Chrysalis

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Newsletter of
The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World
at
Timberlake Farm

As we look up at the starry sky at night and as, in the morning, we see the landscape revealed as the sun dawns over the Earth – these experiences reveal a physical world but also a more profound world that cannot be bought with money, cannot be manufactured with technology, cannot be listed on the stock market, cannot be made in the chemical laboratory, cannot be reproduced with all our genetic engineering, cannot be sent by e-mail. These experiences require only that we follow the deepest feelings of the human soul.[1]

~ Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*

Dear Reader,

At this time when there is growing concern for the world – for global warming, for the economy, for sustainabilty – it is good to hold the image of a "more profound world" that offers an imagination so different from the consciousness of our time.

We feel a certain heartache when we realize how much we live on the surface of reality and fail to make a connection with the hidden wholeness and depth of the world. As Thomas Berry has said, we have grown autistic to this more profound world. We are sense-oriented in our understanding. We objectify the world and ask how we might use and fix it.

As we ponder this more profound world, we wonder if the real crisis of our time has not so much to do with the long list of problems we presently face – global warming, corporate corruption, pollution – as it has to do with our consciousness itself. How might our way into the future look different if we were to replace a consciousness that objectifies with a consciousness that reveals the sacred unity and creative interdependence of humanity and the Earth? What new social forms might emerge from an understanding of Earth as sacred community?

Rather than beginning with plans for "saving the world," Thomas Berry suggests that "the recovery of Western civilization from its present addiction to use, as our primary relation to each other and to the world about us, must begin with the discovery of the world within."[2]

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[1] Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2006), 138.
[2] Ibid, 39-40.

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And that is where we begin our work at the Center. We begin with the "world within," based on our understanding that our primary relation to the world around us is at the heart of the problems we face today.

In particular, the Center is exploring new understandings of what it means "to know" the world that both challenge and inform assumptions that underlie contemporary education.

Thomas Berry addresses this realm of knowing in his book, *Evening Thoughts*:

> *Both to know and to be known are activities of the inner form, not of the outer structure of things. This inner form is a distinct dimension of, not a separate reality from, the visible world about us . . . One of the most regrettable aspects of Western civilization is the manner in which this capacity for inner presence to other modes of being has diminished in these past few centuries.*[3]

In this issue of *Chrysalis*, we explore new work offered by three teachers who have participated in our national program for educators: The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice. One is a middle school science teacher in an independent school, one a high school science teacher in a public school, and one a sociology professor in a private university. All three work with adolescents and young adults whose lives are embedded in the consciousness of our time. All three have developed practices that bring their students into new inner ways of knowing and relating to "the more profound world" in this world.

Marti Canipe, in "Silence, Thoreau and a Covenant," initiates a practice of silence in nature for students who feel the pressures of their high-achieving world. One 7th grader wrote:

> *I'm busy with life. There are so many tasks that I need to complete, so many goals I need to accomplish.*
>
> *People expect so much from me, and I'm busy trying to give these people what they want from me.*

[3] Ibid, 39-40.

Against this backdrop, Marti provides the opportunity for silence and reflection in nature. A whole new world opens up for the students, as revealed in the following poem written by an 8th grader:

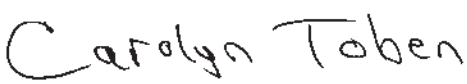
How great was the silence the world once knew?
Everything under it flourished and grew.
Where did it go?
Why don't we know?

Randy Senzig, in "The Evolution of a Science Teacher," was caught up short one day by one of his students who expressed despair in the face of the environmental crises he was passionately laying out before the class. This encounter marked the beginning of Randy's journey beyond standard science to a new Earth Wisdom that arises from an integration of analytical and intuitive ways of knowing. Beholding, journaling, imagination and creativity are nurtured as pathways to know the natural world.

And Lisa Marie Peloquin, in "Grounding Higher Education: Reflections on Openings and Obstacles to Earth-Centered Pedagogy," confronts the cultural imperatives of higher education: "Given that the sacred cows of objectivity and efficiency serve to legitimate human control of the natural world, the reconnection of children with nature requires teaching that expands bases of knowledge and understanding beyond the rational to include the subjective, non-rational, and immeasurable."

In our own work with adolescents and young adults at the Center, we know that a deep capacity for inner presence to other modes of being resides just below the surface of their world of texting, sentence fragments and virtual co-presence. But the allurements of this virtual world are great and need to be balanced with many opportunities for them to bring themselves into relationship with "a more profound world that . . .. cannot be sent by e-mail." We are grateful to Marti, Randy and Lisa for pointing the way.

Warm regards,



Carolyn Toben, Founder

Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director

Silence, Thoreau, and a Covenant

by

Marti Canipe

A Never Ending Friend

You can feel alone among people
But, Mother Nature is always by your side
The sun will smile down on you
The trees will protect you
And the river is a never ending source of life
Next time you feel alone
Go outside
Because Mother Nature will heal your heart ache

-Alli Lindenberg

Framework of the Practice

My students generally come from very high-achieving families who have been successful in their material lives. In many cases this leads to a great deal of pressure put on these students both by their parents and themselves. Even as middle schoolers they worry about establishing a competitive position to get into the "right" colleges and universities. Many of my students regularly complain about being "stressed-out" by all that they need to get done.

I'm busy with life. There are so many tasks that I need to complete, so many goals I need to accomplish.
People expect so much from me, and I'm busy trying to give those people what they want from me.

-B'nai Shalom Seventh Grader

It was with this thought in mind that I set down my dedicated intention for my yearlong practice. The guiding thought behind my practice would be the question: How can I help my students connect with the healing and renewing power of the natural world? I had seen the capacity of my students to make deep connections to the natural world through days spent at Timberlake Farm. I hoped to give them a place and the ability to bring this into their "regular" lives.

Each class begins their day with a "morning meeting" which has as one of its goals to build a classroom community. I utilized part of this time on a semi-regular basis, meeting with each of the three middle school classes in our outdoor chapel. The outdoor chapel provided an ideal space for this practice. I chose the chapel for several reasons. One is its physical location, nestled amongst the trees at the edge of our schoolyard. As a chapel, it is also imbued with a spiritual quality that is essential to the goals of my practice. Finally, it is located just outside of the middle school wing of our building and I hoped that seeing it would remind my students of the times we spent there.

I started my practice with the goal that I would meet with each class of students once a month throughout the duration of the school year. Due to the time constraints of our schedule, each meeting would last only for a short time. Each gathering had a single idea as its focus to facilitate looking deep rather than wide. In reality with the demands of a tight schedule and special events, I meet with each class on a less regular basis.

The Practice Begins with Silence

> *We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature – trees, flowers, grass – grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence… We need silence to be able to touch souls.*
>
> -Mother Teresa[1]

I decided that our practice would begin with experiencing silence. The world of a typical middle school student is the antithesis of silence. It is not an easy experience for many of them to spend time in silence with their own thoughts. At our first gathering I gave the students a general idea of the practice we were embarking on together. I shared the quote on silence from Mother Teresa and asked each student to find a place where they could sit in silence for five to ten minutes.

The students chose spaces they were comfortable with; some stayed on benches in the chapel, others ventured to a spot on the grassy hill adjacent to the chapel. Several students found it difficult to move away from a group of their peers and sat clustered together. As we all settled in our spots and grew still, the natural world began to emerge from the background.

For this first gathering I had not asked my students to write anything during their time. I hoped that by removing the automatic pressure of "handing something in" I would encourage students to focus on their own thoughts. Before going back in to start the school day, each group gathered back in the chapel space to share their thoughts.

> *As soon as it was quiet I felt calmed down.*
>
> *In silence you can actually think and notice.*
>
> *Without nature, there is no God.*
>
> -B'nai Shalom Middle Schoolers

Reflections on the feeling of calmness and peacefulness dominated the thoughts that were shared by students in sixth and seventh grade. Several students also commented about feeling nearer to God when they are outside in silence. Unexpectedly, the few reflections offered by the eighth graders focused primarily on it being hard for them to be silent. I had been pleasantly surprised at how well the days had gone with the sixth and seventh grade and I was troubled by the response of the eighth grade.

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[1] Mother Teresa Quotes, Think Exist (October 12, 2007), http://thinkexist.com/quotes/mother_teresa/

As I looked back on the days, I wondered what had been difficult for the eighth grade. Had I expected too much from them just because they are the oldest class? Did I affect their experience in some way since it was the third time I had led the gathering? Did the "personality" of their class make them more reluctant to share their feelings with each other? Most importantly, what should I do differently the next time we gathered?

