# The Nature of Transformation

## Environmental Adult Education

Darlene E. Clover, Bruno de O. Jayme,
Budd L. Hall and Shirley Follen

# The Nature of Transformation: Environmental Adult Education

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# The Nature of Transformation

*Environmental Adult Education*

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*Printed on acid-free paper*

# DEDICATION

Shirley Follen died in February 2012. She was just 83 years old. We have kept Shirley as a co-author of this book because without her humour, courage to take risks, dedication to adult education, sense of awe at the natural world, love of a good pub, indefatigable creativity, and zest for life and learning, there would be no theory and practice of environmental adult education; there would be no *Nature of Transformation*. Shirley was Darlene's treasured colleague and confidant, her inspiration, her trusted critic, her most beloved friend. Shirley brought pure joy to our lives.

Darlene E. Clover, Budd L. Hall and Bruno de O. Jayme

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# INTRODUCTION

Although environmental problems began with industrialisation, over time they have increased to an alarming degree. Indeed, eavesdropping on the conversations that swirled around the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20, 2012) suggests major environmental challenges persist. Social media messages were for the most part lamentations of the deep geographical (West versus the rest) and ideological divisions hampering the search for global environmental solutions. Despite efforts by hundreds of organisations worldwide such as the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), major political/policy commitments by politicians to change the destructive ecological course were weak at best. We are therefore highly conscious of the power of neoliberalism and global capitalism as the might-makes-right countries interfere with those with little power but much needed natural resources; enforced consumerism is extolled as nationalism - things are to be consumed, burned, used, replaced and discarded at a constantly accelerating pace to ensure economic prosperity above all else; a propagandist discourse of 'ethical oil' fills the airwaves worldwide as we lurch from one devastating spill to the next; environmental justice is shouted from the treetops but ignored at board room tables; and women, often the poorest of the poor who work harder to care for the children poisoned by polluted water, remain just so much collateral damage in the pursuit of profit-at-any-cost.

But while all is not well, neither is it lost. The world has advanced in terms of ecological consciousness and change since 1972 when the United Nations held the first conference on the environment in Sweden. Examples of change worldwide abound. Much electricity in Denmark comes from wind power; paper and plastic recycling programmes proliferate. Many European countries have green parties as part of coalition governments and Indigenous peoples in countries such as Canada have used United Nations declarations on cultural rights to save their lands from destruction (Clover, 2012). There are other examples of environmental activism soaring or daring to new and creative heights. For example, the late Wangari Matthai, the "visionary adult educator" of The Greenbelt Movement in Africa was beaten and jailed in 1990s for her activism but awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 (Kushner, 2009, p. 195).

Both the positive and the negative, however, demand that education, learning, advocacy and activism be maintained and strengthened. *The Nature of Transformation: Environmental Adult Education* is our contribution, as adult educators in the community and/or the academy, to helping people to learn, create and re-create the world they want, to address contemporary socio-environmental crisis and to encourage

hope and a stronger sense of political agency through an ecological approach to teaching, and learning. The *Nature of Transformation* is first and foremost a practice-based book for adult educators, trainers, literacy and health care practitioners, activists, community artists and animators, labour educators, teachers, and professors interested in weaving environmental issues in to their adult education practice in community, workplace or institutional settings. We provide a variety of activities, stories and resources that illustrate how to critically and creatively integrate the rest of nature, concepts of ecological justice and citizenship, environmental consciousness and activism, in to teaching and learning. This book is also for environmental activists who wish to strengthen the adult and public education components of their work. The activities and stories encourage dialogue and critical questioning, tap into people's understandings and use their own knowledge and experiences as the basis for discussion and activism, uncover power relations illustrate how to facilitate learning through community settings and/or to incorporate creative, arts-based practices.

With its emphasis on acknowledging and confronting ecological oppression, working towards justice, ensuring hope and fun are key to the learning process, encouraging critical thinking, defiance and creativity, challenging assumptions, and helping people to find their own solutions and forms of activism, environmental adult education is and can remain a valuable player in any pedagogical quest for socio-ecological change.

## KNOWING WHERE WE STAND; STANDING WHERE WE KNOW

*The Nature of transformation* has three underlying premises. The first is that environmental problems are political and therefore, our emphasis as adult educators, trainers, practitioners, professors, activists, community-based artists, animators or activists must be political. We acknowledge that a single person's activities such as shutting off the tap water while brushing one's teeth or living in a 1000 year old tree to prevent its destruction can have a positive environmental impact (Walters, 2009). There are numerous individualised 'how-to' books on the market with important suggestions for lifestyle / individual behavioural change. However, limiting educational and activist work to a focus on the individual – behavioural modification – ignores the politics of issues such as consumption, food insecurity, environmental racism and the need for collective, systemic change. This omission leaves governments and corporations free to carry out their socio-environmentally problematic activities unencumbered by the critique or challenge of a politicised, engaged, and questioning citizenry. Although it is argued that corporations rule the world – and so it would very much appear - they could not have reached this pinnacle of success without the political/policy support of national governments. Indeed, governments are 'not' powerless pawns standing on the sidelines wringing their hands and wondering how corporations managed to become so large and all consuming, both literally and figuratively. Governments in fact paved the

way through policy change. We also believe that environmental problems are political because we have learned through our work over the past 15 years with communities worldwide that all too often, small individual behaviour changes can be easily undermined by one simple political decision such as a municipal government choosing to dump bottles and cans in to landfill to save money rather than transporting them to a recycling depot. This does indeed happen although the government does neglect to mention it to the general public, which is why you may not know but the sanitation truck driver does if you simply ask (see Chapter Five). So while individuals are important, the collective, through social action, is the more powerful position to take.

Central to many of the activities and stories in *The Nature of Transformation* – whether from Canada or abroad - is the idea that the development of and the solution(s) to today's most complex and pressing environmental problems ultimately lies in the political realm, in the decisions and steps our politicians take or do not take. And it is the collective voices of citizens that influence them most, even in countries like China (see Chapter Six: *Warriors of Qiugang* film). Given this, as adult educators, practitioners, professors, activists, animators and/or teachers, we must use educational strategies to embolden adults (and youth) to creatively, critically and unapologetically challenge this political realm. This does not mean turning everyone in to a full-fledged activist (although that would be terrific), but it does mean encouraging a politicised consciousness or to borrow from Wyman (2004), a 'defiant imagination' that believes in people's and one's own ability to make or bring about socio-environmental change.

