and ownership. Life experiences and how they connect to life outside one's self is also an integral part of the authentic/servant leadership experience (Kovan, 2003).

#### Shared Leadership

The literature on leadership also suggests the belief that leadership is a shared responsibility and not always easily defined or assigned. It is dependent upon developing a leadership style that is compatible with who is leading, under what circumstances and to whom (Haury, 2001). A group leadership program manual published under the auspices of The EarthValues Institute explained shared leadership this way: that within any group there are leaders who can fill different roles such as directing, coaching, facilitating and delegating. The role of group leaders was to initiate, motivate and listen so that leadership was shared. A model of shared leadership is an empowering and yet humbling experience because the success or subsequent failure is shared by all (2003).

Peavey (1986) uses passion and emotion in her work and embraces both concepts of shared leadership and servant leadership. For her “working for change came from the heart” and leadership is a form of service where all concerned have a stake in decision-making and areas of change (Peavey, 1986). According to Stanfield (2000) the desire to bring about change is a powerful motivator and “the courage to care is the foundation of the courage to lead” (p. 30). Tapping into the “heart of leadership is to gain entry into a person’s interior world” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p.7) and recent research by (Ausubel, 2001; Jardine, 2000; Kovan 2003; Orr, 1994) reveal that deep emotions and passions are prominent in the lives of environmental activists. This passion resonated deep within the cohort group as I contemplated its origins and the role it may have contributed to the continued story of their environmental leadership.

It is important to understand that “leadership is an act and not a position” (EarthValues Institute, 2003) and that action is instrumental in bringing about transformation. Viewed in this context, environmental educators, albeit unacknowledged, are transformed into the leaders they are. Leaders are agents of change and leading by action, teaching through example and sharing knowledge that is lived are powerful examples of leadership that impart valuable lessons.

#### Authentic Leadership

Terry (2001) explores the component of spirituality that is evident in authentic leadership. This added dimension of spirituality to leadership is relevant to this study because the cohort group exhibited varying degrees of spirituality during the graduate summer session. Using seven zones to describe the leadership experience, beginning with “serving the past” to “living the promise”, Terry (2001) defines leadership as

“wise, adept choices by persons who singularly and collectively respond to and/or anticipate stirrings, embrace the challenge and courageously and faithfully serve the welcoming promise of authenticity” (p. 417). This leadership model is based on authenticity and believes that the leader lives the promise every day.

When stewardship partners with spirituality, it forms the heart of leadership (Greenleaf cited in Terry, 2001). A form of spirituality is already present in stewardship and when it becomes a component of leadership, it offers hope and empowerment. The sources and stories of hope are as wide and varied as recent research indicates (Hicks, 1998) and leadership without hope is leadership without empowerment or motivation. Making a difference, seeking a profound vocation or a sacred purpose combined with reflection and mindfulness is what Sergiovanni (2000) refers to as the covenant. Stanfield (2000) concludes it is the power of the “social pioneers who live on behalf of the future and make a difference with their lives” (p. 190). Environmental Education needs to develop a leadership model ensuring its goals are carried on by the next generation. Teaching environmental education is the first step in creating the active citizenry it so desires and nurturing environmental leadership should be incorporated into that goal.

To summarize, several characteristics of the four models may be applied to the kind of environmental leadership learned and practiced by the cohort group. The discipline of Environmental Education needs to know what comprises the unique story of environmental leadership in order to prepare future leaders for their role as agents of change. The models of leadership discussed share several themes: stewardship, the importance of sustainable communities, sharing of values, making a difference through

action, a passion and exuberance in daily life and a strong spiritual component. This research project will explore the role these themes may have played in the environmental leadership that has become a life choice for the cohort group.

### Environmental Leadership

The literature review revealed that more research must be done in the area of leadership studies within the context of Environmental Education. It appears to be an area where little research has been undertaken and an initial search of the ERIC digest and EBSCO hosts revealed a total of eight articles on leadership in Environmental Education. In his source book written for staff and volunteers of environmental organizations Langton (1984) describes environmental leadership as relating to “directing or moving the organization to achieve some purpose or to serve some value” (p.13). In his early study on evaluating four environmental leadership college programs, Lemons (1985) asserts that the “resolution of environmental problems requires the development of environmental values and planned change (leadership) of individual and societal behaviour which reflects such values” (p. 244).

As a way of understanding environmental leadership Gordon & Berry (1993) link environmental leadership to the key characteristics of environmental problems which they define as:

- 1) finding solutions takes a long time,
- 2) complex systems,
- 3) an emotion-charged context,
- 4) a relatively weak and scattered science base,
- 5) a need for integration across a wide array of areas of knowledge and human attitudes and concerns (p.4).

Environmental leadership is also dependent upon the context, whether it is educational, institutional, volunteer, non-profit, corporate or government and Gordon & Berry (1993) concluded that there were also certain elements of environmental leadership that were shared regardless of context:

- 1) be a leader and a follower,
- 2) think about change,
- 3) develop breadth and flexibility,
- 4) learn to listen – humility,
- 5) set an ethical example,
- 6) be a lifelong learner (p.29).

Their research included stories by successful environmental leaders from a variety of fields including academics, government, business and industry and its purpose was directed at ways and means of encouraging and teaching environmental leadership to all sectors of the population. It was concluded that one highly effective way of teaching environmental leadership was listening to, observing and learning about successful environmental leaders (Gordon & Berry, 1993). It is the lived experience of leadership that affords a meaningful learning experience.

A study of leadership students at Penn State Conservation Leadership Schools explored the problem of issue awareness and behavioral change in the environmental dimension (Hicks, 1998). This study recognized that in order to develop responsible active citizens, students need to be granted an opportunity to develop a sense of ownership and empowerment if positive change is to be realized. The study determined this could be achieved by teaching environmental action skills, removal of negative barriers and offering concrete experience in solving environmental issues. In my opinion a major weakness of this study, however, was its recommendation that

testing and grading student knowledge in specific environmental education areas was a desirable outcome. This reduces environmental education to simply another subject instead of the values-driven ethic it really is (Orr, 1991). The only real way to test environmental leadership is in the field where potential leaders can experience the whole effect of their plan of action.

The University of Alberta developed a program called the Environmental and Outdoor Education Leadership School as a means of linking to an already established provincial program called Environmental and Outdoor Education Course of Studies (Hanna, 1991). The outdoor education course promoted an integrated, experiential approach so that youth understood the society of which they were a part of. Basic skills relevant to personal and group knowledge, interaction and environmental knowledge were taught at the first level of learning. At the next level learning was achieved by investigation and being placed in various situations and finally at the empowerment level, students learned to commit to personal, society and environmental harmony. This is the kind of learning experience that John Dewey theorized, beginning at the individual level with questioning and reflection, and emerging at the society level with change resulting from thoughtful action (Miettenen, 2000).

The leadership component offered by the University to teachers (undergraduate and graduate) was experiential learning in outdoor situations. Its goal was to link the adventure component of the previous program with environmental education and offered teaching solutions on all three levels of learning that were practiced in the Outdoor Education Course (Hanna, 1991). For a program to be successful, cooperation was necessary from the grass roots level to bureaucratic levels. Attaining that kind of

cooperation and harmony points to a leadership model that has the power to not only motivate the active citizenry that Hungerford (1996) deemed an essential part of Environmental Education, but also a model that teaches social and democratic responsibility.

A quantitative study on leadership effectiveness at the Colorado Outward Bound School resulted in the testing of one hundred and thirty instructors that yielded one hundred and nine valid responses (Riggins, 1985). The purpose of the study was to determine leadership characteristics of effective Outward Bound instructors and to develop criteria that would aid in their selection. A biographical inventory questionnaire was developed and administered along with a personality test resulting in profiles of each leader. Two findings are relevant to this study. One was that participation in the National Leadership School was not thought to be a significant factor for instructor effectiveness and personality characteristics, individually and as a whole, made no significant contribution to instructor effectiveness. A conclusion of this study was the implied relationship between practical field experience and instructor effectiveness.

In other words, effective leadership as it relates to Outward Bound Schools is reliant on practical experience and knowledge gained from life experiences. If leadership cannot be learned in an institutional setting and the evidence linking effective leadership and personality was scanty, then future studies on environmental leadership must look to other areas such as significant life experience, mentors, influence of family, community action and volunteerism to explore the evolution of environmental leadership. This was a quantitative study and rich descriptions of

formative experiences or life transforming events were not included and all conclusions were the result of statistical analysis. Without a doubt, quantitative research is useful, however, it does not create a complete story of environmental leadership. It is only part of the story and qualitative research provides the much needed human aspect of educational research that is lacking in quantitative research.

In his evaluation on conventional and alternative environmental leadership models, Lemons (1985) notes while conventional programmes made provision for the teaching of values and skills, a major deficiency of all conventional programmes was that they did not allow adequate provision for students to test ideals and values against personal experience. In other words, they were taught skills and knowledge, but were not provided with a situation that allowed them to test those skills in a real-life experience and compare the reality of solutions to their own value systems.

Alternative environmental leadership models addressed the concerns regarding values and community experience and also attempted to address the issues of autonomy and social responsibility. Several examples of alternative leadership models were provided and received positive evaluations. The stated purpose of Deep Springs College in California was to “prepare people for a life of courageous leadership and service to humanity” (Lemons, 1985, p. 249). To achieve this, the program included a strong academic content, taught ideals reinforced by personal experience, encouraged participation in community combined with shared decision making at all levels and the integration of school, work and community experiences. One difficulty with this programme is that leadership was equated with intelligence and only those students with the highest averages were granted entry into the program.

In summarizing this section, we learn that environmental leadership requires practical experience and knowledge gained in the field or community to be truly inspiring, motivating and, most importantly, believable. Environmental leadership is about changing currently held values and effecting personal change that benefits society as a whole; it must be inclusive as opposed to exclusive. This kind of leadership is about serving the community and encouraging social and democratic responsibility.

It may be that environmental leadership can be taught in an institutional setting and that certain leadership skills can be acquired, but personal experience and the environmental practice that Weston (1996) proposes is desirable, not only to environmental educators but, to environmental leaders. It is evident that environmental leadership must expand its knowledge base to include economical, cultural, political and scientific knowledge (Gordon & Berry, 1997; Langton, 1984) in order to achieve the balance required for a sustainable future.

#### Culture and World View

The research question refers to a “culture of environmental leadership” and, therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of what the word culture really means. Culture refers very generally to the way of life shared by a particular group of people. In general it takes into account their language, religion, rituals, values, marital and family life and political and economic organization. Peoples & Bailey (1991) define culture as “the socially transmitted knowledge shared by some group of people” (p. 15) and although shared knowledge guides the behaviour of people, it cannot be expressed as an absolute rule because of its complexity.

Culture is not what people do, rather it is the ideas and standards which govern their behaviour. According to Chambers (1985) “a culture, is therefore, a group of people who share standards of behaviour and have common ways of interpreting the circumstances of their lives” (p.4). However, sharing major cultural elements does not necessarily imply a similarity in behaviour. For example, within our own culture, there is the idea that the family is important and necessary for happiness and well-being of individuals. Traditionally, the male was the head of the family.

When we examine family structure within our culture we discover there are many different kinds of families that have evolved to suit a variety of circumstances and the traditional family comprised of mother, father and children is changing. For example, parents play a crucial role in family structure. Today there are traditional families consisting of a father and mother, there are single parent families, there are same sex parent families, there are blended families, families where grandparents adopt the role of parents and foster families. An individual’s response or interpretation of appropriate behaviour varies considerably within a culture. We understand that families are an important part of our culture and families have evolved to suit many different living situations.

The word world view also refers to the way that a group of people perceive and interpret reality and the events around them. It is their explanation or construct of how things work. This includes self-image and how they relate to the world around them (Peoples & Bailey, 1998). For instance, how a person views his or her place in nature is a part of their world view. What happens after death and how the spirit differs from the physical being is also part of a world view. When trying to understand how a culture

views its world, an anthropologist looks at symbolic actions like ritual, myths, language, humour, literature, music, art and even games (Robbins, 1997) to gain an understanding of how world view affects a person's reaction to the world around them.

Culture is expressed through language and language is a way people connect to and communicate ideas to each other. It is a tool enabling us to transmit thoughts, ideas and knowledge. Sapir (cited in Chambers, 1985) suggested "language also was a way of defining and guiding our perceptions" (p.6). Whorf (cited in Chambers, 1985) took this analogy one step further and argued that "each specific language constituted a frame of reference that orders a particular peoples' view of the world" (p.6), meaning that language can reflect the social and physical environment of a group of people. For example, the Inuit have many words to describe all types of snow, we have only one and the Aztecs of Mexico used the same word for cold, ice and snow.

These theories are currently in some dispute by some anthropologists, but in discussing the use of language, they help us to be sensitive to the nuances of speech. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) argue that metaphorical speech is indeed reflective of our conceptual systems and recent research within the context of environmental education has determined that through a range of metaphors student and adult orientations towards the environment can be explored and identified (Snively, 1986; Sherlock, 2004). In these studies metaphorical interviews were used to uncover orientations (how participants understand and experience the world) with the metaphorical categories being selected by the researcher.

Metaphors are shortcuts and are evident in our everyday speech. They condense two very different experiences into one compact word; that is, they take language from

one domain of experience and apply it to another. For instance, when discussing health issues, western language reflects metaphors borrowed from the domain of war. Germs are fought off, defenses are built up and resistance to a pandemic is achieved by waging war.

The Navaho, on the other hand, do not borrow from the domain of conflict when treating sickness. Illness is a displacement of the person from their proper place in the universe; it is some kind of disruption of harmony and balance must be restored (Robbins, 1997). The domains from which metaphors come from, can indeed give insight in people's views of the world. Examining or exploring a cultural phenomenon includes listening carefully to nuances of language and examining how metaphors are used

#### The Disconnect from Nature

The literature on environmental leadership has illustrated that values play an important role in leadership models. Values form our world view. We are not born with a world view, it is a part of our cultural heritage and, through some form of knowledge, is passed on to us enabling us to understand how we fit into the world. As stated before world view teaches us how we came to be and how to make sense of death. It is how we interpret reality and make sense of the events that comprise a lifetime. According to Clifford Geertz, human beings are compelled to "impose meaning on their experiences" because if they did not create some kind of order for their universe, the world would make no sense to them and a state of chaos would result (cited in Robbins, 1997, p. 6).

World views, a component of culture, are deeply ingrained in society and are evident in all aspects of daily life, including educational systems (Bowers, 1995) and it is a fair assumption, therefore, that the world views of teachers play an important role in the formation of values in future citizens and leaders. Corocan (1999) believes that Environmental Education in teacher education is “the priority of priorities” (p. 179), and yet there is little research on teacher beliefs or their world views (Hart & Nolan, 1999). It stands to reason if teachers are to be responsible for ensuring that “culture is to become ecologically sustainable” (Corocan, 1999, p. 179) then research exploring the world view of teachers may determine what kind of Environmental Education should be taught.

World views are reflected in many ways. The way a culture classifies its cultural and natural world reflects world view. For instance, the Kwakwaka'wakw have devised an elaborate ceremony called the Winter ceremony where spirit and animal helpers help the dancers connect and make contact with the supernatural world. It is through this contact that the social order and subsequent behaviour of the people is established and confirmed (Codere, 1990). Thus the Winter ceremonies reaffirmed the relationship shared by the Kwakwaka'wakw that was dependent upon contact with the natural world in order to receive messages from the supernatural world. The animals and plants of the land were powerful intermediaries and, therefore, invaluable as spirit helpers to the cultural tradition of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

The accompanying dance, art, mythology and rituals were devised, in part, to keep the spirits appeased. Cultures, worldwide, have great concerns about the powers of supernatural beings, the presence of ghosts and demons and magical powers of the

underworld. People have devised intriguing ways and means in order to capture, subdue, transform or transfer the power of supernatural beings and other powerful forces.

Myths, for example, are one way a culture passes on this specialized kind of knowledge. Joseph Campbell (1988) spent a lifetime researching the parallels between the great mythologies of different cultures and observed “Myths are stories about the wisdom of life” (p.11). I believe by this Campbell means that knowledge, through a kind of meaningful experience, is transformed into wisdom that teaches a culture about core values. In other words, knowledge is factual and wisdom is experiential. Wisdom is what cultures do with the knowledge they receive. The accumulated stories of environmental leadership, then, will provide the knowledge that when applied becomes the wisdom for future generations.

I am quite certain that a reverence for nature is universal in all cultures; that is, at one time it was a way of life for all; connecting people to the natural communities around them. How a people view themselves and nature is a part of their world view. Are they masters and conquerors of the natural world or are they part of nature? In our Westernized culture, industrialization is the critical process that has contributed to a separation and disconnect from nature that has resulted in widespread misuse of the Earth’s resources (Bowers, 1995, 1999; Smith, 1999). According to Bowers (1995) the current myth that technology can overcome the ecological crisis is part of a belief system and is deeply embedded in all aspect of our culture.

Science has only recently acknowledged that the present belief systems that comprise our world view are a major contributor to the continued destruction of the

Earth. The following joint statement was presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations by the Union of Concerned Scientists:

...a great change in our stewardship of the Earth and life on it is required if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be mutilated. The earth is finite. Its ability to absorb wastes and destructive effluent is finite. Its ability to provide food and energy is finite and we are fast approaching many of the earth's limits. (Cited from Bowers, (1995, p. 4).

Expressed in terse, flat language, the statement was signed by 1600 scientists from seventy countries including one hundred recipients of the Nobel prize. It urges immediate remedial action by mankind.