How great was the silence the world once knew?
Everything under it flourished and grew.
Where did it go?
Why don't we know?

-Alina Gabitov (Seventh Grade)

Silence remained the focus of our practice for the next several gatherings. As we continued to work with silence, students were able to move into it much more readily. They were noticeably more at ease with moving into a calm, peaceful place within themselves. My students continued to reflect on the calmness that being in silence brought to them. They expressed the feeling that somehow when you were in silence the world slowed down. Several commented to me that the demands of their lives tend to overwhelm them and that being quiet really helped bring back their focus.

Moving into Thoreau

Having spent some time with their own thoughts in silence, my practice moved on to students spending some time with the words of Henry David Thoreau. As we gathered for our "morning meeting" that would focus on Thoreau, we spent a little time exploring who Thoreau was and what he had done while living at Walden Pond. Many of the students were very intrigued by his lifestyle which seemed very foreign to their lives. After this brief introduction each student selected a quote from Thoreau and found a quiet spot to spend some time with his words.

As part of this practice, I asked each student to write something while they were sitting in their quiet spot. It could be a response to the words of Thoreau or just something that they felt while they were sitting in the natural world. Some of their responses follow below.

"Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves."[2] – Henry David Thoreau

"When you have time to think and when you are alone, you can start to think about who you really are in the world. When you are lost and you have nothing to do or think about – you will think about who you are right now and who you want to become." - B'nai Shalom Seventh Grader

"I often feel that whenever something goes wrong in my life, or I go to a place that is unfamiliar to me, I begin to examine and learn new things about myself. When you are out of place, you go to a place inside yourself. When I am doing my normal routine, I don't have very much time to stop and think about my life." – B'nai Shalom Eighth Grader

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."[3] – Henry David Thoreau

"The birds are your companions. Their chirping is the beat that guides you. There are so many different kinds of birds, and each one is its own drummer." – Evan Semon (Sixth Grade)

"Most of the luxuries and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind."[4] – Henry David Thoreau

"You don't really need all the 'luxuries' to be happy. They seem to be good things in life, but are really just obstacles in your way from becoming a better person." – Jessica Papier (Seventh Grade)

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[2] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

"Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of the plain."[5] – Henry David Thoreau

"Observe an insect at the same level, not looking from above, not feeling like a human, feeling like that insect." – Alina Gabitov (Seventh Grade)

After our time working with Thoreau we came back together to share our reflections from the silent time. Several students commented about how the quote that they selected randomly spoke to them and the way that they are feeling. I have seen that when doing this activity with students they almost always get the "right" quote for wherever they are in their emotional lives at the particular point in time.

Working with Covenant

Behold

The first time I looked
All I saw was a tree
The second time
All the shapes appeared to me
The third time I glanced
It seemed more magical to me
The last time I looked
The spirit of the tree came to me
And now it will stay there forever
As a covenant

-Eliana Fishbeyn (Seventh Grade)

I am blessed in the fact that my school, through a generous grant, is able to bring groups of students several times a year to the Center for Education, Imagination, and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm. In the spring I accompanied our seventh graders on a day where they worked with the idea of a covenant. The idea of covenant is central to Judaism and while at the Center the seventh grade expanded their covenant to include a covenant with nature.

Before we left for the day, I gathered the students together to talk about what we would be doing at the Center. I asked them to try to leave behind all of the things that "stress them out" in their lives. We reflected back to some of the times we had spent in silence at school and the calm feeling that that induced. We agreed as a group to try and "let go" of social issues between peers, the stress of upcoming tests, and anything else that might cause us to not make the most of this opportunity to spend a day away in the natural world.

I was pleased that the seventh graders rose to the challenge and allowed themselves to be immersed in the spirit of the day. I watched with great happiness as they spent solo time along the trails at Timberlake Farm. The day closed with the sharing of beautiful and poignant reflections by the seventh grade and a sealing of a covenant between each student and the natural world.

Some silence is heavy, this silence is light.
Some silence is shallow, this silence is deep.
Some silence is mean, this silence is kind.
Some silence is hurtful, this silence is my band-aid.

-Paige Feldman (Seventh Grade)

[5] Ibid.

Reflections on the Practice

> *When I have this time to disconnect from my structured life I feel really connected to nature. Then after I go on with my life I forget this calming, relaxed feeling. Nature is always welcoming and gives me a peaceful feeling inside.*
>
> -Jessie Winfree (Sixth Grade)

As the school year draws to a close, I always spend time looking back over what has happened. I ask myself what I could do differently and how I could do it better next year. As I look over the yearlong practice I see successes and challenges.

I was very pleasantly surprised by the willingness of my students to take on something that is very different from their day-to-day lives; by the way they embraced the new experience with curiosity. I was heartened when seventh graders stopped to ask when we would be doing it again. Most of all, I was touched by the depth of caring about the natural world that so many of them exhibited.

There were also challenges which will inform my practice as I continue incorporating these ideas into the way I teach. While many students embraced the experience, there were those who were reluctant. I feel that much of this reluctance is based in being uncomfortable with a nontraditional school experience. I hope to help them overcome some of this reluctance so that they can share in the positive feelings with their peers. The logistical challenge of being able to get the time that I would like was one of the most frustrating parts of my practice. Just like the students, I tend to get bogged down in the mundane details and things that have to be done, all of which are a barrier for me to immerse myself in this practice.

As I move forward, this last year informs how I will teach my classes. It brings to the forefront of my mind the need to keep balance in the lives of my students. I hope to continue these silent "morning meetings" and perhaps expand the practice to other teachers and the lower school classrooms. The effect that this practice has had on my students cannot be quantitatively measured, but I believe that it has had a positive effect on them and will continue to impact them as they move into the even more hectic years of high school and beyond.

> *The chilly breeze feels nice to me. As I sit outside it's nice and quiet. Even though it's quite cold and breezy it feels nice. I hear the sweet birds chirping and waking for the bright day ahead. I wake up more and more. Even though it's soothing it wakes you up and puts you in a good mood to start off the day. So, as I go from class to class I'll think of this experience and have a great day. A chilly breeze feels nice to me!*
>
> -B'nai Shalom Sixth Grader

Marti Canipe is an Einstein Fellow at the Office of Polar Programs of the National Science Foundation in Washington, DC. She taught middle school science at B'nai Shalom Day School in Greensboro, North Carolina. She holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of North Carolina and studied zoology and freshwater ecology at the University of New Hampshire. Her passion for nature is rooted in many childhood days spent in the woods and creeks of the piedmont of North Carolina.

The Evolution of a Science Teacher

by

Randy Senzig

My mother often told the story that when I was three years old I stepped on a grasshopper. As I picked up the little flattened grasshopper I began to cry. She saw in me a spark that would grow into a flame later in life. I planted a vegetable garden in the back yard, found and kept a horned toad as a pet and loved to listen to the wind symphony in the pines.

Thomas Berry speaks of the " meadow across the creek" and the need for everyone to have a nature experience. A number of years ago I traveled the same road home every day from school. The road stretched and twisted its way between communities and subdivisions cutting only briefly through isolated open spaces such as farms. Most of the roadbeds were laid down years before by pumping limestone gravel and sand onto the road, leaving canals alongside the road. This particular canal had been there a long time as evidenced by the large wax myrtles and oaks growing on its west side. So, in the afternoon a long shadow would move across the canal and road. It was pleasing to the eye as the sun's glare retreated in front of the marching shadows. My eyes were drawn to this section each day for a moment's respite. There in the shadows and at the canal edge was life. Wildlife thrived in this microcosm. Little Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Green back Herons, White Ibis, and Anhingas.

Tricolor Herons found food at the edge of the canal and refuge in the trees. In the dark green waters with white water lilies and water hyacinths were red-eared sliders resting on the bank and long nosed alligator garfish swimming. As the afternoons turned into weeks and weeks into months I began to notice changes. Arriving one day I found a group of earth-moving vehicles parked in the field behind the trees and wax myrtles. Soon a bulldozer began to chew up the south end of the canal and spit sand into the far end of this watery refuge. Daily, foot-by-foot, the bulldozer and its waste of sand clanked forward. I saw the destruction each day as the shadows lengthened and the canal shortened. I also noticed that the animals, especially the birds, were not leaving but moving closer and closer together at the north end. Population density increased. How could there be enough food now? What life had already been lost under the tons of sand? Day followed day as the struggle continued and as I observed.

