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Timothy S. O'Connell
Brock University

Garrett Hutson
Brock University

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Resource Review

Timothy S. O'Connell
Garrett Hutson

Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education. Written by Chloe Humphreys, Kingston, ON, Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario, 2018, 77 pp., CDN \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-988127-01-9

The follow-up to the well-received overview of outdoor education literature and research, *Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education: A Research Summary* (Foster & Linney, 2007), this contemporary synopsis provides a rich and illuminating examination of our current understanding of outdoor education. *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018) expands on this previous work and explores the widening breadth and depth of how outdoor education is operationalized not only in Canada, but around the world.

Sponsored by the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO; www.coeo.org), this summary is organized around the Council's four pillars central to outdoor education. These include Education for Curriculum, Education for Environment, Education for Character, and Education for Well-Being (Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario, 2019). Education for Curriculum relates the natural world to "real life" and the considers how school experiences further students' understanding of the environment and related processes. Education for Environment encourages a personal connection to nature, promotes environmental ethics, and fosters awareness of how these ideas apply to a range of settings. Education for Character investigates impacts on personal and interpersonal growth, development of important individual characteristics such as leadership and empathy and focuses on group dynamics. Finally, Education for Well-Being explores how

Timothy S. O'Connell, Professor, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University; Garrett Hutson, Associate Professor, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University.

Address correspondence to Timothy S. O'Connell, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University, 1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way, St. Catharines, ON L2S 3A1, Phone: 905-688-5550 x5014, Email: tim.oconnell@brocku.ca

participation in outdoor education activities promotes mental, physical, and spiritual health and development (COEO, 2019).

While *Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education: A Research Summary* (Foster & Linney, 2007) focused on outcomes, *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018) explores evolving themes from a whole-student perspective. Interestingly, eleven Outdoor Educators from Canada each identified five influential research articles from the previous decade. These served as a starting point for the author's review of the literature included in this summary. A reference list including these articles and books is a nice addition to the end of the summary.

As previously mentioned, the four pillars of outdoor education (i.e., Education for Curriculum, Education for Environment, Education for Character, and Education for Well-Being) serve as the main organizational framework for this work. This framework proves easy to use as subheadings help the reader navigate to topics of interest. For example, Education for Curriculum includes subheadings such as: Learning by Doing and Lived Experience, Place-based Education and Decolonization, and Gender and Feminism among others. Education for Environment is comprised of The Anthropocene, Indigenous Influence on "Place," and Decolonizing for example. Education for Character includes Intellectual Virtues, Civic Virtues, Practical Wisdom, and Performance Virtues. Finally, Education for Well-Being encompasses such topics as Body or Physical well-being, Mental, Mind, Emotions and Heart, and Spiritual perspectives.

A brief overview of the theoretical frameworks and underlying concepts discussed in each of these four areas helps situate the topics and provides insight into the author's predispositions and analyses of the research. This is helpful in contextualizing both the "big picture" of each section as well as illuminates how the topics are intertwined together. While there are some abrupt changes between a few of the topical areas, the writing generally flows well, is coherent, and is easy to understand. Similarly, a short summary captures the flavor of each section and often asks questions about where outdoor education might be in the following decade.

One feature of note in *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018) is recognition of cultural and Indigenous aspects related to each of the four pillars and related research literature. As acknowledgement of Indigenous, First Nations, Aboriginal and Métis knowledge and ways has increased in Canada since the 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (www.trc.ca), inclusion of practical, theoretical and social-justice oriented literature is a highlight of this summary. For example, in the Education for Environment

section, Indigenous Influence on “Place” is presented. This examines not only contemporary research, but explores how it connects to longstanding critiques of outdoor education and offers illustrations of how some organizations such as Outward Bound Canada have begun to change their philosophies in response. The Education for Well-Being section provides a brief overview of the Indigenous Medicine Wheel and notes how ties to the land are an essential part of this framework. The author should be applauded for noting that what is presented is a generalized view of Indigenous Well-Being and that Indigenous instructors and/or Elders should be consulted for specifics related to particular groups and land areas.

In general, the author provides a thought-provoking and informative synopsis of the relevant research literature while avoiding integrating too much personal viewpoints into the narrative. Most sections include points and counterpoints discussed in the related literature. While this is certainly a feature of note, at times the research is presented in a formulaic manner that only includes the “facts” from each study. The author could do more in some sections to provide some analyses and to transition to subsequent areas of the research. This would provide additional depth and breadth to what is already a richly descriptive summary. The lack of critique of the underlying theoretical and methodological frameworks on which the research presented is based should be noted. It is left to the reader to investigate the reliability and validity of the research and to determine if it is trustworthy or not.

While *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018) is focused on the application of research to outdoor education in Canada, readers will easily generalize the themes and concepts to the practice and understanding of outdoor education in other parts of the world. In times of governmental budget cuts that may put outdoor education programs in danger, the proof that outdoor education makes a wide range of positive impacts is evident in this work. The information provided in this summary can be easily adapted to any number of contexts to illustrate the efficacy of outdoor education.

A final feature of note are the 17 drawings by artist Helena Juhasz that are interspersed throughout the document. These complement the text and offer pleasing visual breaks from the dense text that comprises the remainder of the summary. Each of the four sections includes a complete reference list. Brief concluding remarks wrap-up *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018). While these remarks give some potential direction for readers for the future, more could be included here to strengthen the closing and help link the research presented to outdoor education practice in its myriad forms.

Overall, anyone interested in outdoor education will find *Dynamic Horizons: A Research and Conceptual Summary of Outdoor Education* (Humphreys, 2018) a useful and informative read. While this summary is certainly not exhaustive in its review of the literature related to outdoor education from the last ten years, it does give a succinct and timely review of a number of important topics. Readers should find *Dynamic Horizons* a valuable addition to their bookshelves.

References

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