Fran Peavey, (1986) a teacher turned activist, also frames concerns about the future:

What would I do with my last few minutes if the sirens went off? Would I look out my window and watch it all go, waiting for that fraction of an eternity for the wave to evaporate me? Would I grab whoever is nearby and give them all the love I have? Or would I lie down on the hill near my house, hug the earth like a dying lover and apologize? ( p.61)

Both statements acknowledge grave concern for the future, yet they differ in context portraying the difference in world views that is partially responsible for the ecological crisis that exists today.

The first statement views the world as a finite resource with mankind in a management position, above nature, and armed with the knowledge to protect diminishing resources. The second statement accepts responsibility for the state of the Earth and acknowledges an ancient kinship with nature. The first world view places humankind above nature and the second world view places humankind as one with

nature. These are very different world views and they affect, ultimately, how we interpret and react with the world.

There is consensus that a shift, away from a world view rooted in anthropocentrism and extrinsic values to a world view grounded in biophilia and intrinsic values, is crucial if man and nature are to reconnect (Drengson, 2000; Katz, 1997; Orr, 1994). Weston (1995) questions the efficacy of school as a place for teaching environmental education at all but, in my view, it is a good starting point, particularly, because of the profound effect a teacher can have on a student. School is one place to begin the story and the practice of ecological literacy because as Jardine (2000) astutely observed “ecology and ecological awareness are already intergenerational and pedagogy has the ability to be so” (p. 9).

It is in the reconciliation of opposing world views that Environmental Educators and school leaders face their greatest challenge “because the awareness that the ecological crisis is, in part, a crisis in cultural values and beliefs leaves us with some difficult questions” (Bowers, 1995, p.2). According to (Weston 2004), “the task of EE then, very broadly speaking, is to address our disconnection, reverse it, to re-situate us, to welcome us home” (p. 33). This task requires a specialized form of leadership. Lois Goodrich passionately called for leadership that rose to the challenge of creating a moral, caring, committed citizenry with purpose, unafraid to commit to difficult goals (1981).

### Core Values

The study of values in Environmental Education has become problematic (Chapman, 2004) and a case in point is that the entire spring volume of the Canadian

Journal of Environmental Education was devoted to the topic of ethics and values. Caduto reviewed Environmental Values Education and concluded that environmental educators needed to look to strategies used in general moral education and apply them to the field of EE (1982). Drawing on the models of moral development as proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg it has been argued that values and ethics could be enhanced by specific EVE strategies and be applied in a beneficial way to Environmental Education (Caduto, 1982).

Environmental Educators understand the teaching of values is crucial in creating an active citizenry yet the teaching of morals, values and ethics is problematic and continues to plague Environmental Educators. So much so, that in 1995 the Yukon College in Whitehorse hosted a Colloquium on the environment, ethics and education (Jickling, 1996). Research is still being conducted on how best to develop and implement values strategies and a curriculum that is unbiased and free of indoctrination (Caduto, 1982; Fien, 1992; Weston, 1995).

Initiating a shift moving concerns to an ecological framework is a good beginning:

- 1) from independence to interdependence,
- 2) from competition to cooperation,
- 3) from quantity to quality,
- 4) from expansion to conservation,
- 5) from domination to partnership (Capra 1983, cited in Kool, 1996)

Applying ecological values would provide a basic framework for the realization of EE's goal of creating environmentally knowledgeable citizens because an understanding is needed that a partnership between humankind and environment is, not only desirable, but necessary for the continued well-being of both. The challenge to change currently held values calls for leadership and that leadership challenge, in part,

is being addressed by those who have already dedicated their lives to change: the teachers already in the education system. Chapman laments that Environmental Education is not being done because of its failure, in part, to address the critical issue of values (2004). This leads to the interesting question of what values and whose values are being perpetuated in the education system?

The education of this motivated citizenry poses a dilemma in democratic cultures and yet the values that Environmental Education espouses are the very values upon which democracy evolved. Values such as: “acceptance of self, respect for others, open-mindedness, respect for human rights, concern for justice, commitment to justice, commitment to sustainable development and a willingness to be involved” (Fien, 1992, p. 2) are not in themselves controversial, yet the fear of indoctrination persists.

Environmental Education also takes place outside the confines of the classroom. Smith (1999) cites two successful examples of non-formal education organizations at the community level that have been successful in implementing shifts in values; the Earth Institute and Mattole Restoration Council. Bowers (1999) feels strongly the community is in great danger of being commodified, yet Smith’s (1999) research reaffirms the resilience of the community and its ability to remember “the community of memory stored in the stories told by previous generations” (Bowers, 1999, p. 166).

Both organizations that Smith explored operate on the premise that their members can develop the skills and insights necessary to address environmental challenges, most often in an experiential learning situation. These new skills are then put to the test in a practical manner and members experience the security of a mutually supportive group. This kind of knowledge based on practical experience is a

meaningful learning experience that is not linear and also supports Kuiack's (2004) recent research on the significance of influence of others in the process of meaningful learning.

This meaningful learning, therefore, requires environmental leadership grounded in experience that is connected to local communities. As already indicated, linking schools with communities is one way of creating meaningful learning experiences for both student and community (Ross, 2004). EE educators recognize the importance of reconnecting students to local communities that include nature; and share the belief that reflection and action can help build sustainable caring communities comprised of moral citizens (Bowers, 1995; Knapp, 1999; Kuiack, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1999).

Environmental education, because of its concern for nature and conservation, has usually been considered as part of the science program in many schools. It is found at the periphery of school curricula because its values, based on new post modernist beliefs collide with the values created by a competitive industrialized society (Hammond, 1997). It seems to me that by teaching Environmental Education as a subject, compartmentalized, streamlined and homogenized for the sake of curriculum; schools and curriculum developers have failed to initiate the cultural shift in world views towards a more nature-oriented belief system. That combined with the very real fear of indoctrination has crippled Environmental Education and until this issue is resolved, particularly, regarding the issue of values, EE may find itself marginalized until such time real environmental leadership is realized.

### Significant Life Experiences

Marcinkowski et al believe that the ultimate goal of EE is “to aid citizens in becoming environmentally knowledgeable and, above all, skilled and dedicated for working, individually and collectively, toward achieving and/or maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between quality of life and quality of the environment” (cited in Macdonald, 1990, p. 118). Understanding the dynamics of leadership, then, must be considered an integral part of attaining this goal. The realization of this goal requires a special kind of leadership that not only motivates citizens to take action and effect positive change, but one that connects them, lovingly, to the world around them.

Significant life experience research was new in the 1980’s and is particularly relevant to this thesis because that research resulted in two findings that put teachers and Environmental Educators in a leadership position. One finding was that teachers were influential at any point in the students’ development right from primary grades to postgraduate school. This validates the powerful, often transformative, influence teachers have on peoples’ lives, regardless of point of entry (Tanner, 1980).

The second finding; that children must learn to love the natural world before they can be concerned about it (Tanner, 1980) acknowledges that teachers (and/or others) can be instrumental in creating and nurturing this love and care of the natural world. This ethic of care was the topic of a recent research project that reaffirmed concrete care of nature (daily care of plants), coupled with reflection and writing, resulted in a significant learning experience (Mortari, 2004). The children became very concerned about the well-being and survival of their particular plants. The act of caring

and nurturing created awareness in the well-being and survival of nature that was not evident prior to the study.

The early research on significant life experiences is important to this study because it signifies the profound influence of teachers and others in the learning process and acknowledges that knowledge must be meaningful and relevant. You have to love something before you will do anything for or about it (Orr, 1994; Sobel, 1995). The grip of the past has a tenuous hold on the future and by exploring the lives of those who have exhibited committed, proven environmental leadership, it is anticipated that those connections between life experiences and present choices can better be understood. The cohort group are environmental leaders; it is who they are, woven tightly into the fabric of their being.

Teaching children to become environmental stewards in their own communities while learning in an experiential, hands-on-context provides knowledge that is grounded in practical experience and meaning (Kiefer & Kemple, 1999). Recent research has shown that the influence of others is one of the foremost things in the development of meaningful learning and according to Kuiack (2004) this influence is all the more powerful if those teaching have “first experienced a lived world” (p.125). In other words, the teaching is all the more powerful if it is rooted both in experience and an intimate, personal knowledge; and this kind of research contributes to the current study.

Hungerford (1989) saw Environmental Education as instrumental in the creation of active citizens having knowledge about environmental issues that were based on sound educational principles consisting of skills and attitudes. Today environmental

educators are also expected to have an understanding of the social, political and economical components that have contributed to the environmental concerns they so passionately care about (Chapman, 2004). Not addressed by Hungerford, but another crucial component of this model, is the necessity of a passionate dedicated love of the natural world (Goodrich, 1981; Jardine, 2000; Orr, 1991; Riley, 1994). I feel that awakening this love and teaching children how to live wisely, with respect and compassion for all things in the natural world around them, requires environmental leadership based on not only on theoretical and cognitive knowledge, but also a spiritual and emotional wisdom.

I believe we tend to view leadership as expansive and complicated with big ideas, yet it is often the small creative ideas that generate the greatest results as Mortari's (2004) delightful study has already proven. The simple act of caring for plants developed into an ethic of care within children. Diaries kept on a daily basis revealed tremendous insight into how the children developed a one-on-one relationship with their plants (Mortari, 2004). These kinds of experiences are the ones it is hoped are brought into adult life.

A recent study explored the development of experiences that Environmental Educators considered significant to their interest and dedication to the field of environmental education. Ten environmental educators were selected with a proven record of contributing to the resolution of an environmental problem or issue (Ottend, 2002). These ten leaders were nominated by a committee of three provincial leaders in Environmental Education. The data was collected by autobiographical recollections and a semi-structured interview. The participants, eight men and two women, were

over fifty years of age, with the exception of two who were in the thirty to fifty year range.

The most important formative experiences reported by the ten leaders were: experiences in natural areas, the influence of people, experiences of negative environmental impact, education and vocation. The results also determined that beliefs played an important role in their decision to become an environmental educator, but the research did not determine the origins of those beliefs. Some said their parents instilled certain environmental ethics in them, but others noted that while they believed in certain principles, they were not sure where they came from (Ottvad, 2002). This kind of knowing or “learning from that which is not known” was a major theme in Kovan & Dirk’s (2003) recent research on the role of transformative learning in the lives of environmental activists.

#### Current Studies in Environmental Leadership

Fortino’s (1997) research on mentors is the only study where participants are referred to as environmental leaders. The other studies used in this section refer to their co-researchers as environmental educators, teachers or volunteers, not leaders, even though all the participants had proven successful environmental and community leadership in order to qualify for the studies in the first place. This has created a barrier, I believe, because the number of studies undertaken in environmental leadership appear to be few and far between. It is a trend that needs to be rectified by acknowledging environmental educators for the leaders they are. Environmental educators need to be as concerned about environmental leadership as they are about the environment itself (Langton, 1984).

Goldberg's findings on leadership among forty-three mathematics and science teachers provide a basic framework in understanding leadership beliefs in the context of education, although not specifically Environmental Education. They are:

- 1) a bedrock belief in what they are doing is good and important,
- 2) the courage to swim upstream persevering in their belief in the face of resistance or criticism,
- 3) a seriousness of purpose, holding high standards and devoting years of sustained involvement in their causes,
- 4) situational mastery, the happy marriage of personal skills and accomplishment (cited in Haury, 2001).

Nolan & Hart (1999) concluded that "research which attempts to understand the complex mental lives of teachers is important because environmental education will occur in schools only when it becomes part of the teacher's story" (p. 26).

Understanding teachers' lives occurs when teachers are asked to tell their stories, in their own words and on their own terms. Contained within those stories are themes of leadership that have evolved over a lifetime of experiences. "The history of educational change reveals that the most significant determinant of whether or not a program is actually taught, especially as designed, depends on the classroom teacher" (McClaren, 1989, p. 88).

The process of learning and self-renewal in the lives of experienced and committed non-profit activists was recently explored in Kovan & Dirk's sensitive study (2003). Using a qualitative approach informed by narrative; nine participants with extensive activist environmental backgrounds were nominated by their peers. Six were women, all were Caucasian and ages ranged from thirty-four to fifty-four years of age.

The participants in Kovan & Dirk's study spoke of a vocation as something that was meaningful, relevant and had purpose in their lives and they attributed their

commitment “to deep emotional and spiritual connections with the work (p.109).

Their motivation was a spiritual one and the transformative experience, a gradual one originating from a lifetime of cumulative experiences rather than a single formative experience or epiphany. This quest or search to ‘find our life’ is also consistent with traditional Native American learning and is an integral part of ritual and ceremonial life (Cajete, 1999, p.60). The research on culture acknowledged that culture begins internally and reveals itself through beliefs, values and actions that ultimately are transformed to world views.

Through the use of narrative and reflective methodologies, Kuiack (2004) explores the production of meaningful relationships. “Fields of care”, a sense of experiencing the lived world, evolved into “fields of influence” that can result in biophilia. Kuiack’s research emphasized that alternate ways of knowing including mentors, learning through example, imagination, intuition and the influence of others tap into the emotional aspect of knowing. Emotional knowledge is important and along with others (Cajete, 1999; Orr, 1991), Kuiack believes that experiencing relationships with all natures’ creation creates a way of knowing that is inclusive.

In her research, Kuiack refers specifically to Dave, whom she calls a “mindful” educator (p. 130). Kuiack’s research concluded that Dave used empathy, feelings and emotions as part of his way of knowing in order to elicit a response from those whose lives he touched and influenced. Through his field of influence that was interactive and conscious, he created fields of care that profoundly affected the lives of those he taught. He taught in a real life context, on the river, where through his connection with the

river and knowledge of the creatures dependent on it, he wove stories that had meaning and evoked an emotional response from students (Kuiack, 2004).

Cheney (cited from the Colloquium on Environment, Ethics and Education, 1996) puts it this way, "The animal and plant people decided that they would provide what we humans need, so that we may tell the stories needed to create and continually renew this sacred world" (p.66). This translates into a learning experience that is inclusive, not exclusive and that knowledge is best passed on by a teacher who has experienced the wisdom being passed on.

Carol Fortino's (1997) research reveals that mentoring is a critical component if environmental leadership is to be sustained. The importance of mentoring as a way to augment personal and professional development of future environmental leaders was explored through the experiences of environmental leaders. This study is particularly relevant to this research because her narrative approach allowed for stories and experiences to be shared in the participant's own words. Fortino hoped to discover the role of mentoring in sustaining leadership by exploring the dynamics of paired mentor/mentoree relationships.

Fifty-seven leaders were selected by survey from a wide range of environmental activities and organizations from the United States and Queensland, Australia. There are many charismatic environmental leaders, but these were chosen because they were "quiet achievers, based on recognition by their peers for the quality of their activism beyond everyday job activities" (p.3). This was reduced to thirty pairs of mentor/mentorees resulting in a case report on three paired mentor/mentorees.

The mentoring relationships were informal and long-term, but the benefits received by the mentorees were long-lasting. Benefits were on a personal and professional level, with the mentorees gaining experience and confidence in their leadership abilities under the tutelage of respected mentors. The relationships were reciprocal, with each side respecting the knowledge and experience of the other. In summary, understanding the cascade of influence that flowed from the mentor to the mentoree should lead to new implications in professional development of future environmental education leaders (Fortino, 1997).

Doom and gloom is often associated with Environmental Education (Gough, 1993). The historical context of the graduate course presented a unique opportunity to observe the role of hope in the daily lives of these leaders. The horrific vision of the shattered Twin Towers in New York was the beginning of an era of extreme uncertainty and, for many, the demise of the myth that the world was a safe place. These were dark times indeed for all of us.

As a response to the “psychology of despair” and by studying the experiences of twelve global educators, Hicks identifies a “pedagogy of hope” (1988). By adopting a qualitative methodology he identified ten sources of hope: natural world, other peoples’ lives, collective struggles, visionaries, faith or belief, sense of self, human creativity, mentors/colleagues, relationships, and humour (Hicks, 1998). The data was collected by using a semi-structured interview, an autobiographical assignment and a focus group weekend.

An unexpected final source of hope was the focus group weekend where Hick’s participants felt revitalized, renewed and empowered as they shared stories. This

research also emphasized the need for stories of hope and acknowledged that environmental educators were a valuable resource for these new stories. Hick's brave calling for a new narrative, new stories of hope for the future, narratives of a "visions of an earth restored" (p.175) is in itself a source of hope and inspiration.

Stewardship as a method of transformation was explored recently by Demoranville (2002) who concluded that the only "goal of all humanity is to make the world a better place, in our time and for future generations" (p.203). Stewardship is a model that is experiential, encompasses critical thinking, provokes thoughtful action, promotes empowerment and instills hope. The purpose of this study was an inquiry into the nature of sustained involvement and ongoing learning of environmental stewards in three volunteer organizations. The study was qualitative and the data was obtained by primary literature and two semi-structured interviews. The data revealed that the main reasons for initial involvement were: self-interest, deep love of place and influence of friends/mentors. Patterns of sustained involvement were civil society/activism, sense of responsibility, and deep love of place.

Curthoys and Cutherberston's (2002) study on the Ramsey Canyon Reserve confirmed that "a stewardship approach that is both respectful of landscape health and respectful of people can foster humility in preserve visitors" (p. 233). While visiting the reserve people learned that "a visit to this site is a privilege, rather than a right and become willing to place the needs of canyon life above their wants (p. 233). Curthoy's research showed that stewardship played an important role in changing previously held values and also revealed the dynamics of a relationship based on reciprocity. It also

respects the intrinsic values of the earth and at the same time acknowledged the importance of the natural community.

Learning to care for the land and to understand our place within nature, initiates a shift away from anthropocentrism and a move towards a new environmental paradigm (MacDonald, 1995). However, using stewardship as a technology to save the world, places it in the anthropocentric mixing pot along with sustainable development and conservation. Using stewardship, instead, to place intrinsic value on all things in nature establishes firm criteria for good environmental policy (Katz, 1997) as well as Environmental Education. Stewardship, because it is grounded in nature and spirituality on the one hand and connected to the community and humankind on the other, signifies hope for the future.