This particular afternoon, as I drove home, would be different. The canal was over half filled with the bulldozer's sands and the birds were pushed wing to wing at the north end. Cars and drivers traveled unaware of the destruction of nature just a few feet away. My car slid to a stop as it left the four-lane thoroughfare. The shadows marched toward me as I opened the car door and walked toward the canal bank. The white lime sands colored my pants as I knelt down. I felt the sadness rise from this tiny community. There across the canal no more than 30 feet away a Great Egret stood alone- a good distance from the others. As my eyes moved along the opposite bank counting the many birds, I came to this grand bird regally standing there as lord of the land with long white plumes falling from his breast. Our eyes locked. We were at the same level. We stared at each other, for a time. I don't know how long but it seemed to span epochs. Across a great chasm we called to each other. As the thick fog rose on communication between Human and Nature, we stood in a common world, the Egret and me. Looking deeper into his eyes I saw my own reflection and asked, "what can I do to help?" The reply was "teach the story - my story, the story of the insensitive destruction of my home and that of my fellow beings, the story of living side by side, humans with nature, interwoven and interdependent sharing the same air and the same earth and the story of possibilities. This was a catalyst that changed the way that I teach. Helping children to look at all life and their environment differently than previous generations became my passion. It was a moment that taught me the importance of reflection in our lives and of the importance of Thomas Berry's *The Great Work*.

It is through the sharing of Thomas' "the Meadow across the Creek" that I began to fully comprehend the meaning of my egret encounter. After exploring what Thomas felt about the meadow, I began to see that my experience was a life changing experience. Being a scientist, I took Thomas' words to heart: "While we have more scientific knowledge of the universe than any people ever had, it is not the type of knowledge that leads to an intimate presence within a meaningful universe."[1] It took an encounter of being in the presence of other beings to hear the voice of nature, and to feel the connection between us. Thomas also writes "…no effective restoration of a viable mode of human presence on the planet will take place until such intimate human rapport with the Earth community and the entire functioning of the universe is reestablished on an extensive scale."[2] I have accepted the voice of nature to teach this message to my students.

Richard Louv writes of a new disease among children and young people that he refers to as "nature deficit disorder."[3] Many years ago on an Everglades field trip there were two female students who, after disembarking the bus, refused to leave the sidewalk for a hike along a trail in the Everglades. They were visibly afraid. After encouraging them to walk on the trail I asked questions trying to find reasons for this behavior. They told me that they had grown up in an apartment complex in Miami where signs proclaimed, "Do not get on the grass" and the playgrounds were covered with asphalt . . . so they knew that there were dangers in grass and other natural surfaces. We got through that and were able to go on the hike together.

And Rachel Carson spoke of the need to have an adult to share nature with.[4] As I reflect on her work, I have come to understand that my Grandfather was that adult to me. I dug holes around the fruit tree as he told me about Native Americans' way of fertilizing fruit trees, followed him into the neighborhood to collect oak leaves to mulch and compost the azaleas and camellias, and watched the sun rise as we would encircle and herd up hundreds of fiddler crabs to bait our hooks for sheephead fishing on the jetties of the St John's River. He would tell me that "you have to learn these things" - they make you part of this life. So, I grew up, went to college, found professors passionate about science and I fell in love with the science of ecology.

My formal science education was standard science. We studied processes, structure and function. I learned it all in the lecture room and in the lab. My university training was very typical and analytical. I used the scientific method to understand the parts and functioning of the earth. But, I was the happiest and most excited when my botany teacher took us out in the fields and forests of South Georgia or made us go to search for new plants to add to the herbarium. In my senior year the department introduced a new course – Ecology. I was hooked. I had found relationships in university work and science. The very relationships that my grandfather had taught me years before were now being explained in a science text and in class. Now, it began to become clear.

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[1] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), p. 15.
[2] Ibid, p. 19.
[3] Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2005).
[4] Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 55.

Being present to the natural world is something that happens to you. You may want it or try to be present, but I think that you have to grow into it. It is a gradual process that slowly infiltrates every cell in your body. You begin to learn by being in tune with your surroundings. In my case, I have learned some valuable lessons from listening to my students. I was teaching the class about the various forms of pollution. I talked of air, water, soil and noise pollution, giving examples of disasters and numbers. I was giving the lecture that every environmental science teacher gives. Trying to motivate the class to action, I was speaking in an animated way to stimulate interest and excitement. As I looked around the room trying to make eye contact, I saw a "zoned- out look" from many in the class. I stopped. Didn't they care, I asked? Why weren't they getting excited about the need to work on these conditions? A young lady in the third row on the left side of the room spoke up and said, "Mr. Senzig, it is all too overwhelming." That statement hit me like a blast of arctic air. I lost my breath and could not speak. She taught me something very important that day.

The shift in my understanding began when I realized that beyond the teaching of content, people are drawn to you because you act in a way that says to others that you care about all life. People begin to sense it in you even before you acknowledge it in yourself. And then it begins. Students begin bringing birds injured by flying into a window or glass door. Giving the bird some water and a quiet place to rest or taking it to a wildlife rehabber is the strategy. A student rescues a baby turtle in the middle of the faculty parking lot and comes to me wanting to know what to do. There is a snake in the hall that needs to be saved before the next class bell. At 7:00 am two students appear at my door upset. "You have to come now. There is a bird trapped in the media center hall. When the bell rings the students will trample it." I rushed down the stairs with the student to find a tiny Yellow Rumped Warbler in one corner of the hall. I reached for it and it flew to the other end of the hall. The wings were not broken. I followed it to the other end and this time picked up the little bird in my two hands. It was so small and fragile that I had to be focused so that I didn't crush the little creature. I cradled the tiny bird in my hands and moved towards the door. One student opened the door for me. As I carried that fragile small body through the door I heard the other student say, "He is the Bird Whisperer." I carried that bird outside to the now silent courtyard. I opened my hands expecting it to fly away. Instead, it climbed onto my finger, sitting there and looking at me. It felt like a long time before it flew to a nearby post. Students have kind hearts. They want to help other creatures. They say, " We did not know who else to go to or what to do." They return to find out how the animal is doing. They stop me in the hall and light up when told the success of the rescue. When news is bad they go away crushed.

I have filled the room with tropical plants and desert cacti. There are aquaria filled with tadpoles and snails, algae and parrot's feathers, turtles and snakes, fish and more fish. The room has become a nature museum of sorts as all the things that my students find and bring in are on display. Teenagers and faculty walk by the room on the way to class and peer in asking, "What class is this?" The plants and animals call out to them to come join us. "I want to take this class" and "I want to be in this class" are heard as the student heads on to her class.

The practice that I have started in my classes is one that ties observation of the natural world to the development of individualized environmental ethics. The practice is based on Thomas Berry's idea that we must "reinvent the Human for the 21st Century."[5] The unit that I am developing starts with observation activities designed to have the student in the field learn to observe by using the senses. Through various activities that use and stimulate the sense of smell, touch, sight, and hearing, the student becomes aware of his natural surroundings. Through these low stress activities students can have the unstructured time to observe and reflect on the natural environment and their relationship to it.

Next, I use Aldo Leopold's environmental education materials, as well as materials that I have developed using Thomas Berry's *The Great Work* to help students work on their Environmental Ethics. Journaling is a very important tool in the exploration of one's relationship to the Earth. I use the outdoors to teach my students. Finally, I use many techniques that I have learned from nature educators to enhance and teach the public school science curriculum.

I use whatever I have available to produce times where observation, journaling, imagination and creativity are promoted in ways to see things as they are and then to reflect on how things might be. Old calendar pictures, broken shells, wildlife slides, socks filled with objects to touch, film canisters filled with items to shake or to smell are used in activities to encourage the use of imagination and creativity. I am using several of Joseph Cornell's "Sharing Nature" activities such as "the unnatural trail" and "the trail of beauty" to give students the opportunity to look closely at things and then to reflect on the experience.

Using Aldo Leopold's environmental education materials, we read from *A Sand County Almanac*, work in the environmental heroes and heroines activity book, see his video, use the activity cards outside, and complete many of the natural outside activities aligned with *A Sand County Almanac*.

