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TOWARDS MINDFUL ENVIROMENTAL PRACTICE

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The Choice to Become an Environmental Practitioner

As an educator, I work with adult learners who have chosen to become environmental practitioners. This includes people who have solidified this career interest at an early age, as well as mid-career adults, who are making dramatic changes in their professional and personal lives. It sometimes includes people who are more spuriously and haphazardly, or at least less consciously attracted to the profession. Regardless of their background, this choice is a profound career decision. Sometimes it is informed by deeply rooted values. Or it is framed by an amorphous intuitive voice. Citing dissatisfaction or frustration with a recent life circumstance, the person wishes to reexamine his/her values about nature. Perhaps the person is not yet ready to articulate why such a choice has been made. Whatever the depth of awareness of this decision, most aspiring environmentalists perceive themselves as choosing more than a profession; they are searching to link their personal identity to an environmental way of life. Somewhere in the career decision making process, these people have been attracted to a livelihood in which they will be working, as they often say it themselves, "to protect the environment." There is something within them that yearns for a more fulfilling relationship with the natural world. They seek to incorporate various aspects of their lives in order to achieve that goal. In some cases, this is an image or an idea; it's romantic and intangible. For others, it's the obvious continuation of a lifelong pursuit. Either way, this decision to become an environmental practitioner requires support and encouragement. For these people it becomes clear that their environmentalism is intrinsic to personal identity. These are feelings which they would like to discuss, explore, and integrate with their life experience.

In my discussions with numerous experienced environmental professionals, whether they are educators, activists, administrators, researchers, etc., it has become clear that they/we have similar career concerns. We wish to sustain the moral

choice of environmentalism as a way of life, but professional obligations and commitments often thrust us into difficult circumstances.

Sometimes we fall into the various traps of professionalism. For example, the environmentalist is constantly challenged to substantiate his/her agenda. Often we try to adapt a language and approach to problem-solving that is familiar and comfortable to a culture that does not value nature, or which subsume environmental concerns in a material umbrella. In the effort to develop credibility, create compromise, and sustain working relationships, or in the understandable, but hazardous path to higher salaries and career advancement, it is easy to neglect the values, motivations, and experiences that led us to choose environmentalism as a profession.

Many of us become obsessed by our professionalism. Typically we work for resource poor organizations which have grandiose missions. Certainly the magnitude of environmental problems demands this. Hence our lives become our work. How often do we become overcommitted professionally leaving ourselves precious little time to experience nature?

Under these circumstances, it is vital that as environmental professionals, we are capable of articulating and projecting our core values about nature, what I call environmental identity. By doing so, our reasons for becoming environmentalists remain clear in the face of challenging and difficult situations. Our participation in the professions will have an introspective, dynamic, and visionary perspective.

But how is this accomplished? Such awareness requires clarity, self-reflection, and a special attentiveness to the motivations and spirit behind our actions. These are the elements of mindful environmental practice. The purpose of this essay is to address the educational dimensions of this approach. By exploring some curricular ideas that explore this concept, my intention is to show how environmental identity formation may become a conscious process; the basis for lifelong learning; the inner voice and guide that places values, career, and awareness in a balanced perspective.

Educating for Environmental Identity

By environmental identity I refer to an individual's developmental relationship with nature. Identity represents the complex interplay between bodily, psychological, and social processes. By using the term environmental identity, I assert that these processes may be synthesized through symbolic experiences with nature. Such themes as wilderness experiences, relationships to other species, relationship to material life, and sense of place might be the stage through which an individual develops changing concepts of self and works out critical lifecycle decisions.

Why is this developmental? Our relationship to nature is inextricably linked to cycles of ego development. During various stages of our life we conceive of nature differently. What is secret space for a child becomes a sacred space for the adult. Mountains, landscapes, gardens, cities, our fields of experience are regarded differently depending on the lifecycle changes we confront. This is understood by educators, who observe the subtleties of environmental identity as they're manifested in children, adolescents, adults, seniors, etc. It is recognized by psychologists who describe the symbolic, unconscious function of environmental experiences.