Demoranville's (2002) research on stewardship in community-based environmental groups, Fortino's (1997) research on the dynamics of mentoring among environmental leaders and Kovan's (2003) study linking struggles and the learning process among environmental activists all provide rich descriptions of the experiences of inspired individuals. The unifying theme is one of passionate committed leaders managing, on one hand, to find great joy and satisfaction in working for the common good and on the other a kind of despair. The role and nature of hope as explored by Hicks (1998) provided a look at how global educators were able to deal with their despair.

The role of professional development as a means to sustain commitment was very important in several studies (Demoranville, 2002; Fontino, 1997; Ross, 2004; Smith, 1999). In his study of community volunteers, Demoranville (2002) found that,

initially, people got involved because of self-interest. They stayed involved because they felt they fulfilled a civil society role, they felt a deep sense of responsibility and finally a deep love of place. Volunteers also believed that what they were doing was meaningful, relevant and purposeful; a realization of agency.

The role of action in Environmental Education plays a key part in preparing students for their role as future citizens and future leaders. Environmental Education practiced outdoors enables students to develop environmental experiences while engaged in activities, like gardening or bird-watching, without fear of failure. It becomes the environmental practice that Weston (1996) presented at the Yukon Colloquium and I believe environmental practice puts Environmental Education in the context that the learning process and subsequent action are connected. Furthermore, when Environmental Education is taught within this framework, it becomes personal and meaningful because there is less concentration on facts, structure and outcomes and more concentration on developing emotions, values and connections with the natural environment and surrounding communities (McClaren, 1989).

This meaningful learning, therefore, requires environmental leadership grounded in experience that is connected to local communities. As already indicted, linking schools with communities is one way of creating meaningful learning experiences for both student and community (Ross, 2004). EE educators recognize the importance of reconnecting students to local communities that include nature; and share the belief that reflection and action can help build sustainable caring communities comprised of moral citizens (Bowers, 1995; Knapp, 1999; Kuiack, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1999).

Local issues are best dealt with by locals who have the knowledge, history, connections and emotional attachment to their place. Research has shown that development of sense of place must tie into local place in order to foster a sense of commitment and connectedness to nature (Haluzá-Delay, 2001; Rowe & Probst, 1995; Sherman, 1998). Berry, with infinite wisdom, notes that “if you want to go good and preserving acts, you must think and act locally...” (cited in Gatto, 2002). At home is a very good and very hopeful place to start.

Environmental educators have implemented a number of successful projects that promote active citizenry involving students at the local level in their own communities (Ross, 2004; Rowe & Probst, 1995; Rowbottom & Gough, 1993; Williams & Taylor, 1999). Our prehistory confirms that it was in our local communities and local environments that we first learned to think and inquire, to develop ethics and values and act accordingly (Martin, 2001). According to Hickory (2004) communities are “nested” (p. 74) radiating from culture to wildness and not only did we think and develop intellectual abilities outside, we also connected on an emotional level. The odds of creating an active citizenry that stands up and protects their lands and communities are increased if they are emotionally connected to them (Cajete, 1994; Riley, 1994).

The research on environmental leadership is growing and with each new research project valuable contributions of knowledge add to cumulative understanding of the culture of leadership. The creation of the active moral citizenry that Environmental Education seeks to attain cannot be realized without effective environmental leadership. The process of continuous learning in one way or another is

a critical finding in all studies. It would appear that significant life experience, professional development, mentoring, experiential learning and self-renewal, hope, spirituality and humour all contribute in some way to the development of an environmental consciousness and environmental leadership. The challenge of this research project will be to explore those aspects and their connections to the cohort group.

That schools and the focus of education itself must change is the subject of lengthy debate (Cajete, 1999; Gatto, 2002; Illich, 1970; Krishnamurti, 1953; Prakash & Esteva, 1998). Orr (1991) notes that the world has been greatly harmed by educated people and needs instead “more peacemakers, healers, restorers, story tellers and lovers of every shape and form. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage, willing to join the fight, to make the world habitable and humane” (p. 100). Orr is describing a world in need of leaders who are passionate, dedicated and unafraid to commit heart and soul to reserving nature.

It seems fitting to close this literature review with a vision of what ideal environmental leadership might look like. Lois Goodrich (1981) called for a return to the spiritual dimension of learning; of nourishing the whole being beginning with a reawakening of awe and wonder because it seems the other ways have not worked. She pointed to leadership as the single most important influence on Environmental Education, specifically the kind of leader “ who went beyond in depth into my life, to the inspirational, emotional, spiritual and touched me and dared to stand for something and teach me values and morals, standards to guide me in my life” (Goodrich, 1981, p.8).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Introduction To Data Analysis - The Formative Years

The purpose of the study was, through the life experiences of a select group of environmental education leaders, to discover how a culture of environmental leadership evolved and under what circumstances it was sustained. The thirteen themes that resulted are presented in the following data chapters. Each paragraph of each interview was reduced to a single code word or phrase by the researcher. The code words or phrases were reduced to approximately twenty-five codes and transferred to index cards which were then organized into a series of themes. Themes were recorded for each participant and the selected themes were dominant in all or most of the participants.

The seven themes that emerged during early childhood and adolescence are presented in Chapter Four. The six themes that emerged from experiences during adult years are presented in Chapter Five. A final chapter, Chapter Six, discussed themes that emerged from the Alert Bay Summer Field School. This experience was a powerful and transforming experience for many of the graduate leaders and as the research progressed, it was determined that these findings deserved a separate chapter.

### **Discussion**

The seven themes that emerged from the data based on early experiences are:

- 1) Highly Developed Sense of Place
- 2) Deep Love of Nature
- 3) Early Influence of Others
- 4) Early Heroic Efforts

- 5) Early Experiential Learning
- 6) Overcoming Early Obstacles
- 7) Values

### Highly Developed Sense of Place

The reasons for arriving at a point of awareness go back to early childhood and various experiences served as a catalyst in creating this environmental consciousness. Every leader was passionate about a particular place and strong feelings about place have played a vital role in contributing to the culture of environmental leadership that is particular to this group.

For some, as this memory illustrated, that connection to place, in the context of birth place, was strong and unwavering.

It's funny – I found my environmental autobiography and I was looking at it and one of the things that I said was that I have a sense of place so strong that if I don't retire in my home town where I was born, or very close to that town where I grew up, then at the very least my ashes shall have to be spread there so that my spirit may rest in peace. I feel so strongly attached to that land out there and I've thought a lot about this and I don't think any other place I've lived at has had that sense of attachment for me. (Glory – interview)

For others, there was unhappiness and sadness associated with home place.

We would spend hours playing outside, playing on the beach, on the dock, building forts all over behind the house. And I found in recent years when I moved back to an area a lot like that...a lot of it was going back to my childhood and dealing with the ghosts from my childhood. Things and parts about my childhood that I didn't necessarily like, but going to Resolute Cove and experiencing that lifestyle all over again was a good chance for me to go back and realize that there were a lot of positive things. (Reba – interview)

Both memories reveal an ability to reflect back and to connect to present experiences. These leaders acknowledged and understand that we become our history;

that to experience the paradoxes of life is to learn and to grow. The leader revealed the importance of family places.

As a child we used to go to my Grandma's cottage every summer in Sable Beach, Ontario. I have so many wonderful memories of this place. It was right across from the beach, so much of our day was spent by the water. We used to go for walks along the beach (often get an ice cream cone as the end result) build sand castles in the dunes, explore the creeks to catch minnows, and play long games of "capture the flag" along the shores of Lake Huron. I used to think that my parents were not instrumental in shaping my love for the outdoors, but I realize that by bringing me to the cottage, I had my first exposure to being outside a lot of the time and exploring my natural surroundings. (Lida – environmental autobiography)

Sometimes, as revealed in this story that place was shared with family and friends and those annual events became joyful rituals that cemented family to a communal place. Other leaders, as the following memory reveals, moved frequently and childhoods were spent living in many different places.

My own sense of place is scattered; there is no powerful connection to any one specific place, but rather to a collection of places. I have lasting memories of many beautiful places, but no real sense of belonging to one place. If I say one place is more beautiful or more meaningful than the other, does that mean the others have a less meaningful impact. I am a gypsy at heart and have been blessed to travel and live in many wonderful places and while I may not share a personal or long history with these places, collectively, they are my place. (Kirsty – environmental autobiography)

This story showed that a sense of place need not have long roots and traveling determines a different sense of place based on many memories of beauty.

In summary, these examples of memories about developing a sense of place revealed that a variety of different experiences contributed to that development of a strong sense of place. Without love and connection to a place; there is no obligation to care for or nurture that place. The experiences described above are based on a combination of attachment to community (culture) and outside spaces (nature).

### Deep Love of Nature

When and how does a love and lifelong connection to nature begin? For this group, the experiences were very different, but I believe the strong connections that developed regarding their own place as revealed in the above section on Sense of Place contributed to their deep love of nature. Age played a determining role in the type of nature experienced by the leaders and every leader expressed a deep love of nature.

For the more mature leaders there was a glorious freedom as a child playing outside, unsupervised, with friends. One of the mature leaders offered this reflection.

We lived outside as children all the time. We were outside all day long. Winter, summer, all the seasons. We had the freedom to roam and we had the forest, we had the river and we had the swamp. It was a beautiful river and it was never a big deal to say bye to your folks and not see them until the end of the day. So I think maybe that has a lot to do with who you are. (Cohen – interview)

So for this leader, there were still wild places to explore and communities were safe and welcoming places to be. Around every corner, adventure beckoned and each day heralded the beginning of a different plot and a new set as nature's drama unfolded.

The following leader played also outside, mostly alone, according to this reflection.

One special place for me as a child of nine or ten was a plantation of pine or fir trees growing several miles from my home. I spent quite a lot of time at this age by myself because my siblings were away at boarding school. The Pine Forest, as this place came to be called involved a journey, the landmarks which are still clear in my mind...These trails led through pastures with streams, cattle, electric fences, copses and stone bridges. All these places hold special memories and feelings for me...These were the experiences that gave me my entry level environmental sensitivity. (Mick – environmental autobiography)

For this young explorer, a keen sense of observation and an intimate knowledge of local place provided an understanding of the lay of the land and created an emotional connection between land and culture.

The next story reveals the awe and wonder of a child who explored the water and the wondrous creatures that inhabited it.

My body, mind and spirit always desired the outdoors, for I had a deep love of nature, especially the water. The years of cottage life provided a plethora of many sensory experiences such as feeling the slippery mucus when catching leopard frogs, hearing the many cicadas on hot dry days; smelling the storm traveling across the lake; observing each year fewer catfish swimming with their broods or watching the sun sink, exploding with colours into the lake. I assumed everyone saw and delighted in these things. (Shell – environmental autobiography)

All senses were stimulated by nature and astute observation revealed minute changes in nature and also provided the beginnings of an early spiritual connection with nature.

Older leaders, those in their early forties and fifties, had very different experiences than those of the very youngest who were in their late twenties.

Younger members of the group fondly recall more organized experiences into the wilderness. These experiences were no less profound and meaningful than the unsupervised experiences of the mature leaders and had the advantage of a guide or mentor who shared knowledge and experience as this young leader revealed.

In 1981 my Dad took me on a four day hiking trip to Forbidden Plateau... I remember being amazed at everything. The water, trees, snow, mountains, wildflowers and animals that were so raw and wild. The whisky jacks leave me with the most profound memory. When one ate out of my hand, I was hooked... (Tyson – environmental autobiography).

This memory of a magical outing with a father is connected to the wonder in the trust of a wild animal that had not learned to fear humankind.

This following young leader's memory illustrated the importance of outdoor learning experiences that involves camping, hiking and wilderness survival and the profound effect that can result.

The PE class went on a backpacking trip in the Monashees. It was my first "roughin it" experience. I enjoyed the challenge and the adventure and I adapted very well to the "roughin' it" lifestyle...Throughout the weekend, we swam in glacier lakes, hiked mountains, bum-skied down the mountains we climbed, jumped off bridges into the river, went on night hikes and had bon-fires. That trip initiated my interest in backpacking and camping. (Alana - environmental autobiography)

Being outside in nature as part of an outdoor group or school field trip offered young leaders an opportunity to accept the challenges and gain an understanding of the importance of cooperation and teamwork required in meeting challenges. The different kinds of outdoor experiences, whether unsupervised play or organized outings each played a role in helping develop and promote a deep love of nature.

In summary, there are urban and suburban children who may never experience the wonder of stars in a dark summer sky or feel the rough ground beneath a sleeping bag and, yet, it is those same children who, as adults, may make decisions regarding a sustainable future without any personal knowledge of nature. The memories shared above offer evidence that the experience of meaningful outdoor experiences are an integral aspect of education.

#### Early Influence of Others

The influence of others recurred throughout the data and fourteen leaders confirmed the profound effect mentors, teachers, and family had on their lives. The stories shared by the leaders revealed that many leaders learned important knowledge from someone else at an early stage in his/her life. The initial contact may have been

long-lasting or, sometimes, very fleeting, yet the impact was often profound and long-lasting.

We learn in a number of ways, but we most often learn from others; those who teach us what they know. We can also learn by observation, listening, imitating and doing. The role that others play in the processes of reflection and questioning is also an integral aspect of these experiences because by sharing their wisdom and experience, they served not only as role models, but as examples of how environmental leadership is fostered.

The leader below described the special relationship she shared with her grandmother.

My grandmother showed me how to collect cattail pollen, dig up the “fleshy” roots and sketch on small pieces of birch bark. She made me believe I could survive in the woods if I ever got lost. My “Bama” (grandmother) was an artist and would sit by the lake for hours. While she painted her landscapes, she would tell me stories and talk of the sounds we heard and the plants and animals we saw. I have those paintings now and they are wonderful memories of my earliest memories by the lake and the enchanting times spent with my Bama (grandmother). (Shell – environmental autobiography)

From this relationship the young girl learned practical knowledge of survival in the woods and the importance of stillness and reflection while in nature. The medium of her grandmother’s painting granted an opportunity to revisit the past and to remember the lessons learned during early times.

Learning from others can be fun and nature has a sense of humour. An example of humor is demonstrated by First Nations people on the West Coast who have cast the raven in the role of a Trickster who exhibits a capricious sense of humour. The following leader shared this story about the humour in her father’s way of teaching.

And my father, who had been my incredible nature mentor my whole life would make up names for animals all the time! Oh yeah, that's the – you know – the short shafted, long puckered flicker nicker and we'd be all "ooooohhhh". Okay! (Glory – interview)

So, as this story revealed humour can be an effective and positive tool in passing on nature's lessons and this leader, in particular, utilized well the early lessons of her father's humour in her own leadership style.

The impact of a teacher is described by this leader who found it difficult to conform to school.

It is only later, in the first year of high school (equivalent to Grade Seven) after being thrown out of school as a disciplinary measure, that a natural spirit sent me Estelle. She recreated my whole childhood in a learning context...Estelle would always listen to me and acknowledge my childish experiments. She involved me in teaching some lessons and preparing public exhibits and Science Fairs. She was a model of kindness and understanding. (Queenie – environmental autobiography)

The leadership practiced by this teacher is subtle yet, at the same time, empowering because this teacher provided her student with an opportunity to teach, as well as to learn.

This leader remembered a teacher who empowered students.

I had one teacher in my high school career who really increased my awareness of environmental issues. Mrs. Dakota taught me a course called "Science and Society" and we spent a large percentage of the term learning about topics such as ozone depletion, pollution, greenhouse gases, overpopulation and recycling. I became really interested in these topics and for some one who was never really a strong science student, Mrs. Dakota sure made things clear for me. She was so passionate about these problems that we felt we had to come up with some solutions. She taught us that every little step counts. (Lida – environmental autobiography)

This teacher provided knowledge about environmental issues and, through her own wisdom encouraged reflection on the part of students and empowered them by instilling the belief that each and every small step made a difference. This teacher also provided

an example of a leadership model based on taking ownership of local issues and sharing in solutions.

To summarize; early influences were most often provided by family members and covered the full range of family kinship relations. During school years, teachers were important and their early influences had a profound and positive effect on the leaders by creating fields of caring that led to action and commitment regarding the preservation and conservation of nature. These early mentors were able to provide the guidance and direction and, in most instances, the influence was profound regardless of the duration of the relationship. The early mentors taught values based on compassion and sharing and acknowledged the contributions of others in initiating local action. Early lessons for many of the group were grounded in practical experience that resulted in empowerment.

#### Early Heroic Efforts

One of the most interesting themes to emerge was the occurrence and emergence of early activism during childhood years. This was an extremely powerful theme and was shared by eleven leaders who shared the belief they could help nature in some way. This belief was the result of a profound love of nature and was sometimes, but not always, reinforced and encouraged by the influence of early mentors who acknowledged and validated these early actions.

The story below exemplifies the ability of a child to not only question with great clarity, but, to challenge the cultural values that adults often take for granted.

My summers were spent at my grandma and grandpa's house... I was following my grandmother around the garden one evening when one of my most profound memories occurred. I was probably around five or six. As we were walking along weeding, she was stepping on all the

slugs. I was shocked and hurt at what she was doing. She explained that they were bad for the garden, that they would eat the peas. I certainly didn't want that, but I was still perplexed. I remember saying "don't slugs have a right to live, too?" I'll never forget her expression. We didn't kill any more slugs that evening, but we had a fun time tossing them into the forest. (Tyson – environmental autobiography)

This child believed in the right of slugs to live and convinced his grandmother to shift to a way of thinking that helped the garden survive, but also granted the slugs an opportunity to leave slimy trails in the forest because that is what they like to do. Stories like this show the beginnings of the environmental consciousness that provided guidance for these leaders in the future.