Using Thomas Berry's *The Great Work* proved that his work is both relevant and understandable to the students. The book provided a framework for the student to begin to develop his or her own environmental ethic in the following sequence:

1. History of Thomas Berry
2. Ethics and Ecology-Paper at Harvard University
3. Introduction of the concept of the four wisdoms from *The Great Work*: Wisdom of Indigenous People, Wisdom of Women, Wisdom of Classical Traditions and Wisdom of Science
4. Student will read about each wisdom from selected articles (print and web)
5. Develop essential questions to help relate articles to personal journey
6. Select quotations by prominent individuals in each wisdom. Develop questions to help student think about and incorporate lesson into one's life
7. Opportunities for student to behold Nature (personal experience with the outdoors)
8. Student will have the opportunity to develop, to reflect on and to write about one's own personal ethic statement in an ethics essay.

Journaling is supplementary to the class. I give them the permission to relax while completing this series of tasks. Journaling has a very unique way of showing the what, how and why of looking. During the course of each term, each student must reflect on and journal on 60 prompts. One student wrote that "the journal made me stop to see these important things." My students, again and again, told me that the journaling assignment gave them permission to slow down, see things and think about them.

When we are studying the world biomes, I have the students work in groups to develop oral presentations. They have to use technology, so they prepare power point presentations, create a piece of art about the biome, and prepare note cards for the speech. But there is a twist to this assignment. Borrowing from John Seed's "Council of All Beings," each student is required to make a mask of one of the biome's animals. The animal mask is worn during the presentation where the student is to become the animal and speak of the biome from its point of view. To set the stage that first day, the room is darkened, some instrumental music is played, the students are asked to close their eyes and come with me to a distant place where animals talk and all beings are heard. As I walk around the darkened room, waving a large pelican wing to send a gentle breeze to touch each cheek, we enter the new place and begin the reports.

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[5] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 159.

When teaching Biodiversity, I use birds to illustrate the points. We devote a couple of class periods to learning to recognize birds from photos and slides. I teach the students to use binoculars in the classroom and then outside. I bring in some local Audubon club members to lead a bird walk in order to help students begin to learn to identify birds in the field. We learn to identify local species. After some work together, I have borrowed an activity from John Connor at the Museum of Natural Science called Flat Birds. Gather twenty pictures of the birds that you want the students to know, cut the shapes out and glue them to a stiff, thick paper. Then go to Joseph Cornell's Sharing Nature website to download the quotations that he uses with his Trail of Beauty. Now you are ready to start an activity that will reinforce the learning of science with the help of the humanities. Now find an area around the school that you could use as a "trail". The trail could be as little as the side of a building or as great as a local trail in the woods. The quotations are laminated and tacked to trees or other structures at about 30-50 feet apart. The separation between quotation signs gives the students time to write the quotation in their journals. The flat birds are placed somewhere within 360 degrees around the sign at some distance from the central quotation. The student writes the quotation in her/his journal to reflect on later. Now, the student must apply his or her binocular skills to find and name the bird with the help of a Peterson Bird Field Guide. In this way, the student is applying the skills necessary to science while at the same time having an experience of the humanities.

In the end it is what the student has learned that makes success:

"…I HAVE LEARNED MANY THINGS ABOUT BEING HERE ON Earth. I look at our earth more seriously than I did before. Rather than saying that we live on our earth, I have learned that we actually live in our Earth."

"I see myself relating to the Earth and all of the beings that share this place because we are all living organisms and we all have the same rights on this Earth…" Gabe

" I have come to the realization that the Earth is my home and we need to preserve it and keep it in its natural state of being." Ariel

"I have a great deal more respect for the environment because I have a much better understanding of how much it really affects my life." Kyle

"This class has given me some rewarding experiences. From journaling to solar cooking, it has been fun…. it was the first time I thought seriously about the environment and developing an environmental ethic." Anthony

" Environmental Science has changed me so much. I have so much new knowledge and experience. Before I took the class I thought I had a pretty good grasp on the environment. Then I took the class and learned so much more that I ever knew. I would like to educate people about the environment so they can grow to respect and love it also. I see all living things as equal to each other. Everything that is alive demands respect and should receive it. Humans were not meant to rule over everything. We don't have the right. The Heart of Nature is the center of what connects all of nature together. It is a state of harmony and love between everything on Earth. I have learned that I love my planet Earth."

"… these classes have changed my way of thinking." Chris

"I have learned that Earth cannot survive on the linear path we are on. We must learn how to live in a circular path." Chris

" I see myself relating to the Earth by living with the organisms and the things in the Earth rather than just being here with no purpose." Christian

"…I have changed some views and refined others. I would like to remember the effect we as people have on the environment. I have become more enlightened on the issues of the environment and what we can do to save it." Kelsey

" I would like to remember when we went outside and explored the Earth around us and figured out the age of trees, and looked at animal tracks, and even looked at our own soil." Amanda

" We are the heart of nature because we are what controls the fate of our environment and we decide what happens to it." Amanda.

"I really believe that writing in my journal also helped me appreciate the Earth more because I went outside, observed what was around me and wrote down what I saw. It helped me collect thoughts and feelings and I opened my eyes and saw many things that I have never taken the time to look at before." Amanda

"…all the times we went outside in the woods observing animal trackings and trees and plants and insects, it was way better and more fun than sitting in class and taking notes. I learned a lot of good things from this class, like about taking care of our community. That time when we picked up trash along the road was my first experience at that and I don't think I would have ever done that except for in this class. Well my attitude towards throwing trash out the window of my car have changed." Melissa

"Having to take time out of my day to appreciate nature was not a task I found tedious or difficult. However it did provide me with an opportunity, or, rather, an excuse to spend more time outside." Joanna

It is important to teach the analytical aspects of science, but I have come to understand that it is also very important to help students develop the intuitive parts of their brains. If one develops equally the analytical and the intuitive parts of the brain then one will bring the Right Brain together with the Left Brain to arrive at wisdom - Earth Wisdom. Earth wisdom will prepare all beings including the human for the 21st Century and the flaring forth of the Ecozoic Era. Be Brave. Listen to the Heart of Nature and the Spirit of the Earth. That song will bring new ideas and new understandings to share with students. That song will bring humans into harmony with all other beings and the Universe itself.

Randy Senzig has taught science for 31 years in North Carolina and Florida public schools. He holds a NC Science Teaching License as well as being a NC Certified Environmental Educator. Randy is a NCSU Kenan Fellow, the 2006 NC Environmental Educator of the Year, his high school's Teacher of the Year, NCSTA District Science Teacher of the Year and has received many grants to promote outdoor education. He was the co director of NCSU Summer Environmental Camp. His article, "A Letter from a Teacher of Young Women," was published in *The Ecozoic Reader*. His website, Birds in the Schoolyard promotes outdoor education. He wrote the Wake County Environmental Science Curriculum. Randy has studied at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, pursued graduate studies in Conservation Biology at Florida International University and earned a Masters in Education at the University of North Florida.

Grounding Higher Education: Reflections on Openings and Obstacles to Earth-Centered Pedagogy

by

Lisa Marie Peloquin

Part One: The Letter

I held the envelope in hand--with my name carefully hand-written on "happy" paper, this postal anomaly was decidedly different—protruding from the lifeless reams of advertisements upon advertisements that used to be trees, destined straight for my recycling bin. Unlike the usual bombardment of bills into my mailbox or the familiar inundation of overt and veiled solicitations of what more I could give to Your this, My that or the Other—this time, I experienced a genuine pause, opened the letter and received my germinal impressions of the "Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice" program at The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary.

My eyeful fingers leafed through the printed pages of natural tones and graceful fonts. I remember feeling the surge of hopeful excitement that accompanies meaningful opportunity… as well as anxiety-- her existential mirror. Designed for educators, the "Inner Life" would gather a diversity of teachers to co-creatively think, write and speak to the presence and absence of nature within the learning process. The two-year program would include a series of seminars, experiential workshops and focused dialogues designed to cultivate human connection with the natural world. From my perspective, this experience would allow me to question the many bifurcated comfort zones crafted by our culture: minds kept separate from bodies, the imaginary private realm shielded from the collective, the cerebral divorced from the sensate. As an academic situated within a system of "higher education" that legitimates certain forms of knowledge and normalizes particular modes of learning, I immediately felt drawn to this revolution encoded in soy-ink.

Part II: Out of the Concrete Box: Students, Teachers, Classrooms

Ways of seeing the world may become as concretized as the asphalt beneath our (synthetic) rubber-soled feet. As a sociologist, I remain captivated by the ways in which an individual's location in time, place and circumstance renders specific expectations of the real, true and valuable. More specifically, my experience with the "Inner Life" program consistently prompted me to behold, reflect and remodel the teaching and learning process and to expand the limits of higher education beyond orthodox processes and contexts.

