

DEOF WRMC post conference report submitted by Ryan Haggarty, Outdoor Ed, Sports Med, Global Encounters, PE Teacher, MacDougall High School, George MacDougall High School, 412 3rd Ave Airdrie AB T4B 1R7 , Feb. 1 2018

Thank you for the grant to attend the NOLS wilderness risk management conference. I have included the post trip report below. I am very appreciative of the grant and found the conference to be very rewarding, I definitely gained a lot of knowledge, and found it to be extremely impactful professional development.

The usefulness of the WRMC and how its teachings have been transferred to students and the number of students impacted

Impact

The NOLS Wilderness Risk Management Conference was three days of intensive learning. The WRMC environment created thought provoking group discussions which helped me to generate ideas that I can introduce to my classrooms.

I attended 10 sessions and each were packed with ideas and concepts I can utilize in my classroom. For my follow up, there were several themes that resonated with me that I would like to discuss. I felt these could be implemented in my teaching.

There is a need and desire for students to be introduced to real-life hands-on learning experiences. As a society we are seeing a decrease in students' ability to safely take part in outdoor activities and international travel. A few of the reasons are:

- students are less fit,
- students are highly addicted to the cell phones and video games,
- there is decrease in parental tolerance of risk,
- parents and students lack an understanding between real risk and perceived risk,
- students are too willing to take large risks to get the "selfie shot",
- lack of skilled trip leaders
- current economic climate.

Alberta Education's High School redesign is centered around exposing students to more real life hands on experiences.

I currently teach Outdoor Education (180 students, 3 teachers), Sports Medicine (60 students), Global Encounters (21 students), and Physical Education (400 students 5 teachers). These classes are geared towards introducing students to real life learning experiences. With any activity we always keep safety at the utmost importance. To help with this we follow the school division safety protocols and procedures.

Since being back from Portland I have adapted an Adventure and Ecotourism module based on information that I learnt. My Outdoor Ed class started looking at:

- what motivates students to take part in an activity,
- what should motivate a trip leader to run a program for students
- the RVS field trip manual. This allowed me to discuss what activities are allowed and get into the "why" some activities wouldn't be allowed,
- RVS field trip forms
- students plan a trip.

To introduce the outdoor education class to the leadership role, they were responsible to plan an outdoor learning day for a grade 2 class. The Outdoor Ed students were broken into smaller groups to be leaders. They were responsible for 4-8 grade 2 students (an adult with every

group). This took place out at Big Hill Springs and Glenbow Ranch. Activities that the students lead were:

- Scavenger hunt using a UTM grid map
- Animal game, looking at the food chain
- Hiking
- Wildlife drawing
- First Nations stories in a tipi
- Outdoor cooking of hot dogs on MSR stoves

Before the students went, they had to go over a risk assessment of the site. This required them to look over pictures of the area and identify hazards (small ridge, and shallow, very slow-moving stream, skiff of snow). They had to make up safety plans, pack equipment to rope off areas, and reinforce acceptable behavior.

The Sports Medicine class was responsible to plan two periods that would safely introduce the grade 2 class to physical literacy testing. After they had analyzed the data, they needed to plan a lesson on how they can improve the grade 2's skills. Discussions focussed on the acceptability level of their plans for an 8-year-old.

The concept of *student independent learning* was an area that I see provides great potential to continue to use with my programs and expand on. My biggest take away was looking at how to increase student independence, while having them under teacher supervision.

In order to be able to make students more independent there is the balance between teaching them the skills and letting them practice these skills in an environment where they can safely fail.

Aquabatics is the trip provider that helps facilitate Global Encounters. Since returning we have had conversations for Australia on where we can safely increase student independence.

Some of the areas that I feel we already do a really good job at student independence are

- stepping back and letting them create a meal plan
- letting the students take the lead on grocery shopping, the
- food preparation, and cooking on a nightly basis,
- putting students in a leadership role where they have to navigate for the group in locations like cities, trains, airports, and hiking trails

The big message during the WRMC was to make scenarios as realistic as possible, and to use an environment where students can safely fail. As part of the BP grant all my students will be taking part in a variety of outdoor activities. The group will have the

- opportunity to go hiking, overnight camping, going into tunnels (Atlas coal mine), dealing with being outdoors, reading maps and so forth.
- We are going to ask the fire department to come out and spray water into the air. We have gotten a lot of rain over the years during trips to New Zealand and Australia. Setting tents up in rain storms is very difficult and could lead to a situation where important gear gets wet. I hadn't figured out how to practice this until I was having a conversation during the conference.

To make an culture shift at the school I have helped to plan and implement a school wide hiking program as well as discovery days. During the hiking day we took 400 of the 650-student population hiking. We split the students up by grade and each student went out one day each over a week period.

By examining ideas that I have gotten from organizing the event, receiving feedback from students and teacher, and attending the WRMC I have been thinking of ways to improve it. The biggest obstacle we found was the lack of skilled leadership. Teachers are very good at organizing students in a classroom, but being outside took a lot of teachers outside of their comfort zone. The fitness level of some of the leaders was another challenge we needed to examine. To overcome these challenges we were able to partner up non experienced staff member with skilled staff members. This meant that several skilled staff members got to take part every day.

Looking back from the WRMC I would like to offer the Outdoor Council of Canada trip leader course to staff members that are interested. This will increase their skill level along with their confidence, and make sure we have a common vision on to the objectives of the activity.

We are conducting Discovery days in the second semester, which is an extension of the hiking days. The difference is we will be using more third-party providers. Before we run Discovery days, I will be holding a professional development session that covers risk management, field trip forms, and objectives.

The last topic I am going to implement is around checklist. I found it fascinating on how a simple checklist with pause points increased survival rates in surgery by over 40%. We already use checklist for simple thing like equipment needed for an outdoor trip.

I feel that creating one for staff that has the list of equipment needed, how often to stop and take a rest, asking about hot spots would be beneficial for hiking days, and discovery days. All my classes will be creating checklist for different scenarios.

Sports medicine class could create an action plan in an emergency situation.

As you have seen the WRMC will have an impact on an entire school and community. I will be teaching the students that I directly teach about risk management in all my courses, the teachers will be learning and gain confidence about taking students safely outdoors.

This will lead to students and teachers taking their families, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, kayaking, camping etc. I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this event.

Sessions

Here is the list of sessions that I attended. I gained knowledge during each presentation and will be able to take something back to the school.

- How to train high school teachers to safely lead international trips
- Training your staff to provide opportunities for participant independence
- The checklist manifesto and beyond for outdoor programs
- Blindspots: Near miss trauma
- Leading beyond invincibility, group-think, stupidity, and other catastrophic attitudes
- Training simulations: principles for effective learning
- Creating a culture of practice
- Coast Guard rescue simulation
- Training to failure and other unlikely and highly effective training strategies

- Keynote speaker; Emotional Risk: Inclusion and belonging in the wilderness experience