The second and linked premise behind this book is that collective learning and action is more powerful in terms of socio-environmental change than individual learning and action. One person can learn about environmental problems and take a stand and this will have an impact (see Walters, 2009). But a group of people taking a stand is what moves mountains, as the story of *A Show of Hands* in Chapter Five illustrates, and encourages an even more, as noted previously, politically active citizenry. As adult educators we must work to enhance people's collective potential to learn, to query, to make change and to help them to more fully realise their capacities as ecological citizens. What people require are opportunities to reflect collectively and critically upon the root causes of environmental problems, and not simply to respond individually to what often appears on the surface. They need to learn together to see and then to challenge, for example, the systemic practice of environmental racism. In other words, they need to learn to think and struggle together to develop the abilities, skills, and confidence to move different agendas forward. Having said this we are cognisant that communities take action only to be thwarted by corporations or governments. We also know that communities are not homogenous, and that real internal struggles based on class, race, gender and so forth exist. Although we use the term 'community', after 20 years of working in 'community' we are/were never oblivious to these power relations as well as other challenges knowledge that underlies all the activities in this book. But there are also real instances where people

work together, there is change; where collective learning for action has worked and we provide some stories of these triumphs in Chapter Five.

The third premise behind *The Nature of Transformation* is that sharing information, statistics and scientific data by experts is an important way for adults to learn. The environment as a system is complex; problems can be understood and possibly corrected through science. There is much to learn and to know in terms of environmental problems. However, although science matters, not everything is a matter of science. Moreover, counter statistics and data do not often win what are in fact ideological battles. Moreover, the expert-driven scientific can be disempowering and fatiguing. In other words, it can problematically promote the belief that community members have no knowledge to offer and therefore, will not be able to address environmental problems without the proper 'facts'. But communities will never truly be able to match the 'facts game' played by governments, corporations and even some scientists who simply find more data and/or move the goal posts of what can be known. As we said, environmental problems are political and ideological more than anything else. The story of *The Positive Energy Quilts* in Chapter Five acknowledges this and shows how a community matched wits, and won, through quilts – yes, quilts! Our aim with this book is to illustrate educational processes which are engaging and creative and not simply didactic and/or expert or facts-driven. Indeed, we turn the notion of environmental 'expert' on its head, respecting and working with the knowledge of so-called ordinary citizens who always know far more than they may at first believe about the issues affecting their lives and even, the planet and certainly more than many experts give them credit for. For us, vital to developing an engaged, active and politicised citizenry are educational processes and practices that encourage adults to draw from their own knowledge and experiences, engage in critical and open dialogue, challenge one another's assumptions (including those of the facilitator), laugh, have fun and be creative together, as well as continually strategising and developing new educational methods and approaches.

## PROCESS, CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

When we began our work on and around the environment in the early 1990s, no practice or theory of environmental adult education existed. This meant, to borrow from Spanish poet Antonio Machado, we had to make the ecological educational road by walking. This book in many ways shares that journey by passing along our understandings, beliefs, triumphs, creativity as well as some of our blunders and mistakes.

We developed the theory and practice of environmental adult education through workshops in all corners of the world. The activities we created for the workshops are included in Chapter Four and some of Chapter Five, although this latter focuses much more on the work of other adult educators. For almost every workshop we worked with a local organising group to develop the agenda. The organisers supplied the overall purpose, the venue, the length of time we would have for the workshop (anywhere

from two hours to two days), introduced us to the context and explained whom the participants would or could be (they did not always know exactly who would attend). Using this information we developed a series of inter-weaving activities, that aimed to match the context and reach the groups' intended goals. Sometimes the goal was to help the group begin to address an issue, at other times it was to train community animators or adult educators. Sometimes it was simply us (e.g. Shirley and Darlene) as the educators and sometimes we co-facilitated with indigenous adult educators, community activists and/or teacher-educators. Moreover, the workshop settings were varied; the participants equally diverse. In Sudbury, Ontario the workshop was held in a community centre and included an inter-generational and multi-sectored group of youth, local politicians, teachers and community activists. In Thailand we facilitated the workshop on a beach, using ourselves, our bodies, as flip-chart stands. In Trenton, Ontario we worked with a group of university educated women whilst in Metchosin, British Columbia, the international college classroom overlooked the Pacific Ocean and participants came from around the world. We always created at least one new activity for every workshop just to exercise our imaginations. We also often re-used an activity created for one group such as those for the retired university women in Canada for the University of the Third Age participants in an elder care facility in Darwin, Australia. At other times we created a variation on an activity, many of which are illustrated in Chapter Four.

All the activities in this book have been tried and proven to be effective and powerful processes of socio-environmental education and learning and they will work for you. At first glance, some of the activities may seem rather naïve. But with adults nothing is ever as simple as it seems. A question such as 'where are your from' is a potentially loaded question so tread carefully and critically. Further, although the activities can be followed quite closely, this is not a 'how-to' book in the traditional sense. In other words, we have intentionally left the descriptions of the activities quite open. We do provide concrete ideas on what materials or resources to have on hand, the timing, or examples of questions that promote deeper reflection on an issue. But you must keep in mind your own context, the venue, who the participants are, and adapt the activities accordingly. In other words be creative, take a risk, respond to the needs or concerns of your own situation, fall down and get back up and always, trust the process and the people with whom you are working. Moreover, keep theory in mind as it truly enables discussions to go beyond the surface. It is where the politics of the politics of the environment lies.

CONTENT OF THIS BOOK

Theory is an epistemological technology that, more than anything else in a community workshop or classroom, allows for deeper critical understandings of the fluid and troublesome realities of environmental problems. It is theory that helps to move the problem being ascribed to individuals and their problematic behaviour to a, more critical and therefore useful, socio-political understanding of forces

or circumstances. Chapter Two contains a sketch of some of the key educational theories that framed our work as environmental adult educators. These include adult education, gender difference discourse and feminist adult education, arts-based adult education, outdoor-experiential learning, and anti-racist adult education. Although we have not included any specific reference to postmodernism in this chapter, the ways in which we problematised power and victimisation in our work in fact drew from that discourse. We conclude this chapter with a discussion and outline of environmental adult education, an amalgam of methods, theoretical perspectives, discursive protocols and epistemological assumptions that also has its own essence.

Chapter Three provides insights on ecological teaching and learning drawn from our many years of experience of designing and facilitating environmental adult education activities and workshops for communities and/or in institutional settings worldwide. We stress the importance of planning, passion, humour and making things challenging. Woven in to the fabric of all of this is what we see as some of the essential elements required to be a successful community facilitator including first and foremost, respect for people's knowledge. We also stress the vale of tapping into the human aesthetic dimension, people's inherent creative, imaginative and artistic abilities.