The United States, as a decidedly age-stratified society, channels teachers and learners into distinct educational trajectories and environments deemed appropriate for specific stages within the life course. Considered progressive and cumulative, students are assumed to move through stages of cognitive and emotional development that establish the building blocks of identity and social roles. My efforts to complete the application materials for the "Inner Life" brought awareness to my internalized assumptions about the most rightful educators and students to participate. My attention focused on the language of the program description –my fascination with diction was at once a sociological reflex to consider the forces of history and a testimony to my sincere need for belonging.

The application materials presented the "Inner Life" as centered on the *child* in nature. As a university professor that recognizes our culturally specific imaginations of age, I was concerned about my candidacy…Did I work with *children*? What qualities of being are idealized by contemporary understandings of *childhood*? Do I consider childhood a state of openness to nature? If so, were my students already "lost causes," their consciousness sutured by formal education--immunized from empathetic bonds with the natural world? How do assumptions about the openness or "innocence" of childhood reflect levels of material affluence within a society? Are exploited child farm-workers benefiting more from their direct connection with nature than an "incarceration" within classrooms for the mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic?

Ultimately, my perception of undergraduate students as a vulnerable, if not endangered, population catalyzed my decision to reject conventional definitions and expand the umbrella of "childhood" to include twenty some-things. In *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), Richard Louv diagnoses a "nature deficit disorder" of epidemic proportions within Western societies. With progressive industrialization and urbanization, youth lose opportunities for direct exposure to nature and consequently suffer from increasing rates of obesity, depression and anxiety. Undergraduate students, comprising what recent social historians have termed "the Net generation," exist within social worlds more inhabited by virtual representations than grounded, lived relationships.

Of particular salience to my work as an educator, the overwhelmingly suburban and socio-economically privileged backgrounds of private liberal arts students added further complexity to these conditions of detachment from the natural world. Most often, students' first reception of the wonders of nature were the byproducts of mass media disseminated commercial interests. In effect, the ethos of desire at the core of consumer economies actively meshes and distorts the experience of the body in nature with those of the pleasure of purchase. As an educator, I recognized my duty not only to promote consciousness among young people about human separation from the natural world but also to make problematic the personal pleasures of high priced hiking boots, outdoor clothing and tourism.

Teachers, "Professors," Knowledge

My participation within the "Inner Life of the Child" did not merely prompt me to question the reigning definitions of childhood. Part and parcel of the regular meaningful exchange I shared with educators from all walks of life further inspired me to question the kinds of knowledge that benefit students as well as my own limited vision of performing the role of university "professor." Social institutions, such as education, represent an accepted and persistent constellation of statuses, roles and values that address the needs of complex societies. Simultaneously organizational and normative, social institutions structure human action, tempering the flux of social life into scripted social interactions and exchange relationships.

Teachers and learners expect certain performances of one another—behaviors (teachers stand, students sit) and beliefs (A's are excellent, exams are accurate measures of learning) that are consistent with our institutional contexts. Any student that has been "excused" from a seminar for "disruptive behavior" will testify that deviance from these scripts is met with discomfort, mistrust and outright negative sanction. Any professor whose emotions have been judged as "un-professional" or lectures as "meaningless digressions" will testify that these role expectations are interlocking and mutually restrictive.

Education, like all social institutions, adapts and responds to changing historical and economic contexts. As a university professor, I am located within what my society recognizes as a realm of "higher education." Consistent with this clearly hierarchical arrangement, a university professor confronts the cultural imperatives to teach particular skills and specialized information to students. At present, the demands of "effective participation" within a capitalist society promote curricula that prepare individuals to "get a job." Quite simply, money is required to feed, clothe and shelter the body as well as to pay for a university education. Professors are expected to perform the role of the expert and transmit their knowledge in exchange for substantial tuition payments that pay their salaries. Within the minds of students, parents, and educators alike lies the impending reality of "getting what you pay for" in the quest to survive within an increasingly competitive paid, wage labor force.

Despite my deeply held personal convictions that each human being is intimately connected with the natural world, I inherit a civilization that prioritizes speed, efficiency and technology over the most contemplative and transcendental walks in the forest. As participants within institutions of higher education, teachers and learners typically emphasize an education with immediate use-value and technical application in the "real world." The most basic comparison of the distribution of funding and university majors within the "arts" as opposed to the sciences will evidence the priorities of rational, scientific and de-natured interfaces with the environment.

Sharing the "Inner Life" allowed me to critically reflect on the ways in which my conformity with the orthodox content of collegiate education in fact serves to reproduce the very beliefs and practices that subjugate nature. Given that the sacred cows of objectivity and efficiency serve to legitimate human control of the natural world, the reconnection of children with nature requires teaching that expands bases of knowledge and understanding beyond the rational to include the subjective, non-rational, and immeasurable. To invite my students to re-connect with nature would challenge the increasing medicalization of ever more numerous alternative states of mind and the social construction of time measured in dollars and seconds.

Nature as Teacher/Teachers in Nature_

The practice of teaching/learning is framed by specific norms of the body within physical space. Universities provide controlled, sanitary, and rationally organized environments for the pursuit of education. The spatial and normative dynamics of universities testify to the enduring hierarchy of the mind over matter and the separation of bodies from nature. In contrast to the "Inner Life's" intention to reunite children with the natural world, the architecture and landscaping on most college campuses clearly attest to pronounced pressures in the opposite direction.

Wild spaces are replaced with Kodak colored lawns that remain mercilessly manicured…networks of concrete footpaths swiftly direct busy bees past fertilized flowers from one air conditioned building into the next. Hermetically sealed classrooms minimize movement of bodies and air. Appetites for food, drink, rest and movement are tightly regulated. Seating is arranged with reference to chalkboards, media projectors and screens. Windows are closed and shades are drawn to maximize artificial light and visual teaching aids. Despite the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders (lower back pain, headaches), contemporary students are expected to remain seated and motionless in chairs (with six legs on the floor). Prolonged standing and diligent pacing (surveillance) of the student body represent anticipated practices that communicate the status, professionalism and authority of the instructor.

In stark contrast to the contemplative and monastic existence of bygone days, contemporary scholars contend with a hyper-stimulation of the nervous system characteristic of the Information Age. The most "well-prepared" students must become technologically savvy and learn to navigate the avalanche of diverse and often contradictory ideas that emerge from the

social and scientific worlds. Universities often showboat high-tech innovations within the college classroom as the keys to the kingdom of effective teaching and learning. Labeled as "smart classrooms," the most coveted teaching spaces are not equipped with clay tablets and stylus or clay anything, but with personal computer workstations for each participant.

Likewise, the ruling technologies of a society change the patterns of social interaction between teachers and learners. Rapid-fire emails, Blackboard, texting, and IM increasingly substitute for office hours, phone calls, and impromptu outdoor strolls. Universities devote considerable resources to create elaborate networks of electronic communication. In addition to the gender, age, and occupational status inequalities that separate teachers and students, pop-ups and shock waves enter the competition for mindful co-presence and even basic eye-contact among humans. In contrast to the dinosaur pace and complexion of face to face teacher and student relationships, meaningful "connections" are now measured at high speed, preferably air brushed and downloaded in Dolby surround sound.

Traditional teaching and learning environments distance teachers and students from one another and the natural world. Although teachers routinely interpret fidgeting bodies, eyes at half-mast and snacking as signs of disrespect and disinterest among students, the uprooting and planting of living beings within sterile regimes of institutional space inhibit the creativity and energy of the mental, physical and emotional bodies. The "Inner Life" invited me to expand boundaries of teaching and learning to locations within nature and to witness the natural world as a living classroom and as a learned teacher.

Part III: Opening Self and Society with the Natural World

While academics certainly relish floating within the realm of ideas, the ultimate duty of a teacher is to cultivate awareness and affect meaningful change among students. From my perspective, educators exert a potentially decisive impact on the emergent sensibilities and identities of young people. Nurtured through my involvement with the "Inner Life," my teaching actively explores pedagogies that transcend the limits of institutional space, embrace rational and non-rational ways of knowing and pursue intimate connection with the natural world. Timberlake Farm's earth sanctuary has welcomed the voyage of my undergraduate students' bodies and minds to encounters with nature that challenge conventional boundaries of higher learning and community.