This next leader shared a story that reflected the beginnings of the passion for saving the environment that is so much a part of this leader.

They started to develop the property and they started to come in with bulldozers and saws and cut down the trees that were in the way of the development and pile them up just like they would do in clear-cutting forests and then burn them. So well, I thought that was terrible that they would burn like this and then leave...so one Saturday night and I was only eight, I went in there. Walking in there with a little canteen of water trying to put out these fires and my shoes got on fire walking through the ashes... I still have the scars from the burns that I had. (Cohen – interview)

With clarity and poignancy the development of a forested area seen through a child's eyes, takes on a whole new perspective and with great simplicity, a solution is reached. The act of saving the forest signifies the early beginnings of initial involvement that is rooted in a moral consciousness and the belief that nature also deserves the right to exist. This child understood the danger of fires and, when the forest is burned by adults who ought to know better, he challenged their authority and made the decision to put the fire out.

The following story also represented a moral dilemma without the element of danger.

My Auntie Ellen and Uncle Art all confirmed, yes, these are tent caterpillars, and yes, they eat the leaves and I don't know if somebody told me that they kill the trees... I can't remember the real fact, but I definitely thought they are killing all these trees. There were lots of conifers, but there were deciduous trees, too, it was a very mixed forest, aspen, willow, pine...I thought these caterpillars were killing all these trees and I spent the whole summer killing caterpillars by the thousands. Green mush. It was my mission...By the second summer the trees are coming back and they were looking okay...the forest survived and I was amazed...I know I killed thousands of those things...like I really wondered if I was somehow responsible. I didn't really believe I was but I killed so many thousands of them that maybe it helped a bit." (Julie – interview)

In this particular story the child is empowered by a successful resolution and yet, astutely and instinctively, understands that nature is complex and perhaps did not need any assistance at all.

The following story is a contrast to the previous stories because it revealed a child faced with a moral dilemma of a different kind.

I was about six years old...skipping along to school in the rain (which I loved) when I saw a beautiful piece of paper in one of the mud puddles. The colours were incredible and I bent down to examine it. It wasn't paper at all! It was a beautiful moth, and it was about half the size of my pencil box. One wing was submerged and the creature struggled to get free from her watery prison. In my mind she was begging for help, however, the "bridge incident" was still fresh in my mind and I was paralyzed with fear. I could not summon the courage to pick her up and allow the wings to dry off. I watched her struggle for a long time and I heard the call for help. We were locked for what seemed hours in a telepathic struggle, the moth and I. When I could no longer bear to watch her feebly flutter anymore, I ran off to school. At the time running seemed easier than conquering my fear. However, I thought about that moth for years later questioning my inability to touch or pick it up. (Kirsty –environmental autobiography)

For this child, the possibility of communication between human and animal is a plausible thing and this story revealed great insight into previous experiences and the role those experiences play in determining action. One of earth's creatures begs for help, however, because of a previously traumatic experience involving butterflies this child bolted. This negative experience, however, was used in later life to reflect and ensure that she did not run again from helping nature.

The above memories all share the theme of stewardship and the stories reveal the early belief in some kind of stewardship. For the children stewardship was grounded in a simple love for nature and flowing from that love came the responsibility and obligation to care for it. These acts of early heroism contributed to and reveal the beginnings, I believe, of the environmental activism that persisted throughout a lifetime because they had their origins in experiential learning.

### Experiential Learning

Fourteen leaders expressed the importance of experiential learning and the following stories provide evidence that learning by doing is a profound and powerful way of learning. It is memorable, long-lasting and provides a medium for the life-long learning processes that are an integral part of the leadership experience. How we interpret experiences help define who and what we are. It is how we put into context what we know and then apply that knowledge to daily life.

In the following story origins of a strong attachment to animals is revealed.

My grandma and my grandpa always had lots of dogs and my mother never was a pet person, so going to my grandparents place in the summer was the most exciting thing because I got to spend all that time with, like, four dogs and I loved them. I think that is for sure, partly anyway, where I got my love of domestic animals, but I think all animals, too. Cause we'd go for a walk around there and there'd be birds

and squirrels and even foxes...It was more of a gradual thing but that's been influential because my mom always says where did you get your love of animals because she's not like that and I remember being so excited to be going to grandma's and grandpa's and the dogs!" (Alana - interview)

Those early experiences that had their origins in the home of grandparents that overflowed with animals evolved into a lifelong passion on animal rights that include the humane and just treatment of all animals. This leader's love of animals began with domestic animals at her grandparents home and later evolved to include wild animals. This leader is now a vegetarian and a PETA activist.

The story below is vivid in detail about early memories of experiential learning from an adult who had extensive knowledge of fish and fish habitats.

When I was five my uncle taught me how to tie flies...my dad is a fisherman on the coast, so fishing was definitely a part of our lives, but with Uncle Ted I wasn't just going out on the boat and fishing... this was from start to finish. How are you responsible for catching a fish? Where do you throw that line out in the river? Which fly do you want on this river? What season are the flies in to make a larvae or a leech, or what is it you are wanting to catch because of where you are at? What is the temperature of the water? The season? How do you catch and release a fish if it isn't big enough? Just the things he made me think about to be successful in catching fish. (Julie – interview)

This uncle took the time to teach the child in a very specific hands-on-way about the importance of understanding and recognizing the minute connections in nature's intricate web. The child was also taught to think about the specific set of circumstances leading up to a successful catch and, most importantly, the child learned the value of ethics in the wilderness. This is an example of a quality outdoor learning experience infused with lessons and moral values that encouraged respect for nature.

In the following story this child experiences something quite different on a fishing trip with his father and this experiential learning process had a profound effect on the child.

Now, rock fish are not the most attractive of fish, but they have these big brown eyes. What at first was curiosity quickly turned into sadness and then to pure sorrow for this poor creature, still alive but dying. I was sobbing with such intensity for this fish, the only fish we had caught. By the time we got to shore, I was crying with such intensity that my Mom asked Dad that in order to acquire some quiet sanity to do something. He took me outside and we got back into the boat. Even though the fish had been dead for 30 minutes, we placed it back into the water in a futile attempt for revival. No miracle happened that day, but from that point on, my view of life and of fish was forever changed. (Eddie - environmental autobiography)

Initially, it was not a positive experience, however, it provided a valuable lesson for both child and parent because each listened and honoured the feelings and opinion of each other. The great paradox of life and death is evident and a father taught compassion by a simple action that profoundly affected the young boy for the rest of his life. As a result, from a potentially negative experience, a new point of view developed. It is, perhaps, the beginning of a new world view that based on an early experience, began to develop in to a world view that believes in the rights of animals. This leader, a non-Native, teaches and continues to learn from his adult First Nations students.

Sports and outdoor recreation were also components of experiential learning and provided experiences that were grounded in teamwork and cooperation.

I was in figure skating and I did majorettes, so that's kind of a competition, but I guess it's a competition with yourself. Right? We were a team doing a routine in parades...but you are not put in an aggressive situation where you are trying to get the ball away from somebody else. (Milly -interview)

For this leader, winning was concentrated on doing the best one could and competition contained within one's self. That is, the act of competing centred on one's own performance and became internalized. Winning was important, but not at the expense of another team or participant.

In Western culture the real challenge of any sport is the ability to beat the other team or player, however, for many in this group the ability to always do your best figured prominently in their memories of childhood sports as the following story illustrates.

I found out I could run fast, so I started running, so that's very much a solo sport... wanted to do really well, but I was also happy, like with running with what I knew was my best. So I would feel happy coming in third, running my best time and running my best. (Alana – interview)

The leaders who were sports enthusiasts learned the importance of teamwork, cooperation and endurance in beautiful outdoor settings. The sports activities they describe require strength, longevity, skill, coordination and perseverance.

The experiences enjoyed at camp and summer cottages were the beginning of a life-long love affair with nature and the outdoors.

Another really big influence on my life was camp. I went to camp from the time I was seven and I went every summer for three weeks and it was, you know, we stayed in cabins but we always did canoe trips and it was all out door environmental stuff. So that really helped shape my appreciation for the outdoors and the environment. (Lida - interview)

These outdoor experiences exposed the leaders to a world that not only gave them great pleasure, but allowed them an opportunity to learn in a hands-on context over a number of years.

The following leader shared her story of time spent outside as a child, learning to ski and skate.

It's alive, so I grew up fishing on that lake, fishing on the river, and I used to walk to the ski-hill carrying my skis over my shoulders...So all the recreation that I did was pretty much outside, skating outside in the winter, downhill skiing, snowmobiling. We were always outside doing something. (Coral – interview)

The skills of dexterity, endurance, coordination, and cooperation learned during these experiences became valuable assets during their later years. The affective components of joy, compassion and understanding were also learned during these early outdoor experiences

These stories revealed that the leaders learned at a young age to love and respect nature and to reciprocate by giving back by whatever means they were capable of. Some were taught about the intricacies of nature's complex ecological systems and how those systems are intimately connected to all living things on Earth. Others learned about team cooperation through sports or outdoor recreation experiences and gained knowledge by playing and experiencing first hand the mysteries of nature. Most importantly, they learned that they are part of a larger dynamic life-form by their exposure to nature and they were taught those lessons by others who played an influential role in teaching life's lessons.

In summary, the leaders spent a great deal of time outdoors learning and playing in the natural world around them. This was a group whose outdoor time was extensive and long-term during early childhood. The outside world provided a valuable hands-on learning experience that began in early childhood, often, but not always encouraged by others. The opportunities provided by being involved in various activities outdoors

created, I believe, opportunities for learning experiences that were hands-on and engaging. The relationship that developed with nature was not a passive one but an interactive relationship.

### Overcoming Early Obstacles

Life was not always idyllic for these leaders and thirteen leaders shared periods of tremendous upheaval and pain experienced during early periods of their lives. The following story shared by one leader illustrates how she coped with life-changing events over which she had no control.

When I was fifteen my parents got divorced. It was a huge shock to me. I had no idea that there was anything ... I mean it was a bad age with hormones and everything and I had no idea it was coming. So that was pretty hard, but I was lucky because my parents, through all that, never said anything bad about each other... Well, they did once I think, and I said 'Don't ever say that again. That's my Mom. That's my Dad. I don't want you to ever say anything like that to me again'. They really respected that and they left the choice up to me about who I wanted to live with.  
(Lida - interview)

Faced with the trauma of an unforeseen divorce, she managed to convey to her parents that all parties should be treated respectfully and fairly. It was a challenge, I believe, issued to parents who were in a period of great stress and yet they listened to the voice of their daughter. Lessons do not become more powerful than this because empowering a child has life long implications.

The following memory confirms that not all childhoods comprised of playful reveries at the family cottage or lake.

Also, I came from a very troubled family...my dad was, is an alcoholic working in a steel mill in Hamilton and we had a very hard life. He was abused by his father who was not in the picture, and his mom left his father because of the situation, so hereditarily, he passed that on. There

was a lot of fighting, a lot of abuse in my family, a lot of verbal and emotional abuse mostly directed at my older siblings...So I recall that and think that also shaped who I am. I was always trying to be the happy bouncy kid bouncing around the house making sure everyone was happy... (Nattie - interview)

These stories rooted firmly in the past are acknowledged and accepted as part of a complex myriad of patterns that meld and played a definitive role in the development of self-discovery and autonomy that developed in later years. Their stories, sometimes very painful as this story revealed, illustrate that they had to learn early in life the necessary skills to travel safely on a difficult road. The following story revealed an early conflict between parent and curriculum.

I cringed in mortification as I pushed myself further backward into my cubby in the cloakroom, wishing it would swallow me. The words came again from the classroom. "You dizzy bitch, what do you use to wipe your ass with?" On the other side of the wall, I knew that my teacher, a petite woman, must have been cowering before the six foot six tower of rage that was my stepfather. If only we hadn't told him what she had said about how sad it made her to look out the window across the channel and see the clearcut..." (Celine- environmental autobiography)

The story revealed by this leader offers a glimpse of a painful incident that occurred in childhood brought on by a clash in values. The world views of the logger and the teacher are not compatible and the child in a vain attempt to educate her stepfather is humiliated by his rage. Leaders like this experienced at a young age difficulties due to family dysfunction, divorce, death, illness, economic struggles and instability as a result of frequent moving.

This group of leaders showed remarkable resilience during their formative years. It is my feeling that exposure to adversity, evident in many of the leaders' stories, is a catalyst in developing the determination and flexibility that may have

contributed to the culture of environmental leadership that developed in their later years.

### Core Values

The theme of frugality was common throughout twelve of the narratives and environmental autobiographies and crossed all age groups. This leader remembered lessons she learned while living with grandparents.

Going back to the grandfather that I lived with...both he and his wife were “waste not want not people”. They both grew up during the war and I remember sitting at the table listening to them talk about the war... When I was in the war...when the war was going on... I worked the whole day digging potatoes and one bowl of porridge, that’s all I’d get”... and you did not waste anything on your plate. Literally not even a little... like he ate everything, so the sense of thrift was definitely there...  
(Alana - interview)

The above leader learned through stories and the example set by grandparents, the value and importance of not wasting food. Of all the leaders, this very young leader was the most passionate and driven in her desire to impart to others the value of thrift which manifested itself in her adult years in a very personal commitment to recycle and reuse.

The following leader learned that certain foods, readily available to other families, were not going to be found in her family’s shopping cart.

When I was born there was not a penny to be spared and we didn’t buy bananas because they were too expensive. But they were expensive and that was explained to me and I got it... we were on a tight budget.  
(Julie - interview)

I believe that bananas purchased twenty to thirty years ago may have reflected the real cost of growing, transporting and delivery of an exotic out-of-season fruit. I

also remember receiving bananas infrequently as child because they were a special treat. Today many grocery stores use bananas as a loss leader and they can cost pennies a bunch. This leader, today, is passionate about organic foods and has incorporated that respect of food choices into a lifestyle that is not dependent on corporate food production, but one that places value on locally grown goods.

Another leader, now in his fifties, emphasizes the importance of being taught not to waste by parents.

My parents weren't involved in EE stuff at all, but they were very caring. They were not wasteful people. That's a very important thing I was taught – not to be wasteful. (Cohen – interview)

The lessons of frugality and a “waste not want not” ethic were passed down by grandparents or parents who had experienced hardship and were based on a value that seems old-fashioned in today's fast world of go-cups and disposable everything. This philosophy of not wasting was a shared belief that, as a group, was an important value. Valuing and appreciating the gifts of the present is a component of a stewardship model that embodies the belief that each generation must leave something for the next.

The cohort group was exposed to a variety of generations within their family group and families were responsible for instilling the values of respect, gratitude and thrift. The stories shared illustrate that this group of leaders learned these lessons by exposure to older generations who had experienced poverty, war and hunger. Those experiences were transformed into a system of values based on a strong work ethic, gratitude and wise use of resources.

These lessons pertaining to minimal waste were learned on farms, in small communities, industrial cities and schools. The connecting factor was that most families

were instrumental in transmitting these values emphasizing the importance of family and community life. A combination of mentors and family influences ensured that early value systems based on respect and reciprocity were infused into daily living patterns based on the belief that waste was not only undesirable, but unacceptable.

### Mapping Metaphors

This section on the metaphorical language used by the leaders in their childhood and adolescent years described the deep feelings they had towards nature and their homes and the communities. Metaphors, as indicated in the literature review are most often used unintentionally and can reveal orientations and beliefs. The three most common metaphors used by this group of leaders as children were metaphors that represented trees, water and home place.

#### Trees

Trees were a common metaphor for this group. The following story describes a tree, with both natural and human attributes.

My earliest memory of attachment to nature was when I was very young, approximately, five or six. It was a tree, coniferous and very large. It was taller than my dad; it was taller than my house. It was a landmark that could be seen for miles around and serve as an anchor to my childhood wanderings. Hours upon hours were spent playing in the arms and the apron of that tree. I believe it had a name, but I can't remember it. I could go everywhere in my tree and when I was sad or angry, my tree was there to console me. The tree was never part of our yard, but rather a long way away...but it was always there, standing alone, my sentinel, my compass north. (Anne- environmental autobiography)

The tree metaphor is a compassionate companion with connections to both the human community and the natural community. It is at once large and powerful and yet ministers to the young and weak. With both male and female components it attains a complexity that is complete and holistic. It is referred to metaphorically as a landmark,

an anchor, a compass and a sentinel, all powerful images referring to the cardinal directions.

The next metaphorical description is about a regal, albeit slightly imperfect, Douglas Fir tree that also plays the role of confidant.

On the farm, consolation was most frequently provided by the largest Douglas fir tree on our property. The tree stood solid and tall with an irregular shape, very thick and long branches that didn't taper to a perfect Christmas tree. This tree was our much-loved pet's burial ground. As the teen years approached, and life began to get complicated, I found myself sitting against the tree talking to Bear (my dog). It was in the presence of my first and best friend that I felt both safe and unconditionally loved.... (Alana – environmental autobiography)

However, this tree protects not only the living, but has all-important ties to the deceased. It is a burial ground, but metaphorically, it is also a guardian that protects beings in both worlds and has the added dimension of acting as an intermediary between the worlds. This is a powerful image infused with spirituality and this ability to communicate and connect to beings (the deceased family dog Bear) in the spiritual world denotes an acceptance and understanding that the lines between the natural and spiritual world are open to communication.

In the following excerpt, a cedar tree is thoughtlessly uprooted by a young girl and in the metaphorical sense becomes a spirit tree.