Chapter Four is theory and reflection in action: praxis. This chapter includes a plethora of environmental adult education activities, including variations on activities we used with youth and adults from Belleville to Beijing. Some of these were modified from existing activities we found in books but the vast majority came from our own imaginations and the stimulus of working with very bright and creative people around the world. Particular attention is paid, not surprisingly given what we have been talking about up to now, to using the rest of nature as a teacher and site of learning, including theory, using the arts and the human aesthetic dimension and working towards ecological justice and collective solutions.

Chapter Five showcases environmental adult education activities from across Canada and around the world. Woven together are activities and stories of creative, group educative practices. We include these because they expand understandings of the context, challenges and potential of linking ecological learning and education to activism but also because they represent 'hopeful possibilities' in what can often feel like a socio-environmental malaise.

Chapter Six shares some further reflections, challenges we faced facilitating environmental adult education workshops in communities and institutions around the globe since 1992 and some of the key lessons we have learned. Amongst other things, we discuss the importance of taking risks, getting it wrong, and learning from those mistakes.

The final chapter provides a list of the references cited throughout this book as well as further resources on the educational theories and methods highlighted in Chapter Two. We have categorised the references under the theories we outlined in Chapter Two.

## A FEW MORE THINGS

Throughout this book we use the term 'the rest of nature'. We argue that if humans are part of nature, then to use language that separates humans from nature makes little sense. Others use the non-human world but that feels like a negative. Therefore, although cumbersome, 'the rest of nature' is what we feel best makes the connection.

You may believe you know who is concerned about the environment in society and who is not. For example, a group of homeless/street-involved women would probably fall in to the latter category. Think again. You may also think minority groups have too many other concerns to care out the environment. Think again (Tan, 2005). Working class people don't really care about environment problems; they just want good jobs, correct? Not so. Never underestimate the concern people from all walks of life have for the environment. They may express their concerns differently and they may even fall in to a different place on their agenda of their apprehensions, but you do neither them, nor yourself, any favours by assuming you know who wants to work for environmental change and who does not. Stereotyping is ugly at best and useless at worst.

As we write this introduction we remember the many wonderful moments: a vociferous 'Aha!' in a workshop; uncontrolled peals of laughter at the antics of a popular theatre skit; the excitement of the back and forth as we prepared agendas in collaboration with a community group; a robust walk through a tropical forest; dangling our feet off the dock into the water of a beautiful Ontario lake while sipping a glass of wine after an invigorating workshop. We also remember the bits that were difficult, challenging, indeed, panicking. Would people actually engage in the activity? Sometimes they refused. Would the luggage containing all the workshop supplies arrive? Not always. Were the activities too childish or easy for adults or university students? Yes, sometimes but we have omitted those from this book. Would a participant or facilitator get arrested for carrying out our activities in Toys R Us? No arrests but some were thrown out of the store once and that made it an even more invaluable learning opportunity vis-à-vis power (we return to this later in this book). Would a major blackout render our electricity dependent activities useless? Never count on technology. Flip–chart paper and coloured markers work the best. In other words, the good, the bad, the difficult, the humorous actually did occur and on more than one occasion and sometimes, simultaneously. What we know now looking back, and can pass on to you both literally and metaphorically, is that learning happens from the undulations of the ups and downs. And we would not have changed anything for the world.

## WHO WE ARE

Darlene E. Clover was the International Coordinator of the Learning for Environmental Action Progamme (LEAP) of the International Council for Adult Education from 1994 to 2000. She was Co-organiser of the environmental education event at the

1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro and is the world's leading scholar in the theory and practice of environmental adult education. Darlene is currently a professor of community leadership and adult education at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Her current teaching and research foci are arts-based adult education and research, feminist adult education, environmental adult education and activism, and higher education (See Chapter Six for references to her work).

Shirley Follen, who died in February 2012, was an indefatigably committed community activist and adult educator. Shirley taught at a college in Belleville, Ontario for over 25 years and founded an afterschool programme entitled *Bridging the Gap* for underprivileged children. She was the North American representative of the Learning for Environmental Action Programme (LEAP) and the Coordinator of the 'Growing Jobs for Living' educational project in Belleville from 1994–2000. Shirley was a poet.

Budd Hall was Secretary-General of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) for over 20 years. He is one of the world's best-known scholars in adult education, participatory research and more recently, social movement learning. Budd's most recent book on this latter subject was published by Sense in 2012 (see Chapter Six). Budd is currently the UNESCO Chair for Community Based Research and the Social Responsibility in Higher Education at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Like Shirley, Budd is a poet.

Bruno de O. Jayme is an educator and community artist interested in non–formal education and learning and social movements. He is currently living in Victoria and working towards his PhD at the University of Victoria, BC. Bruno uses arts-based methodologies – in particular video and puppetry - and popular education with youth and adults in Victoria and members of recycling cooperatives in São Paulo, Brazil to help them to challenge inequitable power dynamics.

# THE SEEDS: EDUCATION THEORIES AND PRINCIPLES FROM WHICH WE WORK

Individuals and communities can and do come to develop critical and more creative understandings of their situations, just as they can and do come to develop critical and creative strategies for change. But praxis doesn't automatically occur spontaneously. Nor do new generations of activists necessarily acquire the theoretical tools that they need in order to make sense of their rapidly changing worlds, providing them with the theoretical basis for developing strategies that effectively demonstrate that another world is possible.

> Marjorie Mayo, *Learning and education for a better world: The role of social movements, 2012*

Over the past four decades, the nature of adult education has changed and shifted as new ideas and purposes grafted themselves on to existing theories and practices. Addressing contemporary environmental problems is one of those new ideas and purposes. For adult educators committed to the transformative and political purpose of learning, environmental injustices and degradation simply cannot be ignored. The collective production and distribution of socio-environmental knowledge as well as new forms of ecological civic engagement are crucial to the survival of this planet. Educating within a socio-environmental framework contributes to the creation of a more just, healthy and sustainable world by focusing on both the systems world and the life world of this beautiful, robust yet suffering planet. Adult education therefore must now include not only the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres but also ecological discourses and spheres.