My "Self and Society" upper-level seminar involves thirty students in a fifteen-week study of sociological social psychology. From a disciplinary perspective, the course is designed to engage students in a sustained reflection on the ways in which social forces impact our sense of self and relationship with others. The primary subject matter of the social sciences, such as sociology, evidence the anthropocentrism and androcentrism of western thought in general. Relegating "nature" to the terrain of physical science, most sociologists restrict their attentions to the thoughts and activities of men. Standard courses on the self and society define the social as separate from the web of life we call "nature" and proceed to place models of personal agency and human organization within a two-legged cultural vacuum.

A more empirically accurate approach to social interaction would recognize that human beings make sense of life through the use of multiple sense organs within a living and breathing environment. I explain to students that they should anticipate readings and activities that are "touch-y-feel-y," not in a therapeutic sense but in an empirically measurable, individually palpable form. My course adopts an alternative model of human knowledge/understanding that requires a conscious relationship not only to what we see but also to what we touch/feel, hear, taste and smell. By framing the curriculum in terms of the five senses, I strive to de-center the parameters of existence and identity from a purely human, rational and disembodied lens.

On the first day of class, I begin to prepare students for the range of ideas and experiences they will encounter, emphasizing course participants must be willing to look upon the "self," "society" and even "reality" not as the truth but as the consequence of temporary, shared beliefs. A primary analytical goal of a "Self and Society" class is to present personal autonomy, individual identity, and even human consciousness as inextricably linked to the values of an ever-changing, impermanent collective. Given the peripheral, if not "invisible," status of nature within the study of the human, reconnecting students with the natural world in fact provides an auspicious window into perceiving the limits of "normal" awareness and behavior.

The significant duration of students' socialization into formal systems of education dictates that I frame the interface between my students and the natural world in pre-meditated ways. For better or for worse, norms of what higher education looks, sounds and feels like are so profoundly internalized that even their brief absence often translates into "nothingness" within the eyes of my collegiate consumers. In a nutshell, no Powerpoints, no texts messages, no emails, no video mean "no point." For example, the 165-acre earth sanctuary at Timberlake Farm comprises a massive, wild green-space compared to a classroom that serves to "enliven" the scholarly critique of the influence of "total institutions" on human creativity and movement. While the class session at the sanctuary clearly fulfills a course objective from the professor's standpoint, students consistently offer a resounding, dismissive refrain, "Oh! You mean we are going to that *hippie* place?!"

Despite legitimate intellectual intentions, this professor must manage her presentation of self and other to navigate a context of potent, negative projections. To a sociologist, stereotypes represent the ways in which reigning paradigms of thought and shared cultural beliefs cast humans into narrowly defined images. Individuals cling to stereotypes when they continue to describe a world in limited ways despite empirical evidence to the contrary. Clearly, the last time I had looked at my birth certificate, I had entered this material world during an historical era of profound *backlash* to the hippie movement. Furthermore, I had never witnessed a psychedelic light show or "love-in" occurring anywhere close to Whitsett, North Carolina. The corporate cooptation of countercultural social movements bolstered by mass media representations serves to divorce the *hippies* from their environmental ethos and to reduce them to unemployed, anti-intellectual hedonists. This synthesis of the *hippie* and *nature-lover* with culturally held stereotypes of the "useless" was evident within written reflections after class. Essays were replete with blatant, if not unrepentant, confessions that prior to the actual experience, students expected the class would be "stupid," a "waste of time" and "irrelevant compared to real work."

Human beings are distinctive in their abilities to reflect on the past and to anticipate the reactions of others. When integrating earth-centered pedagogies into the university curriculum, I am careful to mobilize accepted educational protocols to help neutralize the negative stereotypes of the "nature-attuned" subcultures characteristic to the U.S. Prior to departure and consistent with professorial role expectations, class-readings (downloaded from Blackboard), and class lectures (presented in

Powerpoint) create space among students for critical discussion of the nature-culture divide. As familiar touchstones for their experiences at the sanctuary, students receive an "education" in the sociology of the environment, technology and knowledge. While at Timberlake Farm, students may then choose to expand their toolbox of learning and encounter nature as a teacher with a distinctive knowledge base and set of resources.

Closeness with the natural world often stimulates a fundamental reversal of the relationship with the senses required for "normalcy" within school. Our perception is influenced by both the efficiency of our sense organs (which differ from individual to individual) and by our mental preconceptions (individual training, cultural conditioning). The natural world provides students with a context of learning that contrasts with the environmental realities of their everyday lives. The "lesson" for my class in particular requires that students remove watches, remain silent, and leave cell phones and computers within institutional walls. This alternative location of learning stimulates the awareness of the senses as both physical sensations and cognitive processes shaped by particular cultural location.

Within nature, students may explore the ways in which their sense of sight is intimately connected to the experience of the self and society. For many of my students, their most intense "exposure" to nature is the daily viewing of a screensaver on a computer desktop, not a focused vision of the forest floor. Contemporary college students are immersed within a culture that is hyper-mediated and inundated by the "unreal," if not "unnatural." As women's and men's bodies are routinely "enhanced" and re-created by cosmetic surgeries, even their images of the landscape are not untouched –but photo-shopped to remove those unsightly shadows and bulges. Timberlake Farm presents students with a space relatively unmediated by human technologies, thus opening the eyes of their bodies to the distorted gaze of their culture and to the enduring eyes of the world.

In addition, the sanctuary temporarily distances students from their normal soundscape. During their silent meditation with nature, unfamiliar sights are amplified by unrecognized sounds. To navigate this life-world, students come to appreciate that the *definition* of space with sound differs significantly from the *domination* of space with sound more characteristic of western cultures. With the bells, whistles and mp3s on mute, students enter an animated world that is abundant in non-verbal, symbolic communication. The removal of the visual and audio cues provided by their digital watches likewise underscores that even time may be measured in multiple ways within the context of nature.

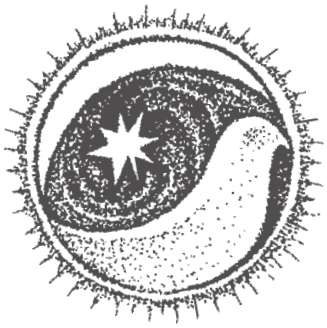
Reconnecting the child with nature re-orients students to the sense of touch as well as its more intimate sensory mode, taste. Our distance and closeness with all facets of the environment is more than mere juxtaposition. While at Timberlake, students may experiment with the norms of contact between a person and the world. Students are asked to remain attentive to what they "touch" and why they "touch." This connection involves a range of feelings that are emotional and sensational. While logistical difficulties and institutional impediments certainly limit touch for thirty undergraduate students outside university walls, students also describe a host of emotional barriers to the Timberlake Farm excursion. Fear of the "elements" often manifests as many students hovering close to the tree house. In their essays, students speak to their discomfort and fascination with one hundred minutes outside of the pace and perceived order of the classroom. As the rich smellscape triggers their memories, student travels also become multidimensional in personal space as well as life history. The natural world expands qualities of be-ing in the world, involving action and presence from within and without, conditioning and agency among infinite life forms.

Part IV: Continued Reflections

As a participant in the "Inner Life of the Child," I was blessed with a co-creative community dedicated to the development, transformation and strengthening of life-giving principles. The conversations, meditations and process of the "Inner Life" allowed me to deeply question the ways in which connection with nature may serve to catalyze and support valuable teaching and learning. From my perspective, the quality of education ultimately remains measured by the ways in which "knowledge" serves

to ameliorate the suffering of all living beings. My work with the Center at Timberlake Farm allowed both myself as a teacher and my students to perceive learning beyond the dominant models and contexts of higher education. Through these direct, lived experiences, I have come to embrace a more diverse community of teachers in the form of a living and breathing ecosystem. I have witnessed my students come to a place where they might see the "unseen," listen to the "silent," touch/feel the "intangible" and creatively integrate and embody scholarly ideas. With a self conscious commitment towards gentle, reflective education connected to the natural world, my teaching will continue to explore earth-centered pedagogies and invite students to become aware within an environment of birth and death, abundance and lack, action and intention.