I will always remember being caught by Chief Yellowhead digging up a young cedar tree in their woods. It was important for me to plant a tree every year on our property. To my surprise and delight, he explained that I must follow his precise directions and omit nothing in order for the tree to survive in its new home away from bird and animal friends. Forty years later, and after many devastating winter storms, that tree is affectionately called "The Chief's Tree". It is a spiritual tree for me now. (Shell – environmental autobiography)

A local elder intervenes and, with patience and kindness instead of recriminations, grants permission to the young girl to continue her ritual of planting a tree every year. With careful instructions, an ancient planting ritual based on the wisdom and knowledge of First Nations people who acknowledge the importance of respect for all living things, is undertaken. This particular story honours the lifelong relationship that flourished between the young girl, the Chief and a cedar tree. All three lives were irrevocably linked and the cedar tree, with roots in three worlds continues to flourish.

In summary, the use of metaphors in these three stories illustrates with great simplicity and elegance, the early origins of belief systems that were created and fostered by a deep and abiding love and respect for nature. These childhood memories of these adult leaders revealed a worldview that believed animals, plants and human beings shared certain attributes and that each was capable of a relationship with the other.

### Water

In the first story below, metaphorically, the ocean is a living playground and the creatures within it transform to wonderful and exciting things to play with.

We swam at night when the luminescent algae traced our movements, and played for hours each day chasing each other with bullwhips made from kelp and popping the fluid-filled tops of the seaweeds that were our toys. (Anne – environmental autobiography)

Through the use of metaphorical language, a child's playground magically springs to life and for a moment, the ocean can be seen through the eyes of a child. It is an interactive playground, exciting and challenging and at the same time a safe and welcoming place to be, even at night.

This leader was born in the Prairies and drew a parallel to connect two very different seas.

I was born in Saskatchewan... the ocean reminds me of the prairies. The prairie field is a sea of gold and you can see to the edges of the earth when you stand in the middle of a wheat field. It is the same when you stand at the edge of a blue sea, watching the ships drop off the horizon. (Glory – environmental autobiography)

Metaphors are embedded in language and are used to capture and express an idea in a phrase that evokes an immediate picture or understanding of an event. When reading this excerpt, the image of a golden sea of wheat is transmitted and easily understood by reader. The use of metaphorical language links the two images which, in the mind of this leader, are also connected because the vast geographical features of sea and land reveal their earthly connections.

In the following story, this leader revealed her connection to killer whales and their watery world.

I'm not really sure when I started to love the ocean and my love for Killer whales...perhaps it started when I came to Victoria. I was about ten and we went to Sea World...my mom said she couldn't get me to leave...I watched the killer whale show three times...In my environmental autobiography I call them my family. (Milly – interview)

For this child, a visit to Sea World is the beginning of a life long affair with whales that culminates with the whales becoming family members. This kind of relationship is reminiscent of an indigenous world view that understands that humankind and animals are connected on many levels. Through the use of metaphors the world of nature and culture are connected by the creation of an image that links completely separate constructs as one.

### Home and Community

For many members of the group, ties to home place and community were strong, often poignant and reflective, recalling times spent in places that held a special place in the heart. The following memory recalled family life at the farm.

My heart still slides on their wooden banister, still listens to my Grandmother's stories of the "old country" while the aromas of roasting chickens cooked in a gas range waft out from the kitchen.  
(Anne – environmental autobiography)

The traditions of ethnic food, the retelling of family histories and a comfortable two story home are a metaphor for the stability and attachment to home place that keep this leader focused who, in turn, is very much attached to her family, her history and sense of place. This leader's heart is firmly anchored in the family home surrounded by memories of a place that was warm and nurturing.

In the next memory home place is revisited in a dream, while in a far away place, and each detail is brought to life in a map of important and meaningful places.

While I was there (Scotland) I remember having dreams where I was flying over my parents house (in Quebec), showing my mom how I could do that. I flew over the road we would follow to go to primary school, over the strawberry field and the blueberry patches, over the pond and the farm. I still remember the pride I felt flying. Mom followed me with the car, making sure she would be there if I fell. I woke up knowing that it was a marvelous nest to grow up in, but that it was time for me to fly on my own. (Queenie - environmental autobiography)

Home, for this leader, has extended from the family farm to include the community and places that are dear to this leader who, as a child, was an intrepid explorer and is now a Parks interpreter. Explorers leave home, as did this leader, but

explorers and travelers alike are nourished and sustained by memories of their home place. The metaphor of flying is connected to that of a bird leaving its nest for the first time and unsure, returns for assurance which is always given. Home as revealed by this leader provided a strong sense of community and belonging, yet it also provided the encouragement necessary to leave and explore other communities.

The following memory illustrates that a home place is not always beautiful in the accepted sense of beauty and that sometimes beauty is hidden and must be searched out.

It was an acreage. Well, actually an industrial yard and my Grandpa Was kind of a packrat, but there were lots of trees around there and it was quite beautiful and there were beautiful sunsets... at night I would roam and wander by myself and feel safe in that area. (Alana – interview)

What is illustrated here is an example of the ability to seek out and discover the extraordinary in the ordinary by peeling back the outside layers of a cluttered industrial yard to uncover the inner beauty of nature. The ability to take comfort in the fading evening light and to feel safe outside at night when most other children are afraid shows the confidence that this leader developed at an early age.

The home places, metaphorically, provided anchors and direction for the leaders as they left their homes and communities. The memories revealed that along with families and friends, animals and plants were included in this holistic picture of community life. The metaphor that nature is healing, magical and safe reinforced the highly developed sense of place that is evident within this group and reflected through metaphorical language.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Introduction to Data Analysis – Adult Experiences

This chapter will explore six themes that emerged from the data relating to adult experiences. The interviews were transcribed and consisted of approximately twenty to twenty-five pages of transcript. To begin the process of reducing the data, each paragraph in every interview was reduced to a code word or phrase. Codes words that were similar or overlapping were reduced, in most instances, to twenty-five codes. In order to elicit themes, the twenty-five code words or phrases were then transferred to an index card (which included the name of the participant) and the process of grouping them into themes or patterns began. This process was repeated for each participant and a list of themes emerged and was recorded.

The following six themes emerged as dominant themes originating in adult experiences.

- 1) Stewardship
- 2) Deep Spirituality
- 3) Importance of Lifelong Learning Experiences
- 4) Sources of Hope
- 5) Disillusionment with Western Culture
- 6) Autonomy

#### Stewardship

The idea of stewardship, in one way or another, was a belief shared by all leaders and served as a unifying concept in the early stages of the research. Every

leader had a vision of what stewardship was. Of the sixteen leaders who defined stewardship all included the idea that humans should care for the earth. The summarized thoughts of each leader (with the exception of one who did not answer the question) regarding their definition of stewardship are outlined below. This question was part of the questionnaire circulated to the leaders in obtaining data for this research project.

Leader #1

Stewardship is taking care of the environment in some way that is politically neutral, like kids planting trees by a stream.

Leader #2

Stewardship is passionately taking care of and respecting the land.

Leader #3

Stewardship is taking care of and respecting the land.

Leader #4

Stewardship is taking care of and respecting the environment.

Leader #4

Stewardship is a duty to preserve and protect, generations forward and backward, but not at the expense of the environment.

Leader #5

Stewardship is ensuring that the ecosystem remains intact to function for future generations.

Leader #6

Stewardship is like taking of a friend, one who cares for you. It is a relationship formed as a result of a partnership.

Leader #7

Stewardship is respect and caring for the land.

Leader #8

Stewardship is respect and caring for the land and teaching kids to do the same.

Leader #9

Stewardship is taking care of an ecological, cultural or historical place.

**Leader #10**

Stewardship is about responsibility and respect, a way of being, a cultural attitude to be passed on, respect for the earth in all its diversity and interrelated complexity and humility for our own species.

**Leader #11**

Stewardship is to take care and nurture our environment, caring for something we really believe in and nurturing to maintain or improve the environment's state.

**Leader #12**

Stewardship is a sense of caring and nurturing the land for today and tomorrow.

**Leader #13**

Stewardship is a responsibility to take care of the land, a responsibility, protection of, love of something. Also to let it be as it is.

**Leader #14**

Stewardship is a partnership, a belief in the rights of the land and the idea that we must teach others to care for the earth.

**Leader #15**

Stewardship means being in a relationship with a place you care about, respecting or paying attention to the message given by the land. You are basically an advocate for the land and the beings upon it, including us as human beings.

**Leader #16**

Stewardship is about looking after and caring for the land ensuring the rights of all beings to survive and making sure that future generations inherit a healthy earth.

Most definitions included the idea that action was important, that some form of obligation was necessary and that future generations had the right to inherit a healthy earth. These leaders were united in their belief that human beings, by some form of obligation and duty, are obliged to make careful decisions regarding use of the earth's gifts. Leaving a legacy is a crucial component of the stewardship model and many leaders, at one time or another, expressed the heartfelt concern that this was one of the continuing motivating factors in both their professional and private lives.

The following quotation regarding stewardship reflects the depth and passion one member of this group feels for nature and the planet Earth.

I also think about responsibility, a responsibility to take care of land, also honour, a feeling to protect what it is you cherish. So to be more clear, I think stewardship implies a sense of responsibility, protection, honour and love of something, much like a child. I think it also follows that stewardship of something is also to let it be what it is; not to control, but to provide freedom. (Freddy – questionnaire)

Many leaders, prior to this graduate program, had taught First Nations students or had been exposed to First Nations beliefs regarding care of the land. The following leader revealed how his connection with First Nations people and their belief system had impacted his own life journey.

The bald eagle has become a symbol of my sense of place, and this bird provides a spiritual icon for me, reminding me to uphold the values of the First Nations holistic connection with the environment and my own professional values to be a guide and resource for students to develop effective environmental citizenship. (Lorne - environmental autobiography)

The eagle not only represents a sense of place for this leader, but also symbolizes the importance of connecting to the environment in a complete and holistic way. Those values are taught and passed on to others and the cycle of respect and reciprocity continues to flow. The values of respect and reciprocity are consistent with the beliefs of many indigenous people who still live in the ways of the ancestors.

### Spiritual

Being in nature has often been associated with a feeling of deep spirituality and all members of the group expressed a deep spiritual feeling for nature. The following story reflected the peace that one leader has found in nature.

I have been grappling with my own beliefs about spirituality since my

best friend died nearly ten years ago...The sky, blue or starry, spreading out above my boat; the seal popping up behind me and watching in silent question; the dolphins riding my bow wake as they escort me down the channel; all make me take a huge breath and give silent thanks to the systems that allow me to be living surrounded by all this magic. I have truly returned to being a child, full of wonder at all the discoveries...(Reba –environmental autobiography)

The ability to reflect on the past and connect it to the present without anger and bitterness is perhaps nature's greatest gift to this leader. The above story is powerful in its portrayal of the cyclical aspect of spirituality and acknowledged that retaining a child-like wonder of the world as an adult has contributed to her growing and continuing spiritual connection.

The story is about the death of a First Nations woman who held a special place in the heart of this leader.

When I went to her funeral in Fort Simpson, I was desolate and remember walking on the banks of the McKenzie River feeling the wind and trying to come to terms with her death. The only way I could do this was to draw on my experiences of nature and see her passing as a metamorphosis from our mundane world of caterpillars to a new place of beauty and butterflies. The wind became her reincarnation and when it blows I still feel her presence. These events, I see now, were a reinforcement of my spiritual connection with the Earth and the beginnings of a deep ecology. (Lorne - environmental autobiography).

The healing power of nature provided the inspiration for the reincarnation of the young woman as the wind ensuring a constant reminder of her presence in the living world. The story illustrate that when nature enters the human world, the wisdom offered is both healing and comforting. In that context the ancient cycles of life and death not only make sense; they complete the cycle.

The following memory revealed another side of humankind's relationship with nature. The cyclical nature of life and death assumed a ritualized context.

I love fishing today....If on a kayak trip we decide to fish, I go through a ritual. Before I kill a fish, I look it in the eye and say thanks. And when I gut the fish, I throw everything back into ocean. When I cut the head off, I hold it in my hand, look up to whoever is listening and throw the head into the water. Fresh salmon tastes so much better that way; roasting over a fire, the salmon gods and my soul at ease. (Freddie - environmental autobiography)

This leader understands the gift that nature bestows must be acknowledged and treated with respect before it is consumed. Gratitude and reciprocity are values inherent in this leader's view of a stewardship model. This world view, with its ties to the world views of indigenous cultures, is that of a Caucasian male teacher who continues to learn and practice knowledge gained from his First Nations students. This is the same leader who, as a boy, learned compassion from his father on a fishing trip when the life of a somewhat unfortunate rock cod was in jeopardy.

For these adult environmental leaders experiencing nature in their later years very often acquired a spiritual dimension that resulted in understanding that nature is healing, enlightening and inspirational. Many leaders spoke of the birth and reaffirmation of spiritual feelings when surrounded by the glory of nature, particularly during dark times where shadows reign. Furthermore, their special relationship with nature reaffirmed their belief that everything is connected and that mankind is but a part of a complex web of interconnected beings. There is an understanding that a balanced relationship with the earth is based on reciprocity, gratitude and prayer.

### Sources of Hope

From the beginning of this research it was evident during early conversations that this was a particularly hopeful group and the data revealed that feelings of hope were expressed by twelve leaders. The following story reflects the role that hope played in the healing process of young First Nations adolescents.

I began to consciously acknowledge the spiritual healing powers of Nature while working at a young offenders home with a high proportion of First Nations youth in northwestern Ontario. It was very moving for me to witness the changes that came over angry, abused kids when they participated in ceremonies with their elders. (Dove - environmental autobiography)

The impact of Native elders who shared their wisdom and used the power of ceremony and ritual to heal adolescent transformed this young leader into one who now incorporates spirituality into her daily life. This story also reflected the scope of an affinity to believe and accept that other kinds of knowledge and learning are not only important, but successful, especially when experienced in a cultural context.

Change and action were strongly associated with hope as this story revealed.

So...feeling the effect of decisions that people made a long time ago has resulted in us being here today and doing the kinds of things that we are trying to do to preserve our culture, trying to save the earth and doing all those things...makes me aware of the choices I am making right now because the choices I am making are going to affect my descendents. (Coral - interview)

For this leader a concern for future generations acted as a catalyst in ensuring that change occurred because of the belief and hope that each and every choice makes a difference. This leader promoted the belief that the choices and decisions made today impact the lives of future generation. She is very conscious of her own lifestyle and choices; a leadership style modeled on setting an example. Hope is what kept these

environmental leaders moving forward inspiring them to work with renewed passion and enthusiasm.

Reflected in this story below is an example of how one leader viewed change and hope.

Our world is in a state of crisis and unless we do our small part and turn it around, I fear for my daughter and my daughter's grandchildren and all the generations to come. I am very hopeful that we can change the world around and we must do our part to achieve that and help students recognize their part in that. Not to indoctrinate them and not to tell them what they need to be doing. I think it's a journey that they have to discover on their own and our role is to help them discover what their part is in that big picture. (Nattie - interview)

One of the most important themes in this story is that of a leadership model rooted in facilitating and guiding as opposed to telling and directing. This leader understands that leadership is a learned process acquired through experience and that experience is the only way that new leaders can be formed. Teaching young people in a way so that they understand the need for change and at the same time allowing them to make their own decisions regarding the nature of change is empowering and hopeful.

In summary these stories above reflect that change and action constitute a part of the leaders' professional and personal lives and is reflected in their own leadership models. These stories reveal that without hope, the future is bleak and that future generations deserve much better than doom and gloom. These leaders found hope outside in nature and also in the people they had meaningful contact with such as students, family and friends.

### Disillusionment with Western Culture

The emergence of a new metaphor (evident in twelve leaders) revealed itself very late in the research process at a time when I felt the saturation point had been reached. As “shrubbies” and “non-conformists” (their words); simply by doing what they do – going against the tide, saving nature when others did not think nature needing saving at all; they emerged as activists, even rebels in some cases. This metaphor originated from a lifetime of constant questioning that resulted in challenging both themselves and others. This group is of the opinion that something is not quite right about the way we live our lives.

The following leader, a non-Native, who had spent many years teaching and learning from First Nations students put it this way:

Absolutely, I had no desire to really want to live a white life, to be part of this culture, this society here, this western capitalism and consumerism. I didn't want to play any part in that... (Tyson – interview)

Their early rebelliousness seemed to evolve into disillusionment with western culture in their adult years and that, in time, acted as a catalyst for change. It may be that our western values based on capitalism, consumerism and competition have resulted in the loss of respect for the environment and that relearning respect for the environment will provide the beginning of a value shift.

The following story illustrates how one leader thinks we can initiate such a shift.

I noted in my rough journal that there is very little respect for the environment in our culture. We do not seem to pay attention to it until something has been pushed to the brink. We need to find a balance where we respect nature and seek a sustainable place within it. Our actions must seek to provide benefit not only for ourselves,

but also for the rest of creation. (Travis – environmental autobiography)

The notion of balance and attaining harmony is complex because our nature is to put ourselves first, but as the leader above pointed out, our actions must also benefit all things around us. There is no confrontation necessary, simply a need to find that balance in a sustainable way.

The following story showed that values can be shifted through exposure to different and new ways of thinking.

Through Quetico Adventures, I was introduced to the notion of a paradigm shift – exploring the idea that our thoughts are constructs that can be broken down and rebuilt in a new way. As well, it was here that I met my first vegetarian, read “Diet for a New America”, put ethics and food together and stopped eating meat. I was also introduced into the alternative music culture during these years. For me it was more than loud guitars and angry youths – it was a voice protesting the status quo, questioning the dominant culture...(Dove - environmental autobiography)

This leader believed that food and ethics go hand in hand and that using sustainable farming practices benefits both the earth and humankind. She today sets a fine example by practicing and teaching the ethics of sustainable methods of acquiring food.