Similarly, practitioners should be aware of the various lifecycle changes that affect their views and visions. As our lives change, as our bodies age, as our values reflect our stage of life (in the Eriksonian sense), the texture of our environmental experience will be transformed. A well-formulated environmental identity enables us to pass through these changes and to guide others through them as well.

When viewed in these terms, the concept of environmental identity is idiosyncratic and complex. How does the individual integrate a lifetime of experience and begin to understand the various ways that his/her symbolic, cognitive, and affective relationship with the natural world can be linked to ego development and lifecycle transitions? These relationships deserve the full attention of the environmentalist, using them to link personal identity to the natural world, using them as the foundation for a commitment to environmentalism and a context for professionalism.

There are salient themes that emerge when environmentalists discuss the critical incidents, circumstances and patterns which inform their commitments. These events serve as the glue of their environmental identity and provide a common reference of mutual support. The role of the educator is to provide the adult learner with the opportunities to share these critical experiences. Students should be encouraged to form learning communities which allow them to explore their environmental identity. By learning community, I mean the formation of participatory, cooperative, and collegial relationships. These qualities help establish a constructive, but challenging atmosphere. Through their peer relationships and with the help of facilitative leadership, adult learners are easily engaged in risk-taking, creative expression, discussion of personal experience, and critical thinking.

This learning process is framed in a broader context: what is our relationship to the complex, unfolding tradition of environmentalism? How does our life experience help us understand the meaning of environmentalism? How can we collectively explore our environmental identities and use such inquiry to improve our profession?

There are specific teaching techniques which facilitate this process. I choose themes of inquiry, what I call patterns of environmentalism. These are ideas

and concerns of historical significance that have moved several generations of environmentalists. I organize these themes around creative assignments that challenge the adult learner to incorporate his/her knowledge. By placing heavy emphasis on the use of autobiographical experience, small group discussions, and other participatory learning techniques, students develop the affinity and trust that allow them to form a poignant learning community.

An Educational Strategy

I have developed a sequence of instruction in which students undergo a distinct pattern of emotional stages. Initially, students locate and name their tradition; they recognize and affirm their choice to become environmental professionals. This provides them with support, motivation and encouragement. It establishes collegiality for a joint purpose. Secondly, students endure despair and anxiety as they observe the magnitude of environmental deterioration. They look at themselves and accept responsibility for the choices of their ancestors. They witness the legacy of their species. The third step is to emerge from this with strength, to recognize that they have the creativity, perseverance, and leadership to promote and implement a sound environmental future.

These steps might be described as:

- Phase I (Affirmation and Support)
- Phase II (Anxiety, Despair, Blame, Guilt)
- Phase III (Meaning, Responsibility, Action)

During *Phase I*, I encourage students to juxtapose the historical development of American environmentalism with their own experiences in nature. They interpret the various wings of modern environmentalism, creating a taxonomy of the movement. They look for their place in this complex picture. They share their reasons for becoming environmental practitioners. They build a support network amongst their colleagues. This helps them assimilate the challenges of their profession. While studying the intriguing complexity of the American environmental tradition, they acknowledge the breadth and diversity of environmentalism, a movement filled with dynamic controversy. They recognize the historical threads of this controversy. They understand that the struggles they encounter are remarkably similar to the struggles of the great environmentalists. They discover their environmental lineage and ancestry and take pride in the legacy.

During *Phase II*, students are engaged in a process of reexamination and introspection. Using the theoretical perspective of environmental history, they study

incidents of clashing paradigms, the contact between the expansionist, imperialist culture of Western Europe and the indigenous cultures of North America. Students realize that this too is their tradition and lineage, as they consider the global and historical consequences of rapid material progress. By studying this theme, students must come to grips with the dark side of economic growth and industrial development. They inevitably question the values of Western Christian culture and look carefully at their own ideological assumptions. This is a painful and difficult process, provoking anxiety and guilt. Students perceive themselves as reflections of a culture which has perpetrated environmental deterioration.