This chapter provides a brief sketch of key educational theories that have guided and continue to guide our educational practice in the community and/or the university. We focus on theory because we believe it truly does matter to learning and change. We included in each workshop a discussion, in one way or another, on theory. We did encounter people who were frustrated with this activity, who voiced a concern that theory was inaccessible to many and therefore, elitist and/or irrelevant. Participants sometimes felt we should just move on to what we knew intuitively, to subjective ways of knowing and experiences, and get on with the workshop or the environmental action. But think as Thompson (1997) suggests of a politician who simply wants to roll up his sleeves and do something without thinking through the longer-term impact or consequences of his or her actions. We never just think intuitively and diving in to an action is often a means to deny the existence of the

grand narrative or ideology that is behind an action. Therefore, like poet Adrienne Rich, we believe theory is the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees. It is the dew that rises from the Earth to collect in the rain cloud and return to Earth over and over. Theory provides a framework to explain and analyse diverse aspects of the world and their relationship to one another. Adult education theories provide critical analytical lenses to ensure deeper reflection and understanding. But theory must be useful in terms of building and shaping educational practice. It must be the connection between lives lived and deeds done.

The five theories in particular that form the foundations of environmental adult education include adult education (personal growth and social transformation), gender difference and feminist adult education, arts-based adult education, anti-racist education and outdoor experiential learning. Informed by or foundational to these adult education theories is Marxism, behaviourism, humanism, feminism, critical theory, aesthetic theory, colonial and post-colonial theory, theories of technical rationality, democracy and citizenship, anti-racist theory, postmodernism and structuralism and cultural theory/literacy, to name but a few. We do not discuss these social theories but suggest you do further reading in these areas.

You may not always see these theories explicitly referred to, although often we do, in all of the activities in the following chapters, but you will feel their presence through probing questions or a poetic report-back activity. For further reading on adult learning theories, we suggest you follow-up with the references in Chapter Five.

## ADULT EDUCATION

A critical adult education practice for contemporary times must re-integrate the learning and teaching of practical skills and knowledge that people need for daily living with the stimulation of questions and public debate about the future of society and the possible designs of individual and social life.

T. Jansen

There is often confusion about the definition of adult education and for good reason. The term can refer to adult basic education where adults return to secondary school to obtain a degree. It can describe collectively the work of agencies and organisations to deliver leisure learning courses, art-making workshops, adult literacy classes, job and computer skills upgrading or English as a second language for adults. Adult education can also specify an area of academic study. The term can also refer to workshops or learning circles – intentional collective practices - held in community centres, church basements or other informal sites to explore concepts such as healthy communities, address issues of violence against women or train activists how to work with the media or engage in peaceful, non-resistance tactics. Adult education can also be categorised in to three areas: formal adult education (degree courses in universities or colleges on adult education); non-formal adult education (workshops, learning circles, art-based activities); and informal adult

education (experiential or individual self-directed activities such as reading a manual or being mentored on the job).

There is similar breadth around the purposes of adult education. For some, it is for leisure – a course on Egyptology through continuing studies in a university or a talk about the paintings of Paul Gauguin in an art gallery. For governments adult education programmes need to focus on learning designed to meet the requirements of the global market. In other words, "the acquisition of new knowledge through education and learning is seen as key to the meal ticket of the nation: the economy" (Bouchard, 2005, p.165). For others, the purpose of adult education – and the emphasis of our book - is to learn and teach for a more just, equitable, equal, healthy and sustainable world.

For the sake of brevity and a baseline understanding of adult education principles and debates, we divide the field in to two paradigms, what we call liberal adult education and critical adult education.

*Liberal Adult Education*

There are essentially three fundamentals to the liberal tradition of adult education: psychology/behaviourism, the notion of the individual or self-directed learning and economic determinism. Within this tradition adult education is in essence a "psychological activity which does not require external pressure or encouragement to begin and which proceeds out of inner drives fuelled by interpersonal energy rather than out of external pressure fuelled by rewards and punishments" (Mackeracher, 1996, p.5). Within this discursive paradigm, attention is paid to the emotional and psychological well being of the adult in the learning environment. This is fostered by removing any alienating or inhibiting factors within the person, much like therapy (Wildemeersch, Finger & Jansen, 2000), designing safe and comfortable learning environments, and creating learner-centred practices (Mackeracher, 1996; Thomas, 1991). Learner-centred activities are tailored around the needs of the learner. Emphasis is placed on utilising their experiences and knowledge and confirming and acknowledging that experience. The role of the educator is to facilitate and guide the learning process (English & Mayo, 2012; Thomas, 1991). Further in the liberal tradition of adult education we find the concept of self-directed learning. According to Knowles (1975), this can be defined as:

> A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes (p.18).

Personal autonomy characterised as independence, free choice, will power and control over learning is essential to self-directed learning.

English and Mayo (2012) argue that the liberal tradition of adult education is now cloaked in a discourse of 'lifelong learning'. Favoured heavily by governments and

business, this discourse revolves around economic imperatives, that is, using training and education (and re-training and re-education) to ensure that adults obtain the skills and competencies required to make nations more competitive in the global market.

Other principles or practices in liberal paradigm include:

• Promoting self-esteem and confidence in the leaner
• Recognising and valuing the vast past experience and knowledge learners bring to the learning process
• Providing opportunities for active decision-making, and planning in the learning experience
• Creating the opportunity for learners to evaluate their own learning
• Helping learners to develop new competencies and skills
• Continually adapting and re-creating learning practices

### *Critical/Progressive Adult Education*

Liberal adult educators will undertake to improve unjust situations but avoid tackling the root cause of injustice. They emphasise the importance of 'life skills', which oppressed people are expected to take up to change their self-defeating behaviours.

Arnold, Burke, James, Martin and Thomas, 1991

Picking up on the last point above, while no one would argue that gaining skills and abilities is not important, many adult education scholars (e.g. Crowther & Sutherland, 2009; English & Mayo, 2012; Thompson, 2007) believe this emphasis is problematic because it neglects issues such as social class and difference, structural inequalities in society and even the classroom, power and social control. Moreover, the adoption of the discourse of lifelong learning by economic interests is often simply "a way of downloading responsibility for education to individuals and blaming them for failed economies and states" (English and Mayo, 2012, p.10).

Critical adult educators share a commitment to the more social purpose of adult education and its baseline values of justice, fairness, equity, equality, and collectiveness. Within this sociologically rather than psychologically driven paradigm, adult education and learning are viewed as instruments or tools for critical discovery, a means to challenge problematic normative values and assumptions, and a call to action and activism.

