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Milestones in Outdoor Education

Anderson B. Young
SUNY Cortland

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PREFACE: MILESTONES IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Anderson B. Young, CEO Research Symposium Coordinator
State University of New York College at Cortland

It has happened every other January for a decade. People travel from all corners of North America and from overseas to the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors (CEO) Research Symposium at Indiana University's Bradford Woods. For this, the sixth such event, over 60 people made the trip, twice the number attending 10 years ago. Half were new to the event; half had done this before. What drew these people together was a commitment to building the empirical, theoretical, and philosophical bases of education in the outdoors and the realization that the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors Research Symposium is a genuinely unique opportunity to share research findings and to talk extensively and meaningfully with other outdoor education researchers. At no other outdoor education-related conference is the focus exclusively on research. At no other conference do we find such a mix of academic disciplines (e.g., forestry, social work, psychology, leisure studies, education, etc.).

Providing this kind of service is what the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors was created to do. CEO was established in 1987 as a means of improving communication among those involved in outdoor and environmental education. It was the product of a series of informal meetings with leaders of various outdoor-education-related organizations that culminated in a founders' planning retreat held at SUNY Cortland's Outdoor Education Center on Raquette Lake. The founders had two major goals for CEO. First, recognizing that the proliferation of outdoor related organizations precluded anyone from keeping track of all the conferences, publications, and other resources, CEO was created to be an information clearinghouse. CEO's quarterly publication, *Taproot*, is regarded by many as the best way to learn what ACA, WEA, NAAEE, AEE, and other organizations are doing, what new resources have been published, and other valuable information. Second, recognizing that research

needs of the field (and the needs of researchers) were insufficiently supported by any national and state organizations, the CEO founders established a research committee to identify ways CEO could strengthen the research foundations of our field. These biennial symposia have been the principal initiative of the CEO Research Committee, and the results have been impressive.

Ten years after the first symposium, our mission remains the same: we seek to advance the empirical, theoretical, and philosophical bases of education in the outdoors. To accomplish that mission, these symposia have had three subordinate aims. First, the symposium marks an opportunity for scholars to present their work to one another and, through this volume, to the larger community of outdoor educators. The Sixth CEO Symposium featured a record 25 research papers on topics ranging from ethics and moral development to youth development to summer camp program outcomes and more. Once again, we were treated to two substantial literature reviews. Many of those papers appear in this publication. Second, each symposium is designed to build a sense of community among those interested in outdoor education research and scholarship. The atmosphere is cordial, informal, and highly interactive. Over and over again the evaluations noted the "friendly, supportive atmosphere," the "opportunity for formal and informal discussions," the "wonderful graduate students and new scholars," and the "chance to meet many of the most experienced and distinguished researchers in our field." Third, the symposium provides a forum where participants can address issues and explore alternative means of pursuing their research and scholarly aims. People form research partnerships, learn of alternative instruments and new resources, and generate new research ideas.

Bradford Woods has been the venue for all six CEO symposia. Over the years, Gary Robb, Stuart Shepley, and their staff have made it so

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easy for us to be there. This center has a well-deserved reputation in our field. To nearly everyone involved with organized camping, environmental education, challenge education, accessibility and inclusive recreation, or other aspects of outdoor education, the name "Bradford Woods" is synonymous with leadership and excellence.

Our symposium coincided with a milestone celebration in the history of Indiana University's Bradford Woods. This year marked the 100th anniversary of Reynold Carlson's birth. The late Dr. Rey Carlson was instrumental in the establishment of Bradford Woods as an outdoor education center. Of course, Rey Carlson gave us much more than Bradford Woods, and Joel Meier has provided this publication with a nice piece about Carlson's life and his contributions to outdoor education, environmental interpretation, organized camping, and outdoor recreation. To celebrate Rey Carlson's life and work, Indiana University hosted an extraordinary banquet during the symposium. We were joined by some of Dr. Carlson's colleagues, family, friends, and current Indiana University faculty. Doug Knapp served as master of ceremonies, and Gary Robb and Tom Rillo spoke about Dr. Carlson. We also saw the premier of a video recounting the life and work of this legend in our field. It was an evening everyone will long remember.

I have had the privilege of being a cofounder of CEO and an organizer of its six research symposia. I am especially pleased with the success of this research initiative. It has evolved nicely. It has doubled in size, but retained the small, informal character that attendees value so much. It has attracted more presenters and published more high-quality papers each time. These resulting publications (formerly called proceedings) get a lot of handling by graduate students and others, and the articles are often cited in our literature. However gratified I am by this success, I am keenly aware that this event works because a wonderful group of people makes it work. It all begins with the CEO Research Committee. I couldn't ask for a more talented, dedicated, or responsive committee. To Deb Bialeschki, Cam-

ille Bunting, Chris Cashel, Alan Ewert, Mike Gass, Karla Henderson, Leo McAvoy, and Gary Robb go heartfelt thanks for all the help this year and through the years. The staff at Bradford Woods never ceases to amaze me. This year was no exception. Special thanks go to Ricardo Moraes, who coordinated all the arrangements. He was unflappable in his handling of the "little things" that came up and unflagging in his attention to detail and courtesy. This event would not happen without the ongoing support of the State University of New York at Cortland, especially the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies and CEO Director, Charles Yapple. Finally, the presenters, authors, and others attending the symposium deserve thanks for filling the program with solid research and filling our time together with stimulating conversations, ample smiles, and a good amount of laughter.

This Sixth CEO Research Symposium was an occasion to note milestones—the 100th anniversary of Rey Carlson's birth, the 15th year of CEO, the 10th anniversary of the CEO Symposium, and the 100th article printed in the resulting publication. These numbers are nice to note, and they reflect, however indirectly, the progress of our field as well as the march of time. These numbers prompt me to look back over my years in the field. Peering through bifocals, I note astounding progress in the volume and quality of research. What was simply a paragraph in a 1976 research overview would today be the focus of the entire review of literature. The knowledge and research expertise of today's graduate students and new scholars are impressive. Well that it is, because the agenda is long. Despite the progress, there are too many gaps and too little follow up in our research. But noting the progress gives hope for the future. Not overnight, but over time, we know more and we improve practice.

In the interest of continuing this progress, planning for the Seventh Biennial CEO Research Symposium is already under way. So collect some data, volunteer to help with planning, or simply plan to attend the next one. January 2004 will soon be here.