During *Phase III*, students develop the vision and leadership to articulate, project, and assert their environmental identity. They explore the concept of ecological metaphor development, an approach that allows them to incorporate environmentalism as a philosophy of life. They familiarize themselves with some contemporary environmental visions. Students consider and represent the ecological metaphors that have been recurrent lifecycle themes. They explore their sense of place, pondering the habitats, landscapes, species, communities, and friendships that comprise their personal geography. From these experiences, students develop a voice for their environmental identity; they create maps and guides that are the constituents of meaning, action, and responsibility.

To develop an environmental identity, we must each write our story. We recall, recount, and reflect upon the critical incidents that encompass our life. I encourage adult learners to spread their lives before them, to use their experiences as the tapestry through which they will understand the meaning of environmentalism. Autobiographical analysis allows students to see their personal development in a new way; they trace their environmental identity formation to the earliest years. They can isolate key events and understand their significance. They begin to recognize and interpret both the practical and symbolic patterns of their environmental experiences.

Small groups become the forum for student projects, which emphasize the interpretation of environmental themes from an autobiographical perspective. The students are asked to develop what I call environmental identity documents, projects that will represent creative attempts to formulate environmental identity. Hopefully, these projects will be referred to throughout their lives as a record of their vision and a statement of their values.

For each phase of the class, the student is engaged in a project that covers the specific content of inquiry, but form an interpretive, introspective, and creative approach. However, these projects must be conceived in such a way that they don't rely exclusively on the personal experience of the individual. Rather, such experience should be integrated within a larger context: the origins, development, and contemporary manifestations of the environmental tradition.

Mindful Environmental Practice: Ideas and Activities

The remainder of this essay will describe selected educational activities. I have taken these from my course Patterns of Environmentalism (please write if you'd like more details about the course). These represent a sample of the various activities I use and they are not necessarily described in sequence. In some cases, these ideas have evolved through considerable experimentation. In other cases, they emerged spontaneously in what I describe as improvisational teaching situations. I must emphasize that the success of these activities hinges on the participation of the learners. The instructor can provide important leadership in interpreting these ideas, but ultimately the student must rely on his/her own interpretive skills.

My purpose in presenting these activities is to illustrate some methodologies for creating reflective discourse among environmental practitioners. I am describing these ideas as they are presented in a graduate level class, designed for adult learners who either aspire to or already work in diverse environmental jobs. But every educational circumstance is different. Educators may find several ideas here which will fit into a more traditional, lecture oriented, undergraduate curriculum. Other practitioners may find that they can modify these activities and use them on the trail, at the workplace, or wherever their work takes them.

Each of these activities encourages a mindful approach to personal experience, requiring that the participant attain clarity about his/her intentions, motivations, and values. The goal is to experience nature, to understand those experiences, and to allow them to serve as the core of personal and professional practice.

Readers are encouraged to apply these ideas freely. My hope is that you will find variations, elaborations, or new directions that you can use in your work, or that will support and challenge your own mindful environmental practice.

Anonymous and Collective Wisdom

Students are assigned "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau and "The Range of Light" by John Muir. They are asked to select a short passage which they find particularly appealing, inspiring or though provoking. Their task is to write the passage on a 3x5 index card. They must then attach a second card below the first one. On this card, they briefly explain why they chose the original passage.

In class, I hand out five additional index cards to each student. I ask them to hand me their original cards. After shuffling them, I return them randomly to the students. The student is then expected to read whatever passage he/she has

received and then to attach an additional comment which further elaborates on the first two cards. Once again, the cards are collected, shuffled, and returned. The process is resumed as the student must read three cards and write a new commentary. This continues until all the index cards are used.