Essential strategies of a critical adult teaching practice include dialogue, critique and the study of power (English & Mayo, 2012). It is based upon trying to better understand "how ideological systems and societal structures hinder or impede the fullest development of humankind's collective potential" (Welton, 1995, p.14). To be more critical and therefore, socially valuable, adult education must take into account the structures and practices of exploration and more deeply explore the beliefs citizens have about themselves, their communities and their societies

in terms of how ideology, power structures and relations have shaped these. This also requires examining how institutions and systems have reproduced and continue to reproduce social inequities. As Paulo Freire (1970) argued so eloquently in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "education [is] a social action that [can] either empower or domesticate people" (p.10). In other words, adult education is not a neutral process.

In this more socially responsive, political practice of adult education, the role of the adult educator is to create learning settings where people reflect on their own as well as larger social, historical and cultural realties. By looking more deeply, or reinterpreting experience, underlying power structures and frameworks that we often take for granted or ignore begin to emerge and re-shape how not only the world is constructed and how it in turn constructs our understandings of the world. To probe deeply means to take risks, to see things beyond their surface level or value, to challenge the taken for grant. In the critical adult education tradition it is this risk rather than comfort that brings about the most important transformation; going beyond the known and the familiar that makes the world expand. In other words adult educators cannot simply create learning environments which are safe, comfortable and simply uncritically affirm or validate all learner experience. Moreover, the adult educator is not solely a guide or facilitator. Indeed, we need to return to an understanding of the value of the educational process, the socially/ politically intentional teaching process and the collective, rather than laissez-faire and individually focused practice of lifelong learning. Being challenged on our assumptions (including those of the adult educator), shifting paradigms and seeing things differently can be painful. But it is no less painful than experiences of sexism or racism. Learning environments must nurture and feel safe to advance problematic beliefs and assumptions, but they must also be intentional sites for challenge, rebuttal and making mistakes. The term 'intentional' means, as alluded to above, that the adult educator is teacher and a learner – critical adult learning and education are processes of co-learning, co-facilitating, and co-engagement. But the adult educator must take responsibility for the process and since learning comes about primarily through social interaction and is shaped by political, social, cultural and economic forces, what adults learn as well as what adult education is about are at the forefront of all activities. Activities that are transformative and challenging, however, can have enormous social consequences, and educators need to be prepared for these (Clover & Craig, 2010; Lopez & Thomas, 2006; Manicom & Walters, 2011).

Within all that we have said are questions of 'education' versus 'learning' and subjective knowledge, which we take up in Chapter three in terms of our work. But importantly, Freire insisted that educators must exhibit not a professional authority, but rather an authority of knowledge (Kilgore, 1999). Moreover, Horton added, "you start with people's experience, people get the point that you start and stop with that experience, but of course…there's a time when people's experience runs out" (cited in Kilgore, 1999, p.193).

At the core of critical or social transformation–oriented adult education is the notion of empowerment. Empowerment does not mean 'giving' power to someone

because if you can give power to someone, you have the power to take it back. Rather, empowerment through adult education is premised upon what Freire called 'conscientização' (consciousness): providing people with opportunities to explore, understand, challenge and ultimately, transcend the constraints placed upon them by particular ideologies, structures and cultural practices, which are both part and apart from the learner. Empowerment is the increased capacity of people to engage in meaningful interactions, decision–making, civic engagement and social action. People are transformed from audience or victim of life, to actors and agents of change in the shaping and re-shaping of their lives, communities, societies or the world. What this means is that within the critical or progressive tradition of adult education citizenship is a key focus although like many other terrains such as the concept of power (Foucault argues that power is never stable nor static), citizenship too is contested (English & Mayo, 2012).

Socially transformative critical adult education takes up social, cultural, historical, economic and political considerations as it continually questions the status quo, corporate capitalism and other threats to social democracy and equity. As it emphasises collective action and reflection in learning processes and community building, it asserts the necessity for rational dialogue, communication and debate (English & Mayo, 2012; Grace, 1998). Mezirow (2006) believes that a rational epistemology of adult learning holds the promise of saving adult education from becoming like religion, prejudice, and politics, the rationalisation of a vested interest to give it the appearance of cause" (pp. 29–30).

An important challenge to critical adult education is postmodernism. This framework problematises simplistic and exclusionary universalising discourses that hide more than they reveal. It also challenges limited, normative conceptulisations of identity, drawing attention to multiple identities and troubling the power dynamics within and around these. Going further, what both liberal adult education and the more critical paradigm often neglected, however, were women's situations and the issue of race. Moreover, a fixation on developing individual agency through job-related skills and capacities in the case of liberal adult education, and emphasising the rational mind and the cognitive dimension in the critical tradition neglected the aesthetic dimension and the powerful roles of creativity and the imagination in learning for change. As you would expect these omissions were not ignored by women in the field.

## GENDER DIFFERENCE AND FEMINIST ADULT EDUCATION

Discussion of feminism and adult education includes many complex factors and problems such as marginality, invisibility and representation.

Morish and Buchanan, 2001

English and Mayo (2012) argue that while "women and learning…refers to an interest in how women learn…feminists share concerns about facilitating women's learning

and they bring to it a more radical perspective in which learning is politicised and in which attention is given to who women are included and excluded form the learning area" (p.159). In other words, the discursive practice of feminist adult education emerged as a challenge to the exclusions and omissions of women in both society and adult education. Although women world-wide have contributed to culture and society and have even played an essential role in the development of adult education for personal and social change, women along with other marginalised individual have seen their experiences, their knowledge and their skills under-valued and/or totally ignored.

Feminist adult education is a pedagogical process for empowerment. It aims to deepen understandings of diverse experiences, social and cultural practices, social structures, ideologies and relationships. It both exercises and contest powers. Feminists "teach against, confront, resist, and subvert social, cultural, political, or ecological injustices, fostering multiple, on-the-ground responses in people to enable them to work towards more respectful, healthy, equitable and sustainable conditions" (Clover, 2011, p.193). As a practice, feminist adult education suggests a set of complementary goals and strategies, a sense of what Vaugeois (2009, p.2) calls "trying things out, of keeping open the possibility that goals will change." What makes it feminist is its accordance of women with subject status, a perspective that believes women bring experiences as subjects that by and large have all but been ignored in a majority of societies. Contextualised within the discursive pluralities of feminisms, masculinist social constructions, and gender fluidity, feminist adult education challenges multiple oppressions in its aim for empowerment, transformation, justice, and change. It aims to re-configure the lives of women in particular but also those in the margins and help them to work towards responding to and/or controlling those conditions. It us a valuable tool for understanding and enhancing adult education, by granting insight into how knowledge and power work both within the education process and society in general (Barr, 1999; Manicom & Walters, 2011).