Lisa Marie Peloquin holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Duke University. She has applied her sociological training and bilingual skills in work with Latino immigrants and migrants in North Carolina, adults diagnosed with mental retardation and mental illness, and alternative health care centers. Entitled "Vibrant Weave: "'Holistic Healing' and the Embodiment of Community in a Southern Mill Town," her dissertation explored how contemporary healing practices and green lifestyles serve as a valuable lens through which we may re-think the nature of culture, power, and the self. As an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Elon University, Lisa teaches courses on women and gender studies, contemporary social theory and embodiment. She has also pursued independent studies in Ayurveda and yoga. Lisa presently serves on the Board of Directors for The Center of Education, Imagination and the Natural World.



Center Programs 2010

Programs for Children

Children of the Forest
An Afternoon Program in the Natural World for 6-9 year olds
3:45 – 5:30 pm
Spring Session I: Wednesday, March 17 - April 7, 2010
Spring Session II: Wednesday, April 14 - May 5, 2010
$80 per session
Once a week, rain or shine, a group of 8 children explores the forests, fields, creeks and organic garden of Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary. Unhurried by the pressures of time, they are guided in natural play and exploration by Sandy Bisdee, staff Naturalist/ Educator, who brings over twenty years' experience with children and the earth to her work at the Center. The program is entirely outside in the fresh air, sunshine, wind, rain, fog and all kinds of weather! Parents may drop off their children or stay for solo time on woodland trails.

Make New Friends: A Nature Camp for 5-7 year olds
June 14 - 18, 2010
9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Cost: $250 a child (limited to 12 children)
Staff: Sandy Bisdee
In this magical week together, we will make new friends deep in the forest, bubbling in the brook, blossoming in the garden and living in the open meadows. Our days begin with music, natural play and sharing time, and continue with nature walks, where we experience "magical moments" on woodland trails. In the afternoons, we gather in the story circle, make time for artistic expression, and go creek exploring off the Creeping Cedar Trail. The week will close with a joyful "Children of the Forest Festival" on Friday. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

Exploring Secret Places: A Nature Camp for 8-10 year olds
June 21 - 25, 2010
9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Cost: $250 a child (limited to 12 children)
Staff: Sandy Bisdee
In this week of adventure and imagination, we will explore woodland trails, but also venture off the beaten path into the wilder areas of the natural world. Join us as we share in the wonder of these experiences together! Each day we make new connections to secret places in the natural world, and new friendships with each other. The week includes poems, stories, songs, rhythm games, music making, and exuberant sharing in the feeling of community with the natural world. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

Earth, Air, Fire, Water: A Nature Camp for 11-13 year olds
July 5 - 9, 2010
9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Cost: $250 a child (limited to 12 children)
Staff: Sandy Bisdee
Join us in exploring the elements of earth, air, fire and water with new eyes. Each day begins with stories and songs from many cultures followed by expeditions into the mysteries of the magical garden, woods, creeks and rocks of our earth sanctuary. Together we will discover an inner relationship to the elements. In the afternoons we give imaginative expression to our individual experiences of the morning through poetry, art and journaling. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

Programs for Schools & Groups

Awakening to Nature
Grades pre-school – K, 9:30 am –12:00 noon, $200
Grades 1-5, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm, $250
Number of Children: maximum 24
"Awakening to Nature " brings the inner lives of children into a new relationship with the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the natural world. Throughout the changing seasons, children are invited to slow down and experience the fullness of each moment at the earth sanctuary; to take in the sounds, the smells, the feel of the air, the colors and movements of forest, creek, pond, garden and meadow. Through story, music, movement and visual image, inner experiences are deepened and shared. The day ends with a heartwarming circle of reflection. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades pre-K-5.

The Poetry of Nature
9:30 am – 1:30 pm
Grades 6-12
Cost: $250
Number of Students: maximum 24
"Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things" ~ Mary Oliver
Students are led along earth sanctuary trails on a journey that deepens their connection to the natural world through silent practices and poetry readings at special sites. While taking in the images of each new place, students are called to write their own poetry of nature. The day culminates in a poetry reading after lunch where each contribution is deeply connected to their experiences of the earth sanctuary and to their inner life. They read poems, ask questions, and share reflections on the day and their sense of belonging to the natural world. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of students in grades 6-12.

Native American Journeys
9:30 am – 1:30 pm
Grades K-5
Cost: $250
Number of Children: maximum 24
"Native American Journeys" is a program about Native Americans that begins around the fire circle. Original and traditional stories, Native American poetry, songs in various tribal tongues, original and traditional flute music, artistic activities, guided earth walks in smaller groups, exposure to everyday artifacts, discussion about food, medicine, shelter, clothing, stewardship and spiritual beliefs can be woven into this day together. Our time together is centered around gratitude, respect for all creation, silence, giving and receiving, sensorial awareness and individual gifts. The children come away with an experience that is deeply connected to the natural world. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades K-5.

Special Design Programs
Since 2004, the Center has created a wide range of Special Design Programs for schools, churches, and universities that bring children, young adults and educators into a deep personal connection to the natural world. The Center welcomes inquiries from teachers and schools, pre-school through college. We offer many possibilities for educators to partner with the Center in creating a compassionate human presence to the Earth.

We are happy to set up an exploratory meeting with you to consider ways in which the Center might tailor a program to the particular needs and values of your learning community. If you are interested in exploring a Special Design Program with the Center, please contact Center Director Peggy Whalen-Levitt at (336) 449-0612 or e-mail her at beholdnature@aol.com.

Applications for Children's Programs may be downloaded from our website at www.beholdnature.org. Please call the office at (336) 449-0612 to arrange a date for a school group before sending in your registration forms.

Site-based Educators' Programs

The Center offers an opportunity for educators who are familiar with the philosophy of the Center to offer their own programs for students at the earth sanctuary. Educators who have attended either the Seventh Generation Teachers' Program or The Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program are eligible for this opportunity. In keeping with the mission of the Center, we ask that participating educators design programs for children, young adults and college students that call upon their inner faculties of imagination and intuition and enable them to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world. The fee for a Site-Based Educator's Program is $125 per day. If you are interested in this opportunity, please request an application from Center Director Peggy Whalen-Levitt at (336) 449-0612 or e-mail her at *beholdnature@aol.com*. Once we have reviewed your proposal, we will contact you within a week to confirm a date. Programs are limited to 30 students.

Programs for College Students

Garden Apprenticeship Program
The Center seeks college students who are interested in working in our organic garden under the direction of our garden volunteer coordinator, Sandy Bisdee. If you are interested in making a commitment to a weekly schedule of service during the Fall, Spring or Summer semester, please contact Sandy at *sandybisdee@hotmail.com* or e-mail the Center at *beholdnature@aol.com*.

Programs for Adults

Nurturing a Sense of Wonder: A Program for Parents and K-2 Educators
Led by Sandy Bisdee
March 13, 2010
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm *(meet at the Treehouse)*
Fee: $40
In this program, we will explore ways to bring the inner lives of young children into a new relationship with the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the natural world. We'll consider how, throughout the changing seasons, we might invite children to slow down and experience the natural world, to take in the sounds, the smells, to feel the air, the colors and movements of the world around them. In addition to practices that can be used outside, we will explore practices that can bring the natural world into the home or pre-school/kindergarten classroom. *(Registration forms can be downloaded at our website: www.beholdnature.org)*

(This program will also be offered at the Walnut Creek Wetland Park in Raleigh on March 20, 2010. Please see our website for details)

At Nature's Pace: A Nature Retreat for Adults
Fee: $250 per four-hour retreat
Group Size: 16 maximum (bring a bag lunch)
Please call the Center to schedule a date before sending in your registration form, available for download at our website: www.beholdnature.org

The ever-accelerating pace of change is leading us to a hurried existence that alienates us from our deepest selves and our connection to the earth. This day for renewal and reflection among the quiet woods, meadows and lakes of Timberlake Farm offers time in the present at nature's pace.

The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice

A Two-Year Co-Research Program for Educators funded by the Kalliopeia Foundation

Since its beginnings in 2000, The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World has worked closely with ecotheologian Thomas Berry to re-imagine the child's relationship with the natural world. Seminal to these conversations is the following quote from Thomas Berry:

> *There is a certain futility in the efforts being made – truly sincere, dedicated, and intelligent efforts – to remedy our environmental devastation simply by activating renewable sources of energy and by reducing the deleterious impact of the industrial world. The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder, beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude the natural world remains a commodity to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality to be venerated. The deep psychic shift needed to withdraw us from the fascination of the industrial world and the deceptive gifts that it gives us is too difficult for simply the avoidance of its difficulties or the attractions of its benefits. Eventually, only our sense of the sacred will save us.*[1]

In considering the education of children and young adults in our culture, we have come to believe that this "deep psychic shift" that Thomas Berry refers to is the central task of our time. To what extent does the schooling of children contribute to their view of the natural world as a commodity? How might we create a context within which children awaken to the wonder, beauty and intimacy of the natural world? What might be done to restore a sense of the natural world as a sacred presence in the lives of children? These are the questions that have concerned us.