When the process is complete, there should be a chain of cards, representing an anonymous series of commentaries. I randomly choose any chain and read it to the class. I then ask that the student who selected the original passage claim the cards and comment on the comments. This process is repeated for as long as it remains instructive.

These essays may be described as holographic: through any passage the entire discourse unfolds. Through this exercise, students penetrate the depth of these essays, but they do so in a subtle and enlightening way. With the ostensible protection of anonymity, their responses to the passages are typically personal and profound. In effect, this process generates a collective wisdom. They are commenting on these passages together, developing a joint essay, a shared document reflecting their core environmental values. Through Muir and Thoreau, and then through each other, they begin to establish a collective environmental identity.

Both Muir and Thoreau are describing sense of place, wilderness experience, and the symbolic textures of nature. Through these essays, students understand the intellectual origins of American environmentalism. They learn that Muir and Thoreau communicate timeless dilemmas: the tensions between civilization and wilderness, analysis and intuition, activism and reflection, objectivity and sympathy, liberation and obligation. These tensions are inherent in contemporary environmentalism and they are with us in our everyday lives.

I like to use this exercise as a means of bonding a group because this process occurs in such a subtle and easy way. What starts as a personal response and a private dialogue slowly become a group effort and a collective essay: the discourse of an intellectual commons!

Trees of Environmentalism

After several weeks of reading about the history of American environmentalism students are asked to develop an artistic representation of a tree. Their work should represent a personal interpretation of the American environmental tradition. It might be an annotated drawing, a chart, an illustrated essay, or any desirable means of graphic representation. In addition, students must indicate where they belong on the tree, where they fit in this tradition.

This represents a work of deep reflection as students both review their experiences and place them in the context of a real tradition. Using assigned readings

(including Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, and Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement*), students analyze and interpret the development of environmentalism. The reading serves as a supplement to the various exercises, activities, and discussions which are background for this assignment. The diversity of approaches allows each student to recognize and portray core attitudes, sensibilities, and values.

Similarly students are asked to use creative expression in order to develop the metaphors and symbols for their trees. They must visualize their tree and document it artistically. The medium of representation will reflect their interpretation of the American environmental tradition. This artistic approach gives students access to ideas which are otherwise buried in a more analytical domain.

When this assignment is due students are asked to create a project which serves as a milestone to which they can continually refer. They may recognize that they've made numerous compromises which must now be subsumed under a more pressing idealism. Or they may temper their idealism with what suddenly appear to be very practical compromises. Students realize the diversity of possible interpretations. The American environmental tradition becomes the subject of personalized maps, diagrams, and illustrations, many of which create the boundaries, frames, and networks that define environmentalism. For many students, this is their first opportunity in years to engage in creative work in an academic setting. Individuals who are initially intimidated at the prospect of expressing themselves creatively find that they are capable of innovative artistic work.

Typically several things occur. Students now have a document for describing their environmentalism. They have created a project which serves as a milestone to which they can continually refer. They may recognize that they've made numerous compromises which must now be subsumed under a more pressing idealism. Or they may temper their idealism with what suddenly appear to be very practical compromises. Students realize the diversity of possible interpretations. The American environmental tradition becomes the subject of personalized maps, diagrams, and illustrations, many of which create the boundaries, frames, and networks that define environmentalism. For many students, this is their first opportunity in years to engage in creative work in an academic setting. Individuals who are initially intimidated at the prospect of expressing themselves creatively find that they are capable of innovative artistic work.

Environmental Meditations

Given the various logistical constraints that may restrict bringing a group of students to a relatively wild natural area, there is an alternative approach which can be integrated into many traditional classroom situations. The instructor should locate a proximate natural area of ecological significance which should serve as the site of a field trip. With as little time as two hours, the instructor can lead an excellent series of meditations.