Because feminist adult education has been so deeply influenced by feminist ideology, it is understand the key concepts that inform feminist ideology in order to obtain a solid understanding of feminist adult education. Having said this, it is important to point out that this and any definition of feminism and feminist adult education is subject to debate due to the fact that there are multiple feminisms and each individual perceives the meaning of feminism in a unique way (English, 2008). Although this inconsistency or lack of clarity might appear to be problematic, in fact it is considered by feminists to be the contrary. The rejection of canonical knowledge and recognition of the subjectivity of knowledge is considered to be one of feminisms greatest strengths (English, 2008; English & Irving, 2008).

Generally speaking, feminist ideology is one that centralises the subordination of women while critically analysing the production of knowledge, power imbalances, and oppression in society. Generally speaking, feminism seeks to empower individuals and groups that have historically lacked access to power, including but

not limited to women (Moss, 2006; Ackerley et al., 2006). Commonly feminism is a term that conjures up images of women fighting for equality against men and a masculine dominated society. Although the roots of feminism are grounded in this ideal of struggle for gender equality, the discourse of equality has limitations. Feminists, have therefore generally come to reject the notion of achieving 'equal' rights on men's terms in a socially constructed "man's" world – one of the challenges alluded to above to 'citizenship'. After all things can be equal but they not in fact be equitable (fair or just).

The concept of patriarchy is perhaps the most important element in feminist pedagogy as it offers an understanding and helps one to imagine how social hierarchies (specifically gender hierarchies), social domination, and power arrangements have been constructed to favour men in the classroom and the rest of society. Patriarchy as a theoretical concept serves as a tool to conceptualise how gender hierarchies are maintained by focusing on social systems and social arrangements created (in the past and present) that reinforce domination of subordinated groups (Connell, 1998; Hunnicutt 2009; Kronsell, 2006).

Gender influences the way people experience the world, interact with others, and the types of opportunities or privileges open. One of the most important elements of gender relations is how they solidify hierarchies and relationships of power in society through various means of oppression and privilege. This means that in the processes of producing knowledge we would expect those who are oppressed to have different roles in constructing and legitimating knowledge than those who are privileged (Cope, 2002).

Knowledge is a very central concept in both theory and practice for feminist adult educators. Feminist adult educators endeavour to view the production of knowledge and the valorisation of knowledge in a completely unique way. Firstly, feminists recognise that all individuals have identities, subjectivities and personal experiences, which shapes their perceptions of the world in ways unique to each individual (English, 2008; Ackerly et al, 2006; Moss, 2006). Feminist pedagogy recognises that all knowledge is subjective and socially created, rejecting notions of universal truths, and meta-narratives, recognising that each individual and group of individuals learns and understands ways of learning in completely different ways (English, 2008). An important component of the knowledge production process is the recognition that there are unanswerable questions and feeling comfortable asking such questions, which runs counter to science, which believes measurement to be the basis of a good scientific question (Moss, 2002). Feminist pedagogy also encourages women to use curiosity to ask challenging questions about what may seem like everyday banalities in order to render visible the unnoticeable in the learning process (English, 2008).

Feminist adult educators will be the first to admit that traditionally their approach to developing knowledge and the ways they viewed knowledge was too narrow, recognising the production of knowledge as predominantly an individual project (English, 2008). It is now common practice in adult education that a wider variety of marginalised groups and individuals contribute to making new meaning and have an

essential role in contributing to the process of knowing (D'Costa, 2006). For feminist adult education collaborative knowledge is an essential component to exploring and understanding the world, thus it recognises that knowledge is a collective process. This collective process explores how collective decisions should be made and how collective knowledge should be shaped (D'Costa 2006). Recognising knowledge as a product of collaborative efforts is an important in including the marginalised voice in the classroom.

Involving the voiceless or marginalised in the creation of knowledge is an important to both feminism and feminist pedagogical practice and is viewed to be critical in dismantling hierarchies and power asymmetries in society (English & Mayo, 2012; Trelstad, 2008). By continuously questioning what should be considered valid knowledge and who should be considered the holder of valid knowledge, feminist education has contributed to the rejection of the traditional hierarchal stance within the classroom, which subjectively decides who are valid contributors of knowledge, and what marginalised should be represented in the creation of knowledge. Focusing on how the marginalised voice has been validated or not validated in the classroom has served as a lens to view and challenge how education has traditionally served to protect the interests of the privileged.

Traditional locations and roles in society have meant women's experiences (although varied) and ways of knowing often differ quite dramatically from those of men. Their understandings, readings or explanations of issues or problems which come from a different place, set of assumption and ways of being in the world have proven to bring greater breadth, depth and scope to discussions vis-à-vis social problems, as we saw happen in our workshops. Thus, while recognising that the marginalised bring much to the table, we must also still recognise that even today in the 21st century, the fact remains that women still occupy subordinate roles in politics, companies, and even organisations.

Patriarchy still permeates society and pedagogical situations. Sit in any mixed university classroom or attend a political gathering and see who raises their hands most often or who heads for the microphone to voice their opinions. English and Mayo (2012) ask: "how often are women interrupted when they speak (quite often)? Do men control the conversation in a class" (or workshop) (p.166). Men worldwide still hold the most power and feel the most entitled and knowledgeable. They 'know' their ideas count, even when/if they are contested. They were the ones to speak first, longest and loudest in our workshops. This means that empowerment, giving voice to women and other marginalised groups, encouraging them to believe enough in themselves and their ideas to speak, must remain a central aspect of the work informed by a feminist lens. It means the emphasis in the educational process must be on building self-confidence, providing space for the marginalised voice to be heard on the one hand and the communicative skills and capacities to speak publicly and see oneself in collaboration for change. Yet focusing on those who have traditionally lacked voice, although this may seem some paradoxical, is also about attending to silences. Silence can be a form of active resistance. Refusal to speak up, take part or

to engage in a process that is clearly biased or weighted to a particular outcome is one example. Therefore, one needs to be sensitive to the context of silences and the power relations they reflect. Equally important, as in liberal adult education, is to create spaces and opportunities and identify educational media and processes with which women will be comfortable and which offer ways to express often submerged feelings and perceptions (Walters & Manicom, 1996, p.16).

## ARTS-BASED ADULT EDUCATION: THE CREATIVE TURN

> A defiant imagination… defies the constraints of expectation and the everyday… because the imagination – liberated by engagement in cultural expression – is necessary to the achievement of all we hope for as a society.