The roots of the disillusionment with Western culture may also be connected to the early heroic actions that began in childhood and transformed into action that contributed to the environmental leadership that comprised their professional and personal lives. The culture of environmental leadership that is prevalent within this group is based on leading by example, a tribute to what is meaningful and important in their lives.

### Life Long Learning as a Transformative Experience

Some life long-learning experiences are, and can be, transformational in a way that is profound and sometimes a change in world view can result. All seventeen leaders spoke about the importance and impact of life long learning. This ability to learn from life's experiences appeared to develop from the formative early outdoor learning experiences they had as children and continued into adulthood. As adults, travel was the field trip of choice and a valuable experience that many of the leaders felt contributed to their knowledge base in a way that enabled them to effect positive change.

It was a contributing factor to who they are and helped them define who they were as this story illustrated.

I also traveled and that has had a huge influence on me. Maybe to change my world that wasn't so great. Whatever it was, I have always had the urge to get up and travel...I had a grandma who said 'If this is what you need to do, do it at all costs. Follow your heart.' I never had money to do these things. Never. But she never let that stand in my way, whereas my parents were more practical. They said, get a job first... they were your typical family. You don't go travelling, you find a job and get yourself settled, that (travel) comes later when you retire. I never bought into it and thankfully my Grandma encouraged me to do that. (Nattie - interview)

Even though following her heart meant parental disapproval, with the blessing of a compassionate and understanding grandmother, this leader set out on her own path that was different from the one her parents intended.

The lessons learned in other countries were often profound and described as life changing events, well worth discomfort and lack of even the most basic of amenities as this leader learned.

As a group we spent six weeks camping in the bush and by the time the journey was over, we were bush people. The intensity of Africa grabs you and gets under your skin, twisting and burrowing like an insatiable parasite. It becomes a part of you, either willingly or unwillingly. I always say that it was in Africa that I first felt the heartbeat of the earth. I do not mean that in the metaphorical sense, but an actual heartbeat, a heaving, a life form that breathed and lived as I did. (Kirsty - environmental autobiography)

Learning experiences in far-off lands and exposure to different cultures was often a life-transforming event that, for this leader, resulted in a powerful reconnection with the Mother Earth. The following leader also underwent a transformation in Africa.

After Africa...returning home to Canada was very difficult for me. I had lived out of a backpack for three months and had appreciated the simplicity of my life and the beauty that surrounded me. I was appalled to be re-immersed in a materialistic world where there was so much value placed on owning things. The experience in Africa was a turning point for me. I became more aware of our excessive North American lifestyle. I was determined to set other values for myself. (Alana – environmental autobiography)

The disappointment with western values, particularly, with a culture whose values are based on materialism and consumerism, culminated as disillusionment with those values. Experiences, such as the two stories above are powerful and transformative because a shift in belief systems is the awakening of a new self, a shift from who we thought we were.

The stories above showed how and what leaders learned in far away places. For other members of the group sometimes the lessons did not come from far away. Learning is not always fun and can be a struggle; challenging even for those who regularly teach. This leader revealed how she acquired new learning skills.

I mean we can think about it and laugh now and I guess that's good when you can think about a situation and you can laugh and you can pull out funny things with some good memories and that's the way a lot of situations are with me. I have to look back. I can look

back on Biology and think about what I have learned or I can dwell on all the times I cried... (laughs)...I mean which is going to be better? I might as well look back at everything I've learned. (Lilly - interview)

She learned that humour combined with an ability to separate the good from the bad was one way she could turn a negative experience into something quite positive.

Their life stories and the struggles they faced prepared this group of environmental leaders to teach and lead with compassion, understanding and respect. I believe their thirst for wisdom based on life-long experiential learning in a meaningful context is a part of their leadership footprint. They teach and lead from the heart

#### Autonomy

For eleven leaders in the group, life was not laid out in a predictable manner. Life can be a messy, unpredictable business, yet around the corner lies the unexpected, the joyful surprise that makes getting up somehow easier on a dark day. The ability to be flexible and open to change ensured that opportunities are not missed and that new challenges are met, not with fear and trepidation, but with an openness to embrace and learn from new situations. The story below is an example of a leader who is not afraid of what is around that corner.

Sometimes life takes you in a certain direction and, honestly, I don't know what my next job will be. It may not even be in the field of Environmental Education. I hope it is, but I don't know if I'll be able to find a job doing that, and if I can't maybe my life will go in a different direction, but I know that I'll always be personally active on lots of environmental stuff. But, you know, I think I'm also shaped a lot by circumstance, as opposed to saying that I 'm going to do that and nothing is going to stop me. (Dove- interview, 30)

Being open to change and responsive to the challenges of new life choices, ensured that life's journey is not predictable and that real truths can be found anywhere along the way. While the group is focused and dedicated in their efforts to teach Environmental Education; it was not always something they always felt they would do as is revealed by this story.

I never had a path to become a nature interpreter. Never in my dreams. I literally fell into a bucket of shit, as my father would say, and came out smelling like a rose. And that's what I feel like happened. I went off to University, got an Arts degree with a major in history and was going nowhere fast...I had a mentor in University... So when I graduated I went to her and said what do do now? She said get your butt out there and volunteer all over the place and explore your options. (Glory - interview)

This particular leader discovered her passion as she wandered, somewhat at loose ends after undergraduate work and fortunately a mentor provided direction and guidance at a critical time in her life that resulted in a passion for interpretive work and she has never looked back. Others knew at a fairly young age what they wanted to be. This story reveals the focus and direction that contributed to the general autonomy of the group.

The first summer I started teaching swimming lessons full time, that's when I realized definitely what I wanted to be. So I guess I was around seventeen when I realized I wanted to be a teacher. So I was lucky, I went to school knowing what I wanted to do. (Lida - interview)

Once in the system, it did not take long for some of the leaders to realize that change was not only imminent, but necessary if they were to continue teaching. This leader faced the challenge and explained her dilemma with the system in which she taught.

There has to be a better way than this. So I worked in the system and just constantly noticed that it didn't work and so I started thinking about things like having more time in the community rather than having students walled up inside. Everything is broken down into one hour segments and so some people take a half hour to settle down

into what they are doing and another fifteen minutes to think about it and that leaves them about ten minutes to work on something.  
(Coral - interview)

This First Nations high school teacher was creative and dedicated as she devised ways to incorporate her way of thinking into the system by creating a flexible classroom that considered the needs of individual students and the local community.

As youths and teenagers, almost all the leaders rebelled and challenged those in positions of authority. As adults they continued to challenge the system by utilizing methods that included various leadership models, initiating a shift in values and choosing or for some by default finding a career where they felt they could make a difference. As a group, they continue to question, to learn and to transform those learning experiences into an extension of self. As individuals they exhibited an honesty and confidence in the choices they make as this story illustrated.

I am comfortable for the way I do things. I am comfortable with the choices I make. I don't feel that outside sources dictate any of my choices. I feel really comfortable that my choices come from the heart.  
(Julie – interview)

### Leadership

The topic of this research paper was to discover how a culture of environmental leadership was developed and sustained in a select group of educators. To that end, one of the questions asked to each graduate was: If you were to describe yourself as a leader how would you do that? What are the important qualities you think a leader should have? The edited responses are listed below.

#### Leader # 1

I think I am consistent, motivational, enthusiastic and reflective. A leader should walk the talk and be compassionate.

#### Leader #2

A leader should provide motivation, provide direction and support. Regarding qualities a leader should know when to lead and when to let others lead, sharing leadership.

Leader #3

A leader is someone who inspires other people, who contributes to society; someone who helps other see their potential and self-worth. A leader should walk the talk, be caring and compassionate.

Leader #4

A leader collaborates with other people towards a common goal, challenges the status quo.

Leader #5

I see myself more of a facilitator and the qualities should be the ability to follow allowing for the validation of their own ideas and teachers them how to act without a leader.

Leader #6

I am a leader in training. I am unlearning, students and children are my leaders at this point.

Leader #7

Leadership changes with context, I am a quiet leader passing power to students. An important quality is to empower others.

Leader #8

I lead by example, I have not yet become a leader

Leader #9

I am not a leader yet. Important qualities are to open doors without pushing through, a leader offers guidance.

Leader #10

I share knowledge, I'm a loud enthusiastic and caring leader filled with wonder and enthusiasm about the natural world, keen to be a mentor. Important qualities are knowledge, humble, admit what they don't know, be respectful, charismatic and willing to share.

Leader #11

My leadership style is not authoritarian, more like teamwork, I am quiet and lead by action. Important qualities are the ability to communicate, to be honest, open and mutual respect.

Leader #12

I haven't really thought of myself as a leader before, more of one who gets things done with the help of others. Important qualities are to be compassionate, flexible, be able to communicate effectively and let others take the lead.

Leader #13

As a leader it is my responsibility to pay attention to the needs of others through observation and dialogue and to facilitate people in meeting their own needs. A leader needs to have a strong sense of awareness spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally.

Leader #14

I would say that I lead by example and by sharing stories and experiences of things I have seen others do. I am not a take control leader and wait for others to contribute or even take the lead. I think leaders are compassionate, effective communicators and above all honest and true. It's important that leaders acknowledge mistakes they make and encourage, encourage and encourage.

The consistent nature of their leadership is connected by the idea of shared leadership, empowering others and leading by example.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Introduction to Data Analysis

#### Alert Bay Field School

The final chapter of data analysis describes the main themes that emerged from the Alert Bay field school. A detailed description of the field school is included in Chapter One, pages 12 to 15. The original cohort group met for the first time at the Namgis Village of Alert Bay located on Cormorant Island during the summer of 2001. It was here they attended a field based university program that included learning about the culture and ways of knowing of the First Nations people who lived there.

Exposure to the Namgis culture by the cohort group was both enlightening and humbling to this group of leaders. This exposure, by complete immersion, to the Kwakwaka'ka people coincided with the fact that the leaders would be sharing cramped quarters with twenty-four people they had only just met. The leaders, for the most part, took this challenge in stride with great aplomb exhibiting their irrepressible ability to overcome obstacles and demonstrating the leadership skills that had brought them to the graduate program in the first place.

The fact that the people of Alert Bay graciously welcomed the cohort group into their village was due to the patient efforts of Dr. Gloria Snively who, as a graduate student, had earned the trust and respect of the people while conducting research for her doctoral thesis in 1981. Through a long term relationship that included meetings and

discussions with village elders, the idea of a field based graduate school finally met with their full approval. It provided a unique opportunity for First Nations elders to participate in a university graduate program by sharing their traditional knowledge and wisdom with graduate students who were in a position and willing to pass on this valuable knowledge to others.

The graduate students were welcomed into the village and provided with rare opportunities to witness and partake in several ceremonies and be immersed in village life. Students were invited to attend a traditional potlatch, a welcoming ceremony and were witness to the poignant drumming of two elders who returned, for the first time, to their ancestral birthplace, the village was Mamalelequla located on Village Island. The field school experience resulted in three main themes: group dynamics, culture and community and other ways of knowing.

### Making Connections

The first summer at the field school in Alert Bay was a catalyst in forming initial group relations. The following quote taken from one of the interviews illustrates some of groups' perception regarding the role that Alert Bay played in forming their own group dynamics.

Well...one of the big things was how it really formed us as a group. To have that experience of us living together for those few weeks up there in those tight quarters was really something... It helped shape us as a group and also taught team building by being around a strong and rich native community. (Lida - interview)

Witnessing and, to some extent, experiencing the culture of the Alert Bay First Nations people helped the cohort group form their own group culture. For some members of the

group, it was connection on two levels; a primary connection at the group level and a secondary connection with the First Nations culture as this leader suggested.

Somehow connecting with the people who lived there (Alert Bay) and connecting with our cohort group, it was like two levels of connection...I left there thinking what a fabulous program I am about to start because I met some fabulous people. And the First Nations people, I connected with them also... (Nattie – interview)

These ideas of connecting on not only one level, but on two levels indicates how the individual astutely grasped the situation and then processed those experiences into something that made sense in their own lives.

The shared experiences of the University of Victoria summer sessions, beginning with the Alert Bay Field School, were a critical component in contributing to the formation of a cohesive group culture because it allowed opportunities for intense group interaction under a variety of circumstances.

#### Culture and Community

Experiencing the lessons and stories of a culture that valued and honoured its elders was empowering for the cohort group because many recalled their own childhoods where the influence of parents and grandparents had been a strong and enduring one within their own communities. They recalled their own memories and the lessons learned from the elders in their lives as the following leader recounts.

It was just through my mom and dad; fishing and hunting, berry gathering, and that's where I connected. They (Namgis) were doing the same things, and that's how they learned about nature. That's how they connected; living from it and that's how I developed my connections and then challenging religious beliefs, challenging community living, challenging culture by looking at our culture. We learn to be more open to other cultures (Queenie – environmental autobiography)

Learning outside in an experiential learning context helped develop strong connections to the land. From that deep connection this leader learned to challenge previously held beliefs about her community and culture and that it was important to be receptive to other belief systems. This next leader also learned the importance of valuing elders in her life.

So in that respect, it was neat and I think one connection that I made there was, valuing whatever elders are in your own life, like my grandmother, my great grandfather. They are from a different culture, but they are from my culture and it is important to value that, also. (Alana – interview 19)

The experiences shared in Alert Bay helped her make the connection that the elders in her life deserved that same kind of respect afforded the elders in Alert Bay. The leaders acquired a first-hand awareness of the diverse issues that have confronted First Nations people resulting from colonialism as the following leader recounted.

I see things differently now. Growing up you get this sense that these wise First Nations leaders are something of the past and now I know that these communities have these wise leaders struggling to bring their community together and they are very real and they are here. There are going to be a lot of leaders coming from First Nations communities, leading their own communities and, I think, also leaders for our communities as well. (Travis – interview).

Yet, despite the devastating impact of colonialism, the First Nations culture was viewed by this leader as a strong culture led, in part, by elders who brought the words of the ancestors to the people of today. The elders, with their stories and lessons on life, connecting the past and present, were not only leaders in their communities, but for this leader came to symbolize hope in the form of new leadership for western communities also.

As the Namgis children learnt about their culture from the elders, they also came to represent a form of hope for the future. The elders explained to the cohort

group that this was often a difficult and lonely task, sharing stories about the alcohol, drug and sexual abuse within their own lives and the lives of the next generation. These were issues that members of the cohort group related to on personal and professional levels because they had been, at one time or another exposed to the same social problems.

The cohort group and the elders were connected by the fact that both groups viewed the children in their own worlds as something worth fighting many battles for. The following story related the impact of children in the village as they participated in ceremonies and dances.

Of all the experiences that touched me the most over the last six weeks, it was the story of the Namgis people. Working and living in the community of Alert Bay and meeting key elders and chiefs had a profound effect on my way of thinking regarding the "Indian question". As I watched ceremonies on the beach and in the big house, I could only marvel at how far this particular group has come in preserving and resurrecting their culture. Watching a toddler in the stands dancing the dances of his people gave me great hope for the future of the Namgis. (Anne – environmental autobiography)

The dances, combined with the traditional ceremonies based on a First Nations world view were grounded in respect and reciprocity and steeped in exchanges between the natural and supernatural world. It was a privilege and an honour to be invited to the big house, witnessing ceremonies that have existed since ancestral times. Alert Bay, for some of the group was a transformational and powerful experience and the following story reflected how one leader felt.

I think the most powerful experience I had there was the day the canoes came. I saw people dancing and welcoming them in their traditional way and the experience of the big house following... That whole ceremonial process was something I had not experienced before on such a large level and that showed, made me realize how rich these traditions and culture are and what tremendous power that had for the

people. That changed me the most. (Dove – interview)

A testament of the power of witnessing these ceremonies was the first hand knowledge of the bitter struggles that First Nations peoples faced as they regained their traditional culture. The lessons learned here add to the rich array of previous learning experiences of the group and in this instance are transformational in that outsiders understood that this vibrant culture still lived. The next leader described how a shift in her perspective changed her world view.

The path my life had taken leading up to my Alert Bay experience allowed me to arrive there with an open-minded attitude. What I learned from the Kwakwaka'wakw people was a dramatic change of perspective, from a scientific to a cultural perspective of nature. There is nothing like soaking in a cultural bath... Their living culture joins the whole of myself, e.g. my relationship with nature in my childhood and the respect and spirituality I grant to nature now. (Queenie – environmental autobiography)

This leader observed that living with the Kwakwaka'wakw people propelled her from a scientific perspective of nature to include a cultural perspective of nature. Through their culture, she discovered there is another perspective of nature and with that discovery is able to form a more complete self. She feels joined and connected with the past and present, understanding how each impacted the other.

This following story revealed that sharing the knowledge of elders, community leaders and university professors provided an experience that was meaningful and the lessons learned applicable.

The Alert Bay experience grounded the program (UVIC EE Masters program) for me in the practical light of everyday life and gave context and reality to my perspective of First Nations views... This program has moved me through a model of knowledge to awareness and action. (Mickey – environmental autobiography)

For this leader the meaning of Alert Bay and the role it filled in connecting culture and community was powerful because it inspired him to become even more active in his environmental leadership role.

I believe Alert Bay became a metaphor on many levels, not only for self-discovery and a deeper searching in self for each and every leader, but also validated the powerful connections between the human and non-human worlds. The unique ability to connect the learning experiences captured in Alert Bay into their own lives gives credence to the ability of this group to view things in a holistic manner. Other Ways of Knowing

The cohort group was open to other ways of learning and knowing and this meant they were receptive to other ways of teaching. The experience of Alert Bay illustrated the importance of learning and sharing community knowledge by those outside the traditional western teaching profession. The First Nations elders, during their own teachings, granted permission for their stories to be retold and relayed by the cohort group. The following story emphasized that the teaching were powerful, moving and emotional for both the elder and the student.

