

The Ecology of Home

David B. Zandvliet



The Ecology of Home

RESEARCHING ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

Volume 3

Series Editor

David B. Zandvliet, *Simon Fraser University, Canada*

Scope

There continues to be growing concern about the state of the environment, yet we are often confused by the complexities of economic, ethical, political, and social issues related to it. Daily, there are references in the news media to environmental issues such as global climate change, ozone depletion, dwindling resources, famine, disease, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and continuing job losses in many BC communities. The problems we face both as individuals and within our broader society are now so pervasive and ingrained within our cultural ways of being that we can no longer look to education about science and technology alone to solve these problems. Resultantly, environmental learning can and should include a sustained critique on dominant societal and industrial practices that often contribute to widespread and localized environmental problems.

We must also turn to ourselves as individuals, and as educational professionals to make change and develop a new ethic – a responsible attitude toward caring for the earth. Working to integrate environmental learning within all subject areas promotes this change in attitude by providing students with opportunities to experience and investigate the relationships linking individuals, societies, and natural surroundings. Education ‘about’, ‘in’ and ‘for’ the environment provides students with opportunities to learn about the functioning of natural systems, to identify their beliefs and opinions, consider a range of views, and ultimately make informed and responsible choices for themselves, their families and communities. This book series aims to look at environmental learning and the associated educational research related to these practices from a broad and international perspective.

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*For my wife, Vajiramalie
and the homes we will inhabit together
now and in the future ...*

Home is a word – and an idea – as elusive as it is universal. It's a place that offers shelter, protection, privacy, but it's also a state of mind ... Both physically and spiritually, home is where we live – a notion at once simple, powerful, and profoundly mysterious ...

K.M. Kostyal (n.d.)

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Figure 1. Entrance to a Masai Home (Western Kenya)

BIOGRAPHY

As the storyteller in this book I thought I should begin by first telling you a little bit about myself. Currently, I am an Associate Professor and Director of the *Institute for Environmental Learning* at Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, Canada). In truth, my work has involved the practice of ecological education and the development of the curriculum for both the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Environment at my home institution and at others around the world. However, this is not how it all started ...

As a child, I grew up within a stone's throw of the Toronto airport – right in the heart of suburbia. Here, I was well acquainted with 'progress' as I watched the expanding shopping centres, highrises and subdivisions going up all around me. The parks and playgrounds of my youth were literally being 'paved under' on a daily basis. To counteract this phenomenon, most Torontonians took refuge in their television sets (especially in winter) – a simulated or virtual environment I suppose. In this, I was no exception as one of my favourite pastimes was watching the Jacques Cousteau specials. Then as now, the ocean held a strange fascination for me and I dreamed of one day playing the adventurous Marine Biologist.

Eventually, I did enroll in a marine sciences program at a nearby university. As I left my childhood home for the first time, it seemed as though my dreams were about to be realized. Indeed, university was an important time and place for me and I remember walking on campus and enjoying the trees and their vibrant autumn colours – it was great to be away from the city with all of its concrete and noise. And so, as my identity formed – so did my interest in the environment.

Eventually, the draw of the ocean became too much for me to resist and I left my home in Toronto to make a new home for myself in coastal British Columbia. In remaking my home on the West Coast, I have had the opportunity to rediscover myself a number of times in my various careers as a marine biologist, school teacher, college and now university professor. However, as the topic of this book suggests, the idea and practice of 're-making a home' for oneself is a complex and constantly evolving practice. So, this book is at once both a theory about education – and a story about my attempts at rediscovering 'home.'

If you follow the trail of your own enthusiastically repeated stories, you will begin to rediscover the things that invigorate and enliven you ... (n.d. attributed to M. Radmacher)