> Max Wyman, 2004

Imaginatively educate. Aesthetically elucidate. Visually illuminate. Creatively investigate. Theatrically explicate. Artistically animate. Performatively resonate. Feminist and critical adult educators have long called for more innovative pedagogical approaches that centre on the whole person and challenge, re-create or transform the world in which we live. The arts and creativity are often what they called, and Paulo Freire's firmly supported the arts and visual literacy in his community work. Although often dismissed as "frivolous, a mere frill, irrelevant to learning in the post-industrial world" (Greene, 1995, p.125) the past two decades has seen a marked growth in understanding and using the power and potential of the arts as tools of adult education and learning (e.g. Barndt, 2012; Clover & Stalker, 2007; Lawrence, 2005). But there is a complicated 'knowledge' and educational history to the arts. This history is broad and we do not pretend to have here an exhaustive summary. We simply highlight some of the most robust debates as they pertain to social change, knowledge, learning and education. You may follow up on the readings cited at your leisure.

### *The Arts, Society and Knowledge*

For centuries scholars have debated how aesthetic forms engage, undermine, elaborate on, counter or enhance 'the social, cultural, and political conditions of society' (McGregor, In Press). Plato was one of the first to articulate a consistent albeit relatively derogatory view of the arts in human life and society. To Plato the arts were 'falsehoods', flawed or inexact imitations of the world with the potential to corrupt by stimulating irrationality and irrigating immorality and associated inappropriate behaviours. This particular understanding derived from a bipartite notion where the rational or thinking element of humanity was seen as noble and aimed towards the greater social good whilst the irrational side – the emotional or 'appetive' – was highly susceptible to the corrupting forces, making a dangerous "impression on suggestible people" (Belifore & Bennett, 2010, p. 54) and becoming

their rulers. Threaded through these understandings were issues ranging from class and artistic interpretation. Whilst the highly educated classes were understood to have the skills necessary to assess any 'myths' portrayed in and through the arts, the 'susceptible minds' of the non-lettered classes were not. Seen to be lacking in any form of aesthetic judgement or life experience upon which to draw, the masses were unable to interpret artworks 'correctly', discern reality from engineered situations (such as in the theatre) and were thereby mislead into "believing things they had no grounds for believing" (Hospers, 1974, p. 156).

Following in Plato's footsteps, Aristotle took a somewhat different approach although one could argue his journey terminated at the same destination. Aristotle developed a hierarchy of different forms of knowledge, separating the 'useful and necessary' from the 'beautiful and purposeless'. This distinction, McGauley (2009) argues,

> divorces art… from any purpose other than reflective enjoyment. Because the material world is governed by competing social interests and is thus unstable, messy and unreliable, the pursuit of beauty and truth has to occur within the realm of pure thought. The highest truths are the Ideal, transcending the life of exploitation and poverty of the majority, and reserved for the 'higher' level of society, those whose minds are uncluttered by distractions like cold or hunger (p. 25).

These sentiments of superiority formed the ethos upon which many arts and cultural institutions were founded. Their mandate was to provide enjoyment, enrichment and knowledge and for the most part, they attracted solely the upper classes. As an enhanced social consciousness began to seep through these cracks of this elitism, however, efforts to encourage the intellectual improvement of the working classes were put into place, forcing the doors so to speak. For some greater access to arts and cultural institutions for the labouring classes and poor was seen as cultural democracy; for others it was simply a means to make them more valuable to the wealthy classes, augment their perceived lack of morality through contact with art, religious texts and literature, or to uplift the spirits of the poor, although many institutions maintained a steadfast and hearty distrust of this latter, believing them to be incapable of becoming civilised (Perry and Cunningham, 1999). And then of course there were women who were not yet 'persons' and of such delicate natures they needed to be confined "into separate ladies' rooms" in libraries (Lerner, 2009, p.133). Indeed, as Nochin (1993) argues, women were allowed in to galleries most of if they were naked or virgins. She was of course, speaking predominantly about the artworks themselves!

Scholars have of course been inspired to develop aesthetic conceptualisations to challenge these ingrained sentiments and practices of elitism, classism and sexism outlined above. Theorists such as Bourdieu (1993) described the artworks within these institutions as well as elitist social and institutional practices as 'high art', meaning particular genres or types of art – and all by men who maintain today the

moniker of 'the masters' - that had a reified position in the cultural hierarchy that, despite the above efforts, or perhaps because of them, remained out of reach of the majority. Feminists such as Nochlin (1988), as we noted earlier, went further, highlighting an unrepentant sexism shadowing both elitism as well as terms such as 'the masses' and 'the majority'. Others denounced all separations in the aesthetic life-world, illustrating how they create chasms between arts and crafts and delegitimise the arts in relation to education, knowledge creation and the enrichment of citizens' everyday lives (Duvenage, 2003; Mann, 1977). Inherent in this were questions around 'use-value', giving rise to complex debates around freedom of expression and instrumentalism, central to which, and most interesting, is politics. On one side of the debate are scholars who argue for creative expression to be free of all politics and pre-determined use or end value whether or not it is for the betterment of society (e.g. McGauley, 2009). The primary concern was that art would become an advertising aesthetic aimed to simply commodify ideas. Moreover, political goals and messages in art, no matter how progressive, rendered them mere handmaidens to propaganda (Adorno, 2002; McGauley, 2009). There were also important concerns about a tendency towards seeing the arts as tantamount to 'fixing', an insurmountable burden "to transform the lives not just of individuals, but of whole community" (Belifore and Bennett, 2008, p. 3).

On the other side however, are those who challenge the idea that authentic expressive freedom in art only exists when it is disengaged from all interests outside of itself and that all politicised uses of art is simply propaganda. While they acknowledge the arts cannot change the world or solve 'all' the worlds' problems, they can be contribute to change by illuminating and naming socio-political subject matter, and encouraging active learning in ways other methods cannot (Clover, 2011; Mullin, 2003). The problem is not the use of the arts as a political, educational or organising tool, but rather an impoverished understanding of politics, imagination (Mullin, 2003) and any other "sense of the creative possibilities in human life" (Williamson, 2004, p.136). Aesthetics is politics and working with or through this real/imagined medium is more than an oblique route to change the world. Arts have a potential to rupture "the codes and categories of how the world is seen, to imagine the world not as it is but as it might be" (Miles, 2012, p.10).