But there was one time when Vera was talking about her growing up and the white people coming in and her being taken away and I remember She was being very frank about that and (for me) was very powerful, very personal. (Lana – interview)

The stories told by the elders were based on truths as this story reveals and those truths were poignant, enlightening and powerful because they were based on life experiences. These life based experiences, as revealed by the above leader, are a valuable teaching tool because they connect on a very personal level

This leader observed the message passed on by elders is captivating and meaningful.

They captivated me with their stories and their truths and they always do. I love it when they begin “this is my truth” and they are speaking right from the heart and you know they are not getting any of this from a text-book of facts. These are life experiences, what they were taught and passed down from generation to generation. There is always a story attached; and their tiredness, there is a certain something in their tone and you know they have gone through a lot of pain and suffering. This is the life they lived...and you can't but help know that they have something to offer. (Nattie – interview)

This kind of deep learning is not based on memorizing facts for a test, but is based on remembering a powerful story that attained meaning because it has been lived. It is the quality of meaning that ensures that remembering takes place. Learning is also a gradual experience requiring the time to reflect and to experience that what is being taught. This leader acknowledges that she has yet to fully understand the teachings of the elders.

One of the things I am trying to understand about elders' teachings is that so many times, until you are enlightened, you don't know what you've learned and I think that I am on that journey because I don't know what they taught me because they will tell you things, they will share things and you kind of wonder where is that coming from? How relevant is that to me and what is your point? And then with some of the stories that came out, I didn't know where we were going with them. So I think to myself, maybe these are the lessons that I am not prepared to learn yet and when the time arrives, maybe a light will go on. I am not in that space yet. I have a sense that may have been what was going on in Alert Bay. (Glory – interview)

She is confident that at some time in the future, she will be able to put the experience into context when the time is right.

The power of the experiential learning process that became part of the Alert Bay Field School is perhaps one of the most important themes to emerge from this data.

The power received, in several cases, resulted in transformative changes for the leaders as this leader revealed.

I guess I was being kind of cynical ...thinking it's (Alert Bay) not going to be a great change. I wasn't going to learn anything new, but it would be a nice environment to learn in...It just blew me away. It was so different and my sister-in-law is Cree and she said to me. You just wait – this is going to be different because you are invited there and you are going to have elders who have accepted you there and you are going to hear a much different story from them than you have heard before... I still didn't think much of it. But when I got there – boy – those elders blew me away. They told us there stories or as they said “my truths”. It was so moving and it just opened my eyes. (Loren – interview)

These teachings, based on human experience, as told by the Elders and Chiefs of the village were immersed in emotion and spirituality. The sharing of the stories enabled group members to connect to their own culture, their own elders and most importantly, their own hearts. This kind of learning experience, in the format of a graduate field school, is multi-layered and provides meaningful wisdom based on personal experience. The stories and memories of the leaders reflect the importance that knowledge must be experienced if it is to be applied in context.

The paradox that was Alert Bay is forever embedded in the memories and culture of the cohort group. The gifts of great joy and great pain, with their powerful connections to despair and, subsequently hope, are life stories fully lived.

I loved Alert Bay because you laughed; cried; felt their joy and their pain and it was just so real and it's like we said before, you have to have both and so I felt the pain and I felt the hope and without that feeling of hope, it wouldn't have been as great. (Nadine - interview)

The wisdom gained by attending the Alert Bay Field School has become a part of the culture that binds this group. It is now a part of their personal practical knowledge and is embedded in the stories they tell and the wisdom they pass on to those they teach.

The wisdom and generosity they possessed was first experienced by the researcher during the Alert Bay Field School. I do not come from a science or education background and, as a result, several assignments assigned in Alert Bay could not have been completed without the help of my cohort group. At all times, help and coaching were provided to me by any member of the cohort group, regardless of time constraints. I also observed assistance being provided to other members of the group who were inexperienced in particular areas. Each member was willing to share their expertise and knowledge with others. They do indeed lead by action, combined with a generosity of spirit that includes a sharing of self.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Summary of Research Project

This chapter presents an overview of the research project and a discussion of the findings. The life experiences of a select group of environmental education leaders are woven into a case study that revealed a number of themes common to many of the leaders in the group. The first section consists of a summary of the research project and is followed by a discussion of the study results in relation to the findings of previous researchers and their connection to the reflections of environmental educators and philosophers. The last section outlines implications for further research.

The purpose of this study was, through the life experiences of a select group of environmental education leaders, to discover how a culture of environmental leadership evolved and under what circumstances it was sustained.

#### **1) What kinds of significant experiences lead to the development of Environmental leadership?**

Seven themes emerged from the data relevant to early significant experiences: highly developed sense of place, deep love of nature, early influence of others early heroic efforts, early experiential learning, overcoming early obstacles and creation of values. These themes originated in codes and emerged from the data and were not pre-selected by the researcher.

All leaders exhibited a highly developed sense of place and the stories revealed it is attachment to place that served to ground the group in later life. This abiding sense of place developed from languid summers spent at cottages, busy childhoods spent on

farms, lonely childhoods in isolated communities, cosmopolitan urban childhoods and the fragmented childhoods of those who moved frequently. Despite the context of place and the wide range of experiences associated with sense of place; attachment to home places was strong and enduring in all seventeen leaders, including those who moved frequently.

The deep love of nature that evolved in early years is connected to the strong sense of place shared by these leaders and may have contributed to the development of the stewardship ethic that many leaders practiced in their later years. Mature leaders, those in their fifties and late forties experienced the glorious freedom of a time when neighbourhoods and communities were safe and welcoming places to be. Younger leaders usually experienced the outdoors in a more organized manner. Outdoor camping trips, hiking excursions, school outings and hunting and fishing trips offered experience with the added bonus of practical knowledge taught by people with experience and respect for the land.

The early influence of others, possibly as mentors, during childhood and adolescence played a significant role in the future development of environmental leadership within the group by providing positive role models and setting examples of stewardship and leadership. For several leaders, negative influences were more powerful than positive experiences in that they provided concrete examples of who not to be, what not to do and how not to behave. Family members, mentors, teachers and friends all played a role in shaping the worldviews and values that, ultimately, resulted in shaping the leaders' own teaching and leadership styles.

These early formative experiences relating to sense of place, deep love of nature and influence of others are reflected in much of the significant life experience research. Tanner's early study on thirty-five environmental activists determined that frequent time spent outdoors in natural, rural or pristine areas and the influence of others were early formative experiences (1980). Chawla's findings determined that the development of environmental activists required three connections; adults who bound them as children to nature, a sense of past and future generations, and physical and seasonal tasks (1994). A recent case study study of ten British Columbia environmental education teachers, who had been identified as exceptional environmental leaders, revealed the two strongest influences to be experience of natural areas and people (Ottnad, 2002).

This group of leaders showed a tendency towards early heroic efforts that manifested into action-oriented projects. Often, on their own volition, and by practicing early leadership qualities that are characteristic of their later years, they embarked on a variety of neighbourhood projects in order to save both nature and their communities from what they perceived as an undesirable outcome. These schemes and elaborate plans to rescue nature and their communities were sometimes, but not always, undertaken without the guidance of parents or teachers.

I believe this powerful theme reveals the early origins of an environmental consciousness based on values that developed, in large part, because of their own experiences in nature and the community. This theme of early heroic acts was not discussed in any of the studies used for this research. However, a recently completed M. A. research project by one of the environmental leaders in this project discovered

that nine out of the twelve children who participated in the research project in the children's own words, "helped nature" and, more specifically, directed their efforts towards trees. These twelve children lived in a very isolated coastal area in B. C. and spent much time by themselves or with friends playing outside (Sweeney, 2005).

The importance of experiential learning figured prominently in the leaders' childhoods and is connected to their early heroic acts providing evidence that this kind of practical learning experience is desirable and long-lasting. Experiential learning occurred in a variety of settings under diverse circumstances and illustrates that learning by doing is a profound learning tool. Their stories of experiential learning reveal that nature and community were not always thought of as separate and this early ability to see the connections between community and nature is carried on into their adult years.

Outside they learned practical things like how to tie fish flies and how build fires and how to make camp in the wilderness. Others acquired strength, flexibility and patience; learned the values of cooperation and sharing. The importance of voluntary, practical hands-on-learning relevant to communities, schools and nature in holistic way is discussed in several studies in the literature review (Bowers, 1995; Knapp, 1999; Rowe & Probst, 1995; Smith, 1999;) and is reflected in the stories of these leaders.

Using the environment as an integrating context has resulted in strong evidence that students perform better in mathematics, social studies, science and language arts than those enrolled in traditional programs (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998). Their experiences of early childhood reveal an understanding of the concept that nature and community are connected and our prehistory confirms that it was in our local

communities and local environments that we first learned to think and inquire and develop intellectual abilities (Martin, 2001).

Overcoming early obstacles was prevalent in the childhoods of these leaders and contributed to the resilience that would sustain them in their later years. The autobiographies and semi-structured interviews revealed that most leaders had painful episodes, some short lived, others long term in their childhoods. The stories revealed an optimism and feeling of hope that was truly inspirational and was carried to their adult years. Recent research by Hicks (1998) observed that collective struggles among global educators were considered a source of hope and Kovan & Dirk (2003) concluded that profound and lifelong struggles contributed to transformative learning; a process Carl Jung called individuation. I believe these struggles experienced in childhood gave birth to a strong belief in the value of hope and resilience that is evident in their adult lives. Kovan's recent research on transformative learning in the lives of non-profit environmental activists revealed that continued engagement with struggles resulted in an awareness of self and transformation (Kovan & Dirk, 2003).

A core value that the cohort group shared was one of frugality that recurred through many of the autobiographies and interviews and was one that, I believe, played a key role in the development of a sense environmental consciousness. This group of leaders learned at a young age the importance of not wasting and not to take things such as food and clothing for granted. As a result the values of respect and gratitude played an important role in their lives as children and continued into their adult lives. These values, an integral part of community life, were taught by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and signify the importance of a community where families are comprised of

several generations with histories about earlier times and lives that can be shared.

Sergiovanni (2000) describes a community like this:

Communities are organized around sound relationships and ideas. They create social structures that bind people to a set of shared values and ideas. Communities are defined by centres of values, sentiments and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of the “we” from the “i” of each individual... (p.65).

Six themes emerged in their adult lives and appear to be the result of a merging of thought and action that transformed into environmental leadership. The themes that emerged: stewardship, deep spirituality, sources of hope, disillusionment with Western culture, life-long learning experiences and autonomy all contributed to the environmental leadership practiced by the group.

The ethic of stewardship was defined by the leaders in response to the questionnaire and consistent in their responses was the idea that stewardship is an intergenerational concept consisting of obligation, duty, respect and gratitude. Their concern for future generations acted as a catalyst in their actions to evoke environmental change. Environmental leadership can be seen in these terms because in order to sustain a culture of environmental leadership the idea of a legacy and environmental stewardship are important components. Demoranville's (2002) recent study of environmental stewards determined that concern for future generations was to some extent both a motivating and sustaining factor for involvement in non-profit organizations.

A spiritual belief manifested itself in the stewardship ethic shared by the leaders. The seventeen leaders who agreed to participate in this research project had a deep and profound spiritual belief that was directly connected to their love of nature

and the outside world. This belief in the spiritual world also included the concept of hope, and this was a hopeful group of environmental leaders who believed in the power of change and saw themselves as agents of change. I feel it is this belief in a spiritual world that moves them through the difficult events that comprise a lifetime of diverse experiences.

The transformational nature of life-long learning experiences in the lives of these committed environmental leaders was powerful and profound and expressed with eloquence and great clarity throughout many of the interviews. This, combined with the ability to connect the past and present, resulted in leaders that were extremely perceptive and highly motivated in their quest to effect positive environmental change. According to Fien and Rawlins, if teachers are to effect change, then teacher training programs must “adequately prepare teachers to effectively achieve the goals of environmental education” (Fien & Rawlins 1996, p.2)

Autonomy was expressed by a confidence in self and a belief in the ability of others to lead. This belief in the ability of others to succeed was reflected in their leadership models and their choice of professional careers. In education, nothing is more important than instilling in others that they have the ability to learn and with knowledge and appropriate skills comes empowerment and the ability to effect change. A successful leader is able to motivate and inspire others which is empowerment at the grass roots level using a model of shared leadership based on a moral (Sergiovanni, 1992) and authentic leadership (Terry, 2001).

**2) What were the experiences and perceptions of these environmental leaders during an experiential based graduate program in Environmental Education?**

The graduate program was an important factor in the initial forming of group dynamics because it was the catalyst that drew the group together. The experiential component of the program offered opportunities to network, to exchange ideas and to increase their theoretical and practical knowledge of environmental education. Opportunities were provided to experience the wonders and intricacies of the natural environment. The changing oceans replete with a myriad of sea and mammal life, the dark forests teeming with plant life, song birds and microorganisms and the majesty of the killer whales and eagles that inhabit B. C.'s coast provided a living classroom immersed in experiential learning.

Directly connected to this living classroom was the impact of humankind on nature and this was revealed in first hand exposure to environmental issues that concerned clear cut logging, dwindling fisheries, fish farms, disappearance of rural lands, protection of estuaries and waterways and habitat protection. Instructors, professors, speakers, authors, elders and activists all provided lectures that were grounded in practical experience and knowledge.

The strong First Nations content, combined with a field school that introduced immersion into another culture, was another factor that drew this group to this particular graduate program. The field school at Alert Bay provided an opportunity for a kind of learning that many of the cohort group was already familiar with; learning in an environment where knowledge was practical, meaningful and applicable. It was the powerful and transformational experiences at Alert Bay that were most frequently mentioned in the environmental autobiographies and the semi-structured interviews.

The leaders in the cohort group spoke of acquiring a new respect for their own culture, yet this respect was combined with a questioning of Western values and a desire to re-connect with their own cultural past. They spoke of the importance of hearing first-hand the First Nations perspective of the results of colonization and the strength of the community in meeting those challenges. During the telling of these stories by elders from the village the cohort group learned the importance of other ways of knowing and sharing knowledge and, at the same time, they were exposed to a subtle, yet authentic model of leadership.

They learned that it took courage to weave emotion, passion and self into lessons. The elders acknowledged and accepted spirituality into their daily lives and in doing so lived the promise of authenticity that Terry defines as the essence of leadership (2001). The cohort group also experienced the subtle way that the elders coached and facilitated the younger generation, leading by doing and leading by showing. They also experienced the gentle, but dedicated leadership of Dr. Paul Spong, a marine mammal researcher, living at Robson's Bight. Taking tea and sharing the whale songs in that beautiful place is etched forever in time and the potential loss of killer whales to the coast of B. C. is not only a cultural loss, but a spiritual loss to those privileged enough to witness them in their natural environment.

David Garrick, another environmental leader, introduced the cohort group to his passionate connection to the forest in the form of culturally modified trees. Tucked away in the dark and damp forest, he lived in a camp devoid of many amenities, rather like a forest sprite renewing his energy by passing on his knowledge to camp visitors and students. These kinds of leaders, living their lives committed to work are examples

of environmental leadership that show the importance of coexistence and cooperation between culture and nature.

The connections between community and nature, already strong within the cohort group, were reinforced by memories of a people who had lost homes and communities and yet had retained the belief system and values important to those communities. These values of respect, reciprocity and gratitude were practiced and taught by village elders and similar values, introduced and nurtured in the cohort group as children, were validated in Alert Bay. The importance of connections between community and nature emphasized by (Bowers, 1995; Knapp, 1999; Kuiack, 2004; Smith, 1999;) is eloquently framed by Wendell Berry, a philosopher and farmer and relevant to the values shared by the cohort group:

If the members of a local community want their community to flourish, and to last, here are some of the things they should do: Always include local nature – the land, the water, the air, the native creatures – within the membership of community...ask how local needs might be supplied from local sources...see that the old and young take care of each other...always be aware of the economic action of neighbourly acts...always care for (your) old people and teach your children. (Berry cited in Suzuki & Dressell, 1999, p. 256)

The literature suggests that moral leadership is strongly connected to sustainable communities because there is a sharing of important values and ideals that result in a commonly understood goal. This belief has been reinforced through my own fieldwork in developing countries where I learned that the building of a sustainable community with common values is an important goal because leadership is most effective when all have a equal interest in not only the outcome but, more importantly, in the process. I concur that this is a goal that environmental educators must strive for

because “the leadership that counts in the end, is the kind that touches people differently. It taps into their emotions, appeals to their values and responds to their connections with other people. It is a morally based leadership – a form of stewardship” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 120).

Some of the most meaningful experiences in Alert Bay evolved as metaphors of hope for these environmental leaders. Many leaders, as children, had already learned that adversity and hope walk hand in hand and, in the remote village of Alert Bay, they learned first-hand that for many First Nations peoples the walk has been long. Hope was reflected in the faces of First Nations children as they learned a new dance, attended a potlatch or watched the canoes arrive. Hope was relayed in the stories about the past shared by the Elders and was reborn in the strength of a community that continues to honour the past while welcoming the future, whatever it brings.

The experience at Alert Bay provided the leaders with an opportunity to put into context, not only the lessons learned during the three year graduate programme, but lessons learned during a lifetime of lived experiences. This research process was also a part of that learning experience for the leaders because like the elders of Alert Bay, they were provided with an opportunity to share and reflect upon those experiences that influenced and guided them.

For many of the leaders recounting their own stories was a new and rewarding experience and they often referred to the stories of the elders who recalled their own passion, pain and joy. I think offering the cohort group an opportunity to tell their stories provided them with another means of connecting to and understanding on a personal and emotional level the lessons and stories shared by the elders in Alert Bay.