The class should explore this area by engaging in a series of environmental

meditations. There are numerous variants that are possible here, depending on the type of area visited and the predilections of the instructor and the students. The instructor should select and create a meditation which is synonymous with the place. I have experimented with several meditation ideas. These include what I call a yin-yang meditation. Students are asked to find a deep, dark, earthy, enclosed spot where they should focus entirely on the place where they are sitting. This is accomplished by focusing on the elements (wind, sound, smell, texture, moisture, etc.) as the subjects of meditation. This will then be contrasted with a prominent, exposed, sky-view spot where they repeat the meditation.

What distinguishes these meditations is that they should focus on natural or ecological phenomena. This may include any obvious theme or pattern; habitats, weather, biogeography, raptors, etc. The instructor can experiment with various approaches, including solitary and collective meditation, silent walks, or any suitable approach.

It's important to let students know that you are not planning any psychological surprises and that none of the exercises will be threatening. Rather, the focus will be on silent, meditative observations, using environmental themes. This disclaimer is helpful in heterogeneous groups which may involve people who have not experienced meditation or have stereotyped it in an unfortunate way. It's imperative that the instructor let people feel comfortable about this experience.

Finally, after a sequence of meditation, observation, and hiking, the group should reconvene and discuss their experiences. As a debriefing technique, I ask the participants to describe any impressions they had. The critical step is to initiate a discussion about why we often deny ourselves these experiences and how we might overcome these blocks. I ask students to consider how to develop routines and rituals that will incorporate such meditative outdoor experience into their practice.

Many environmentalists, when they cite critical incidents that have motivated them to enter the profession, describe some kind of wilderness experience. Yet commonly, when entering the stage of life in which their professional identity becomes important, they find it increasingly difficult to gain access to the very experiences that led them into the profession.

Wilderness experience represents, for most environmentalists, profound expressions of wonder, awe, and creation. Whether this includes their intimate understanding of ecological dynamics, their relationships to other species, their relationship to the Cosmos, or their understanding of the evolutionary history of Earth, what is now described symbolically as *Gala*; these qualities are the inspirational source of modern environmentalism.

These deep philosophical challenges and concepts are linked to stages of personal development as well. The wilderness provides practical and symbolic challenges

that help us understand our character, that help us understand who we are and what we can and can't do. Thus wilderness experience, or direct contact with the natural world, is a fundamental aspect of environmental identity formation. I believe that it is an educational priority to facilitate experiences that allow adult learners to jointly explore this realm. Students return from this short expedition motivated to maintain their connection with the natural world.

I call this approach mystical ecology, because it represents the use of the natural environment as a bridge to meditative awareness. Mystical connotes wonder, awe, transcendence, and creation. Ecology connotes life, energy, interconnect- edness, cycles, etc. The synergy of the term mystical ecology represents the development of improvisational meditations that integrate place and environ- ment with wonder and creation.

Magic Markers, Toaster Ovens, and Other Commodities from the Information Age

As an introduction to considering cross-cultural perspectives on resource trans- formation, I ask students to examine the ecological-economic pathway of every- day commodities. I hold up a magic marker for the class to examine. I briefly reminisce about magic markers and explain that I can remember, when I was a child, my first encounter with the invention. I recall my impressions. How rapidly, what was in the beginning a black marker became dozens of colors, varieties, etc. Magic markers became ubiquitous.

I give the students newsprint and ask them to draw a diagram outlining every- thing they know about the production, distribution, and consumption of magic markers. Typically, their papers are blank. They recognize that they have vir- tually no knowledge about this commodity, how it is produced, whether its use entails environmental pollution, or whether it raises any other political issues such as quality of the work environment, etc.

I repeat the exercise using a piece of toast. Where does the bread come from? What about the toaster oven? I examine its style and consider its consumer accoutrements. I note that it is plugged into a complex network of wires and energy. I ask the students if they can trace the process in which bread becomes toast.