In response to these questions, the Center initiated a two-year program in the Autumn of 2006 entitled "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice," designed to prepare educators to develop capacities to nurture the deep inner faculties of imagination and intuition in children and young adults, and to create contexts within which children and young adults are given the opportunity to develop a bond of intimacy with the natural world.

Each year, the Center accepts a new class of twenty educators into "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice" program. The group is comprised of teachers, parents, child psychologists, guidance counselors, religious educators, child care providers, naturalists, college professors, and others who are entrusted with the care of children or young adults and who indicate a deep interest in developing capacities for nurturing a relationship between the inner life of the child/young adult and the natural world.

Designed as a co-research among participants, the program unfolds over the course of two years. During the first year, participants come together for Saturday retreats in the Fall, Winter and Spring, as well as a two-day retreat in the summer. In the second year, participants develop a practice in consultation with Center staff and reunite for a retreat in the Summer during which practices are shared. The program is intended to be a meaningful sequence of experiences that build one upon the other. Therefore, we request that participants make a commitment to attend every session and complete readings and assignments prior to each retreat.

In the first year, we focus on "Presence" - the development of inner capacities, both in ourselves and in children and young adults that enable us to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world. In the second year, we focus on "Practice" – the development of new ways of working in the world.

At the Center, we try to create a meaningful context for our programs by paying close attention to the rhythm of the day. Retreats begin with a moment of silence intended to quiet the mind and create a field of receptivity for the group. Every retreat includes solo time in the natural world, time for reflection and sharing, the fellowship of shared meals at lunch, and presentations related to the theme at hand.

Applications can be downloaded at www.beholdnature.org or requested by contacting Peggy Whalen-Levitt at the Center at beholdnature@aol.com or (336) 449-0612.

[1] Thomas Berry, Foreword, *When Trees Say Nothing* by Thomas Merton, edited by Kathleen Diegnan, Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003, pp. 18-19.

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World

A Brief History

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World was established as a non-profit organization in March 2000 in a public/private partnership with Timberlake Farm, a 165 acre earth sanctuary located in the foothills of North Carolina. The earth sanctuary was placed in a conservation easement with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina in 2001.

During the 2000-2001 academic year, the Center invited a group of educators to participate in a series of retreats with ecotheologian Thomas Berry (*The Dream of the Earth*) and writer/educator Richard Lewis (*Living by Wonder*) entitled "The Biological Imperative: Nature, Education and Imagination." These retreats marked the beginning of our work with educators in which we considered the question "Can we establish a new form of dialogue between ourselves and the extraordinary phenomena that make up our living universe?"

From 2002-2006, the Center offered a yearlong intensive program for educators entitled "The Seventh Generation Teachers' Program." Through a series of three retreats, teachers shared their own ecostories, kept a nature journal, and transferred new ways of listening and responding to the natural world to their practice as teachers. Seventy-nine teachers participated in this program during its first four years.

During the Fall of 2006, our work with educators took the form of a new two-year program, "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice," funded by a grant from the Compton Foundation. Now in its third year, this co-research program continues with the support of the Kalliopeia Foundation and attracts educators from all over the country.

The Center's Programs for children and young adults have served over 6,500 young people from more than 50 public and private schools in the foothills of North Carolina since the Center's inception in the Fall of 2000. The Center's approach to working "small and deep" with children and young adults is realized in our present offerings including "Awakening to Nature," "The Poetry of Nature," "Native American Journeys," "Children of the Forest," and our one-week nature camps in the summer.

In the Fall of 2004, the Center initiated Special Design programs for schools and groups. Through programs tailored to the needs of a particular learning community, the Center has created a wide range of Special Design Programs for schools, churches, and universities that bring children, young adults and educators into a deep personal connection to the natural world. These programs offer many possibilities for educators to partner with the Center in creating a compassionate human presence to the Earth.

The Center publishes a biannual newsletter, *Chrysalis*, which reaches an international audience. Published since the Fall of 2004, *Chrysalis* is a forum where thoughts on the relationship between the inner life of the child and the natural world are exchanged, as well as a vehicle for making Center programs visible to the general public.

Now in its tenth year of existence, the Center was invited to make a presentation about its "Inner Life of the Child in Nature" program at the Child/Spirit Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee on November 8, 2007. In recognition of its distinguished service in carrying forward the work of Thomas Berry, the Center was awarded the Thomas Berry Award by the Greensboro Public Library on November 10, 2007.

The Center's work is now reaching wider audiences through publications and television. An article about the Center's work with children, "Ten Caterpillars Yawning," appeared in *Earthlight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age*, edited by Cindy Spring and Anthony Manousos in 2007. In the summer of 2008, the Center was featured in a North Carolina Public Television segment of Simple Living on the child's relationship with the natural world that included interviews with Thomas Berry, Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, and Joseph Cornell, author of *Sharing Nature with Children, Journey to the Heart of Nature,* and *Listening to Nature*. The Center's work will soon be featured in the forthcoming book, *For the Love of Nature: 101 Solutions for the Restoration of Biodiversity,* by Briony Penn and Robin J. Hood with Guy Dauncy.

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm

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www.beholdnature.org

Mission Statement

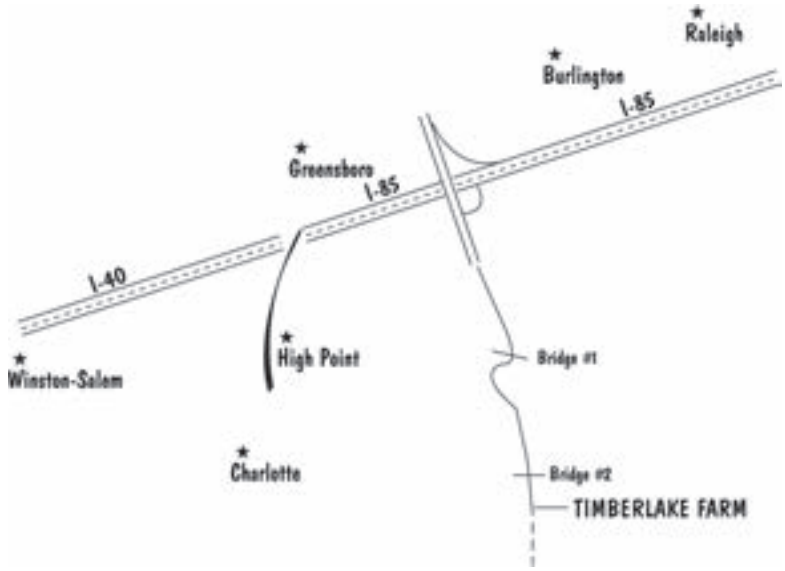
The mission of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is to bring to life a new vision of the relationship between the inner life of the child and the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the universe.

Presently, the natural world is viewed as a commodity to be used rather than as a sacred reality to be venerated. A shift in our way of relating to the natural world is essential if we hope to participate in nature's unfolding rather than in its demise. This shift is nowhere more crucial than within the field of education where the child's way of relating to the natural world is formed.

Located within the beauty of a 165 acre earth sanctuary, the Center's way of working is threefold: First, the Center offers a setting within which national presenters explore the relationship between the inner life of the child and nature from diverse perspectives. Second, the Center provides a context for teachers to deepen their own personal connection to the natural world and to be co-creators of ways to bring nature awareness to all paths of teaching. Third, the Center designs programs for children, young adults and college students which call upon their inner faculties of imagination and intuition and enable them to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world.

FROM WINSTON-SALEM/ GREENSBORO
Take I-40 East to I-85; continue about 13 miles beyond Greensboro towards Burlington. Exit at Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). You will go under the overpass and loop around. Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.

FROM RALEIGH/DURHAM/ CHAPEL HILL
Take I-85 South towards Greensboro. Continue on I-85 about 10 miles past Burlington. Exit on Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.



The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is a non-profit organization that champions inclusiveness and actively discourages discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other factors that deny the essential humanity of all people. Furthermore, the Center encourages a love and respect for the diversity of the natural world.

Center for Education, Imagination and The Natural World
at Timberlake Farm
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Whitsett, North Carolina 27377

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