This component of the research project was not an evaluation of the graduate program, yet it is important to realize that the formation of a tightly knit group during a graduate program does not always occur (Fien & Rawlins, 1996). It may be that Alert Bay provided the beginnings of a peer-support group that continued throughout the duration of the program and thereafter.

In summary, the Alert Bay Field School provided a unique opportunity for a cross-cultural exchange whereby students, elders, university professors and community resource people were in a unique position to share stories and knowledge on equal ground. I believe an understanding of different world views was elicited and graduate students came away not only profoundly affected by their experience, but inspired to teach and lead others about their new and holistic knowledge base. As environmental leaders they felt strongly the responsibility to pass on the wisdom and words of the elders who graciously granted them permission to do so.

### **Recommendations**

- 1) The creation of an active knowledgeable citizenry is dependent on the development of appropriate environmental leadership. This can be attained by introducing curriculum that teaches stewardship as a way of thinking and a way of being, as opposed to the content of a subject. Stewardship models are immersed in promoting deep experiences in the natural environment, reflection, action and community involvement resulting in advocacy and self-empowerment.
- 2) The care and respect for the land requires a specialized kind of leadership that is grounded in local experience complete with the local knowledge

necessary to create sustainable communities. Successful environmental leadership requires local leadership that balances the needs of the biotic community and the human community. Therefore, programs that wish to create successful effective environmental leaders must be holistic and multi-disciplinary including knowledge in areas such as marketing, world trade, economics, politics and communication.

- 3) The development of environmental leadership in people of all ages is dependent on and perpetuated by environmental leadership that leads by example and the idea that shared leadership accepts responsibility and ownership for local issues and their subsequent success and/or failure. This kind of leadership is effectively taught by those who have walked the walk because it is personal practical knowledge that transforms into a meaningful and believable learning experience.
- 4) The introduction of other ways of knowing into the curriculum is a worthy goal because while factual knowledge may be a specialized intellectual exercise; it is the acquisition of wisdom that is applicable and meaningful in the real world context. Other ways of knowing includes local knowledge, indigenous knowledge, mentorship, imagination and intuition (Kuiack 2004).
- 5) The creation of an experiential learning component in graduate programs that is community based and project-oriented and provides an opportunity for environmental leaders to work actively in the field testing their environmental knowledge and leadership skills in a real life context.

#### 4) What are the characteristics of environmental education leaders?

The data in the form of the responses from the questionnaire, the environmental autobiography and the semi-structured interview revealed that the cohort group shared Gordon & Berry's (1993) six elements of environmental leadership:

- 1) be a leader and a follower,
- 2) think about change,
- 3) develop breadth and flexibility,
- 4) learn to listen – humility,
- 5) set an ethical example,
- 6) be a lifelong learner. (p.20)

The quality of spirituality is evident in all seventeen leaders and is an important element in sustaining a culture of environmental leadership for this group. Contained within this spiritual component are the values of hope, gratitude and inspiration.

Terry's (2001) model of authentic leadership affirmed the importance of spirituality in the context of a holistic leadership model and spiritual reflection, usually in a natural setting, was something the cohort group practiced in times of stress.

The data revealed that hope, in all its metaphorical references, was a mindset that enabled the leaders to move through many challenging and difficult times. Hick's research on the "pedagogy of hope" reveals that without hope or sources of hope, the twelve global educators in his research would not be able to continue with their work (1998). Despair is paralyzing and hope is a keen motivator for student, teacher and leader.

The cohort's thoughts and perceptions of leadership were outlined in Chapter 5, but key phrases repeatedly by the leaders were: guide, facilitate, motivate, lead by example and share leadership. Shared characteristics of leadership identified by the

participants were that leaders should be: inspirational, enthusiastic, caring, humble, respectful and good communicators and these findings reflect many attributes of Lois Goodrich's description of ideal environmental leadership (1981).

The literature review revealed that Sergiovanni's moral leadership model grounded in projects at the community level is an effective and applicable leadership model for the field of Environmental Education (Bowers, 1995; Hammond, 1997; Rowe & Probst, 1995; Sergiovanni, 2000). Providing opportunities for students to connect to the communities and natural areas around them while engaged in meaningful local projects is empowering and is an example of experiential learning that promotes the motivation of an active citizenry (Hungerford, 1996). Leadership in Environmental Education is about change and action and the cohort group learned at an early age how to evoke and implement change.

An environmental leadership model is also grounded in servitude and Sergiovanni observed that servant leadership must always meet the needs of the community in a cooperative way (1992). The spiritual component is also an element of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1990) and spirituality, through communication with nature, was a preferred way for the cohort group to connect with themselves and nature. The data revealed that their preferred model of leadership was based on leading by example and they felt strongly that a leader must not only talk the talk, but walk the walk.

Environmental leadership according to the literature and reinforced by this study is best perpetuated by those who have experienced the challenges and adversity of environmental leadership on a personal level (Kuiack, 2004; Gordon & Berry, 1993;

Lemons, 1985; Riggins, 1985). In his study on the evaluation of environmental leadership models, Lemons concluded that conventional leadership models despite their best efforts were on some way exclusionary because there was no way for students to test new and acquired knowledge in the field against their own personal value systems.

Alternative environmental leadership models were more successful in addressing this issue because new ideals and values were reinforced by personal experience (Lemons, 1985). This idea of personal experience was reflected in the impact that the powerful teachings of the elders of Alert Bay had on the cohort group and by the fact that this group practiced environmental leadership based on their own personal experiences.

#### Implications for Future Research

The literature review (Hart & Nolan, 1999; Ottnad, 2005; Ross 2003;) and this research project determined that more research needs to be done on the origins of belief systems of educators. Specifically, how other life experiences account for and contribute to the development of values in creating a culture of environmental leadership because environmental leadership is value-laden (Gordon & Berry 1997; Langton, 1984). I believe that this research project offered a snapshot into the lives of environmental educators and revealed the emergence of an environmental consciousness connected to a variety of life experiences and influences. They shared a value system that encompassed a world view somewhat different from those values endorsed by mainstream culture and were manifested in a stewardship ethic that was practiced throughout their professional and personal lives.

More research of a participatory nature needs to be initiated exploring the stories and lives of experienced environmental leaders. A methodology including focus groups and participatory discussions on the possible origins of values and belief systems relevant to environmental leadership is desirable because as Ross (2005) so recently noted the beliefs of teachers was more significant than any other finding in his research related to the success of professional development in the Colquitz River Watershed Stewardship Project.

Further research needs to explore the theme of hope because hope is inherent in environmental leadership. Hope was an important factor in the lives of this group and was, in part, the result of adversity and struggles experienced throughout a lifetime. Perhaps it is hopelessness that needs to be addressed in those who are not environmentally consciousness and that kind of research may provide answers to the lethargy that seems to be prevalent among many young people today.

Additional research needs to be initiated on the spiritual aspect of environmental leadership. This spiritual aspect is present in stewardship and according to the literature review spirituality is an integral component of authentic leadership (Terry, 2001). The values of hope and spirituality that are evident in stewardship and environmental leadership require more in-depth research and their role in sustaining commitment is particularly urgent in light of the troubling times in which we live. Unfortunately, Ministry of Education documents delete any references to a spiritual relationship with nature. Spirituality in this cohort group was a strong and binding connection and endorses one of the single most important philosophies of Environmental Education (Jardine, 1996; Orr, 1994)

### Final Thoughts

Each leader in the group has learned from past experiences and how they interpret and make sense of these experiences translates into the rich culture of environmental leadership they share with others today. Implementing stewardship programs that combine local community action with student input provides learning experiences at all levels with the intent of positive local change. Individual actions, locally based, are a successful strategy in dealing with environmental issues (Williams & Taylor 1999). The first step in cleaning the global village is to tidy up the backyard and this group of leaders has taken that issue to heart. Within their schools and communities they have been involved in various programs, on professional and volunteer levels, that make their local communities a better place.

As environmental educators they have ensured that nature has retained a place within their own communities. Their experience and knowledge serve as a template for learning; a lesson plan gleaned from life itself. The stories full of triumph and, just as often, great pain shine as a beacon; a bright force illuminating the path the future environmental leaders. Teaching others to reconnect with nature in local communities and local places and implementing action based on reflection results in positive change (Hammond, 1997). These leaders not only practice experiential learning; they live it. Through their stories and their introduction of a stewardship model to students, they offer proof that hope exists in a framework that embodies empowerment for the individual and one that results in respect and understanding for the biotic community.

The literature suggests that moral leadership is strongly connected to sustainable communities because there is a sharing of important values and ideals that results in a

commonly understood goal (Sergiovanni, 1992). This belief has been reinforced through my own fieldwork in developing communities where I have learned that the building of a sustainable community with common values is an important goal because leadership is most effective when all have an equal interest in, not only the outcome, but, more importantly, in the process. I concur that this kind of leadership is a goal that Environmental Education must strive for because “the leadership that counts in the end, is the kind that touches people differently. It taps into their emotions, appeals to their values and responds to their connections with other people. It is a morally based leadership – a form of stewardship” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 120).

The past is based on the experiences and memories of those who lived it; it is about people and the experiences that shaped them. The past shows us how people construct meanings to make sense of the world around them and using the past is a powerful learning tool reinforced by the elders of Alert Bay. The experiences and culture of this group of leaders is now written into the history of Environmental Education so that the lessons in the form of personal experience can be passed on.

The group case study will serve to inspire and motivate those who hesitate because they do not know where to begin. These seventeen leaders, through their inspirational memories of hope and change serve to effect thoughtful action as the reader reflects on the transformational nature of the group case study. Their experience reveals the important role of teachers and parents in providing opportunities that engage young people in deep experiences with nature. Simple action projects initiated by parents, family members, teachers and mentors reflect the importance of instilling the belief that each and every action connects to something much larger.

Their ways of knowing will provide insight into how environmental leadership is created and sustained providing direction for principals, curriculum planners and teachers in the field of Environmental Education because, as I learned, Environmental Education is not so much subject, as it is a way of life. That way of life is a window through which this group's leadership skills evolved and if that way of life can in any way be recreated, it will provide valuable knowledge for the field of Environmental Education.

In closing this chapter on the data review, I have selected this story of one leader's joy and exuberance in the field that chose her. I feel this story best articulates the feelings that the group had about their careers and as the data revealed, it is in some way reflective of all of them.

And I can't help but think what a lucky creature I am because it's such a privilege to get to work in nature interpretation. I get to spend my days frolicking in the forest involved with children. It doesn't get any better than that...When I get really weary or things get me down, or politics at work start eating me up, I can't help but try and remind myself how lucky I am! (Glory – interview)

## AFTERWORD

This leg of my journey is over and the legs of my daughter, sixteen months after being hit by a speeding car, have finally begun to heal. I was with her when she took her confident first steps at twelve months of age and again when she took her hesitant first steps at twenty-five years of age. Her recovery would not have been possible without the help of her brother and father along with close knit community of family and friends who lovingly offered assistance and encouragement during some very dark days.

The importance of community was consistently reinforced by family and friends and the healing power of nature was experienced in our favourite place – the summer house on a secluded Gulf island. It was here in the solitude of nature surrounded by water, swirling mists and soaring gulls that, through reflection and gratitude at the absolute beauty of nature, the most important healing took place. Whenever our spirits languished - a heron, an otter, an eagle, a piece of polished sea glass or a swallowtail butterfly – instilled a feeling of hope and reminded us that life was still so very good. In order for life to continue being good it is vital that our natural places remain intact; our spirits depend on it.

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## **Appendix A Participant Consent Form**

University of Victoria  
Office of the Vice President, Research  
Human Research Ethics Committee

### **Teachers for the Earth: Profiles of Inspired Leadership in Environmental Education**

Dear

As graduate students we are required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Environmental Education. My research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gloria Snively, whom you all know, and you may contact her at 250-721-7830 or at [gsnively@uvic.ca](mailto:gsnively@uvic.ca). You are essentially pre-selected because you are enrolled, along with myself, in the same graduate degree program. We all share ideas of environmental stewardship and exhibit a great passion for preserving the beauty of nature, while at the same time ensuring that this worldview is passed on to others. This research will explore how and why your collective experiences as environmental leaders has created and sustained a culture of stewardship. This research will also include the experiences and knowledge of our professors in the EE program at the University of Victoria.

The purpose of this research is, through the use of group biographies, to explore and discover how a dynamic group of environmental leaders continues to inspire and motivate others to care for and respect the environment. By implementing stewardship programs, combining local action with student input and providing experiential learning experiences at all levels, your initiative has resulted in positive local change. Because of your initiative, passion and commitment to local environmental concerns you have ensured that your schools and communities are happier, greener places to live. In essence, what I really want to know is "How do you do what you do?"

Research of this type is important because the results will explore the role leadership plays in incorporating change. It will also provide valuable insight into your lives as leaders, as well as acknowledging and honouring your efforts to enrich the minds of students by reconnecting them to their natural surroundings. Your accomplishments as a group, and the positive impact this has had on others, will be realized and revealed possibly for the first time. It is my hope that, as a group, you will be energized and reborn by the collective histories, gaining impetus for further meaningful work in the Environmental Education field. As individuals, you will continue to empower and motivate others, working to initiate changes in worldviews that will ensure the protection and continued conservation of the environment. It is imperative that your experiences and stories are heard in their own right, preserved and collected in libraries, so that environmental educators will have access to this rich and informative

knowledge. This research will lead the way into further research into the lived human experiences of environmental educations and the impact those experiences have on others.

If you agree to this research, your participation will include the completion of the questionnaire that is attached. I am also asking that you supply me with a copy of your complete environmental autobiography, as it will be an integral part of the research process. In the spirit of reciprocity, I will ensure that you all have a copy of my own autobiography. Interview times will be arranged during the summer session at Victoria. At the end of summer, time permitting, I would like to set up a group session to discuss the research process ensuring that close takes place. For those of you who request confidentiality, please be reassured that those wishes will be respected and accommodated during the group session.

The use of names in relaying experience and stories will not be a necessary component of the final meeting. This study may cause some inconvenience to you during the hectic summer session and, to that end, I plan to interview some of the Island and lower mainland participants after the summer session, if necessary. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a result of your participation and I feel we will all experience positive benefits as a result of this research.

Your participation must be completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time and your data will not be used. In terms of protecting your anonymity, there will be no reference to names and places of work in the thesis or published articles should you so indicate. Any information you share with me including questionnaire material, interview data and autobiographies will not be discussed in any way among group members and will be considered highly confidential. All information given to me will be kept under lock and key. The data's only purpose will be in the compilation and writing of the thesis and possible publication of articles. Once the research is complete tapes, transcripts and autobiographies will be destroyed. My own journals and reflections will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, coded so that identities are not known.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and supervisor at the above numbers, you may verify ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4362). Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature and Date

As a researcher, I guarantee your anonymity, should you so desire, and further state that the information provided by you will be kept confidential.

As a participant, I am willing to have my name used in this research      **YES**      **NO**

A copy of this consent will be left with you and a copy taken by the researcher.

**Appendix B**  
**Graduate Program in Environmental Education – Alert Bay Field School**

**ED-E 574 (1.5) Environmental Education Perspectives**

This course will take a multi-disciplinary approach to explore goals for environmental and outdoor education; cultural differences in perceptions of community-environment relationships; the traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom of First Nations Peoples; current issues and trends; the research related to student's environmental knowledge, attitudes and values, teaching strategies; and assessment techniques. (Course Instructor: Dr. Gloria Snively)

**EDUC 431 (1.5) Community and Culture**

The struggles between city building and the protection of “home place” surrounds us. This course examines ideas and beliefs that shape relationships between human communities and the environment by drawing on history, ethnology, economics, and philosophy. Students will examine the assumptions and strategies of city-builders as well as the ecological insights and strategic thinking of long-resident indigenous peoples. The objective is to explore various assumptions about growth, activity, and compromise that drive the pervasive and troublesome struggle between development and preservation.

(Course Instructor: John Corsiglia)

**ES 400A (1.5) Ethnobiology of British Columbia's First Nations**

Ethnobiology is the study of the direct interrelationships between people, plants and other botanical organisms (ethnobotany) as well as between people and animals (ethnozology). This introductory field-based course will consider the theories and methodologies of a number of fields that contribute to ethnobiological studies, including botany, zoology, anthropology, linguistics, ethnopharmacology, economics and biological conservation.

Consideration will also be given to the history of ethnobiology with emphasis on the relevance of this interdisciplinary field to various academic, environmental and social issues. The course will involve an overview of notable botanical and zoological species with traditional cultural roles among several First Nations of British Columbia. Special attention will be given to ways in which ethnobiological subject matter may be incorporated, by both formal and informal educators, into teaching programs and curricula. Students will be required to produce a research essay report or curriculum or other approved project.

(Course instructor: Dr. Brian Compton)

Source: Graduate Program in Environmental Education, University of Victoria  
 Course Package Hand-out.

**Appendix –C**  
**Questionnaire**

The questions will be divided into four types of questions.

- 1) Personal
  - a) Our experiences shape who and what we are, what experiences have shaped who you are?
  - b) From where do you derive hope and inspiration?
- 2) Background and Training
  - a) Was EE a part of your formal training?
  - b) How would you describe your role as a teacher in EE?
  - c) What three factors beyond your control prevent you from teaching EE the way you think it should be?
- 3) Affective (in a meaningful, powerful way)
  - a) Describe an incident that had a lasting impact on your feelings about the environment?
  - b) What motivates you to promote EE in your classrooms?
  - c) What do you think motivates or inspires students to take an interest in EE?
- 4) Leadership
  - a) What is your most effective EE teaching tool?
  - b) If you were to describe yourself as a leader, how would you do that?
  - c) What are the most important qualities you think a leader should have?