As a follow up assignment, I ask the students to consider a tool of the infor- mation age that they find either indispensable or the source of knowledge or entertainment. After describing all the benefits and pleasures they derive from this tool, they are instructed to learn as much as they can about its production and derivation. In effect they are asked to be mindful about the use of this tool. Where does it come from? Why do I use it? What purpose does it serve? What are the ramifications of its use? This becomes the subject of a short essay which

is discussed in small groups during the next class session.

In a world filled with the promise of endless consumer wealth, we are perennially tempted with the fruits of material affluence. If our culture teaches us anything, it's how to use commodities as symbols of personal development; how to measure the style of affluence. Merely flip through the advertisements in *Sierra Magazine*. Countless pages are filled with the goods of environmental consumerism. Clearly there is an environmental style, a stereotyped character who dresses in natural fabrics, enjoys rugged good looks, drives a Volvo, and adores compact binoculars and cameras.

It may seem trite to reiterate this dilemma. Yet few of us are immune to the relentless pressure to define ourselves through our commodities. Whether it's our clothes, our car, our computer, or even our wilderness equipment, we face a persistent struggle: how do we separate our legitimate interest, joy, and curiosity about the toys and tools of the information age from the traps of style, image, and consumer addiction?

This question is fundamental to environmental identity; the timeless tension between materialism and spirituality, the simultaneous fear and excitement about high technology, the drive to both preserve and utilize natural resources. Ultimately we are asking: How do we wish to live?

We cannot answer these questions divorced from direct knowledge of where the things we use come from. *Outside Magazine* may help you choose the best mountain bike. It may even tell you about the ecological impact of these bikes. But it is unlikely to provide a taxonomy of the natural resource transformation process that yields the bicycle. In other words, we are infrequently exposed to the ground floor of material life, the economic and ecological basis of commodity production. In most cases, we just don't know where the products of everyday life come from.

Environmental identity is formed not only on the basis of our aesthetic and spiritual connection to the natural world, but also out of our understanding of the processes of natural resource transformation. Our participation in material production, our relationship to technology, and our awareness of environmental pollution, all of these have cognitive, affective, and symbolic connotations. To describe a natural resource is to consider a potential. The eastern White Pine is a ship's mast, the floor of a house, an ornament, a shrine, or a weed. It all depends on who you are, when and where you lived, and what culture you belong.

To make these issues accessible, I attempt to broaden the student's understanding of resource transformation. Initially, we consider the commodities of everyday life. What do we know about these things? How can they be tied to environmental identity? Following this, we enter the discipline of environmental history. This provides a longer view; it allows us to see how different cultures

in various geographies and histories encounter the same question.

What emerges from these exercises are profound value dilemmas regarding material life, consumption, simplicity, and technology. Students realize that they can capably discuss the style and function of these commodities, but they have no access to their ground floor production. They consider what this means and what implications it has for their environmentalism.

The Sense of Place Map

The sense of place map is an artistic representation (loosely interpreted as a map) that represents the student's ecological, geographical, developmental, and symbolic themes, patterns and affinities. The map may utilize any appropriate abstractions or modes of expression. The assignment is a means to express an environmental philosophy that is rooted in geography, rooted in place. It should integrate geography, personal growth, and environmental identity. The project is conceived as a way to create an individualized ecological metaphor. It is a bridge from the larger culture, to the natural world, to personal development. But this self-reflection is grounded in geography. It's located on a map. It's tied to real places.

This is a major assignment for the class and as such it requires alot of planning and preliminary discussion. During the first week of class I explain to students that they should begin to think about a sense of place map. They are bewildered and wonder how they will ever accomplish such a task. As the weeks pass the sense of place concept begins to take hold. Students cultivate images and thoughts that form the basis of their maps. I encourage them to raise questions and concerns about the assignment.

When the assignment is due, I devote one or two class sessions (depending on class size) to the map presentations. Because the students often reveal personal values regarding seminal developmental themes, it's critical to maintain a supportive atmosphere. This is a very moving class, an event that the students will long remember.

Adult learners live in a real world of families, children, jobs, lovers, automobiles, money, rent, mortgage, appliances, and other accoutrements or necessities (depending on your state of mind) you care to name. There is a domestic side to life. You may return from your mountain retreat to find carpenter ants destroying your garage. You may dwell for several hours in the cerebral texts of environmental philosophy and return to the persistent demands of your young children. My point is that environmental responsibility is something that happens all the time. From disposable diapers to global warming, our action is always needed, our mindfulness essential. Sometimes we succeed; we live by our principles. Sometimes we fail; we can do better the next time.

Environmental identity is lodged in the real circumstances, the real events, the real habitats of everyday life. The task for the educator is to present students with a process that enables them to integrate these experiences. Sense of place is a concept around which such integration occurs. By sense of place I mean our feelings about land and community. Through our appreciation of place we develop a community niche. The habitats of familiarity, the kindred species, the cultural nuances, the environmental landscapes; these are the qualities that mold and shape our environmental identity. They ground us. They let us soar. They give us a home. They inspire us to travel.

Sense of place is fundamental to environmental identity. It's the domestic basis of environmentalism; it's the source of our deepest connections to the natural world. It is the inspiration behind bioregionalism, an approach which places an emphasis on creating a personal, community, and cultural life that is defined by biogeographical parameters. It is the inspiration behind the idea of sacred place; symbolic landscapes that contain and reflect the substance of ecological worship. It's a way to engage in the nitty-gritty world of neighborhood politics.

The sense of place map is a symbolic document that links environmental identity to life cycle development. It's a way to illustrate and communicate the places we've been, where we live now, and where we see ourselves in the future. I ask the students to describe (metaphorically or literally) both their formative environmental experiences and their ideals and wishes for the future. Through this process of self-reflection they understand their current sense of place, the people, community, land, and species that form their networks of domesticity and exploration, the sources of their sustenance and struggle.

The sense of place map allows students to create a geography of their environmental identity. Real places take on new meaning. They become good, wild, and sacred, as this idea is described by Gary Snyder. Students rediscover their sources of inspiration, their blocks to awareness, their totems. They review the patterns of their lives. They assert what's important, visually recreating many of their most meaningful experiences. They determine the importance of community. In some cases, they recognize how difficult it is to establish meaningful community and how sense of place is so easily eroded, how sacred places become wounded. They recall special places from their past that no longer exist, but reside as internal sanctuaries, that tell important stories from which they derive profound lessons. Most critically, they find the links between personal development and natural places, out of which they formulate environmental identity.

The variety of creative expression is astounding. I have seen several hundred such maps during the twelve years I have used this project. Various mediums have included mobiles; stories; mandalas; linear maps; surreal maps; maps that superimpose the past, present and future; slide shows; dioramas, dramatic presentations. As students share their maps with their colleagues, they are moved by the stunning presentations and their enormously revealing content.

A Lifelong Process

The search for environmental identity is a life long process. It is a way of life, an orientation towards living that is a constant struggle, a perennial reevaluation. It becomes the student's responsibility to incorporate such an approach as intrinsic to their professional and personal discourse. The environmental tradition doesn't begin and end in the classroom; it is the everyday struggle to improve the quality of the environment. Environmental history isn't an abstract academic pursuit; it is the omnipresent struggle to understand environmental change. Sense of place isn't just a piece of art or a means of personal expression; it is the foundation of a healthy community.

Environmental identity formation is more than personal introspection. It is the basis of our professional practice and our guide to right livelihood. It is something that we discuss with each other. The various distractions of everyday life, the conflicting impulses that drive our energy, the struggle of living in a culture that devalues nature; these factors make it difficult and rare to discuss such seemingly impractical ideas as environmental identity. We realize that such discourse is a gift, an opportunity, the potential to integrate theory and practice for the purpose of environmental awareness.

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