These aesthetic considerations take us further along the continuum of epistemological, investigative and educational value of the arts. Some scholars argue the arts lack any ability to supply real data or new understandings that can be judged against "any reliable scientific standard" (Belifore & Bennett, 2008, p. 47). New (1999) challenges that the arts cannot "authenticate the view [they convey]", which means they are neither factual nor reliable sources of knowledge. Although we may garner some 'truths' from the arts, "they are not shown to be truths by virtue of being persuasively conveyed [through an artwork]" (p. 120). Taking this further, Carroll (2002) challenges claims that the arts can educate. If they simply recycle truisms people already possess, "it makes little sense to claim that people learn the truisms they already know…there is little point in regarding the arts as education" (p.4).

This means the best the arts can do is to "activate already possessed knowledge rather than its creation *ex novo*" (Belifore & Bennett, 2008, p. 46).

Although himself somewhat wary of truth claims Habermas argued that aesthetic expressiveness was the "correct way to interpret one's own and other's needs and desires; the appropriate argumentative form for revealing subjectivity" (in Duvenge, 2003, p. 55). On this alone they secured themselves a legitimate place in the everyday communicative practice. However, what was recognised and valued was their 'subjective' or personal nature. Marcuse, however, lifted the arts into the realm of the cognitive/intellectual, arguing that "imagination enables one to transcend the given, by cognitively creating the future" (in Miles, 2012, p.17). For many, this was an advance against leaving the arts to languish in the affective/emotional realm where they could too easily be dismissed in a flurry of derision, scorn and condescension (Green, 1995; Yoemans, 1995).

Other scholars, however, argued that it was this 'affective' – sensory, appetive, and emotive - aspect and ability of the arts that was the most transformative. Indeed, Greene (1995) suggests the more serious the problems in life, the more we need the arts to provide us with compassion, empathy and insight and challenge today's technically rationalised industrial culture 'whose values are brittle and whose conception of what's important [is] narrow' (Eisner in Butterwick and Dawson, 2006, p. 3). Wyman (2004) refers to this defying "the constraints of expectation of the everyday [to approach a] realm of understanding [that] lies beyond the immediate and the real" (p. 1). Similarly, Fielder calls it "moments of release from the ordinary burdens of everydayness and even rationality" (cited in Mann, 1977, p.5).

Eisner (2008) brings the emotional-rational together, suggesting the mind operates at its highest level *when* sensory perception and emotion are understood as inseparable and integral:

> To talk about thinking *and* feeling is somewhat of a misnomer, for it segregates feeling from thinking by the inclusion of the word 'and'. The ability to feel what a work expresses, to participate in the emotional ride that it makes possible is a product of the way we *think* about what we see…. Seeing is an accomplishment and looking is a task, and it is through seeing that experience is altered, and when altered, becomes an experience in shaping the kind of minds that people can make for themselves (p. 344).

It is the reuniting of the emotional and cognitive engagement with and through the arts that will "achieve all we hope for as a society' (Wyman, 2006, p. 1)."

## *The Arts, Adult Education and Learning*

You will notice as you move through the activities in Chapters Four and Five that popular theatre, poetry, storytelling, puppetry, collage, video and other aesthetic practices figure prominently as means to make explorations more creative, presentations more fun and engaging, and to encourage new, metaphoric and

symbolic understandings and insights of old problems. This is because we believe that of all our cognitive capacities the imagination and creativity permit us to give the most credence and depth to alternative realities (Greene, 1995).

Arts-based adult education draws on a key concept from the 'formal' art world and particularly the feminist art world: activist art. Activist art is about engaging "with political issues, questions and concerns" (Mullin, 2003, p. 191). It is a collaboration between artists, adult or community educators and other social movement actors involving "research, organisational activity, and orientation" around a social or ecological issue of concern to the community (Felshin, 1995, p. 10).

Arts-based adult education is described as an imaginative, participatory aesthetic approach to personal, cultural and social transformation (Clover & Stalker, 2007). It is about people using collective artistic processes and media, sometimes with artists (see Chapter Five) but also often with adult educators (see Chapter Four) to comprehend and understand a particular social, cultural or environmental issue. Tapping into the aesthetic dimension is another way to promote new understandings and knowledge, stimulate critique and debate, re-construct and re-position ideas, and enhance people's sense of themselves as cultural actors and agents who can challenge processes and practices that exclude, marginalise and des-empower. Using arts, crafts and other symbolic, performative, metaphoric and visual forms, adult educators can address any number of complex contemporary issues. Engaging the aesthetic dimension enhances, or has the potential to enhance, the transformative and emancipatory objectives of feminist and radical adult education by providing an aesthetic space for conscientização, to see or present the existing world as if it could be otherwise.

Arts-based adult education is grounded in the understanding that "learning through art is always an experiential activity" (Lawrence, 2005, p.80). It is also an embodied way of learning because one needs to use her or his hands or vocal cords to create art. A stronger sense of personal authority or power seems to come from this creation, from when someone is able to express her or himself through creativity; when she or he is free to act, draw, dance and sing without self-consciousness.

Arts-based learning is also fun and fun is a factor that is often missing in forms of adult education that emphasise critique and address serious socio-environmental issues. But without fun, programmes and laughter in this type of learning, we run the risk of what Schugurensky (2002) called the 'paralysis of analysis'. We have watched the atmosphere in a workshop–as we grappled with a particularly difficult issue– quickly transform when a group of participants shared their deep-rooted stereotypes through the satirical antics of a popular theatre skit. The arts enabled them to show what they had been taught to believe, say what they might not otherwise feel they could say, and let the laughter move them along to new understandings. In other words, the art had a very unique way of making a difficult subject easier to digest and process without taking away from the gravity of issue.

But the arts are also about taking a risk and being challenged, key aspects, as noted above, of transformative learning. It can be a risk to be creative in a room full of strangers. It can be a risk to create images in a quilt or a collage that will be

visibly challenge the status quo or reveal bigotry or ignorance. And it can be a real risk to share art with a public audience. Art is a powerful instrument used in many demonstrations and rallies and it is often censored as discussed in two of the stories in Chapter Five.

In their discussion of art and capitalism and arts as subversive, political practice, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) suggest creative practice is particularly applicable or aligned to the environment because it is within these two domains where "the multiplicity and particularity of beings – human beings, natural beings and in some versions, artefacts – are assigned an intrinsic value" (p. 91). And so for us, it became.

## ANTI-RACIST ADULT EDUCATION: GREENING JUSTICE

[As educators] we should be able to confront and deal more openly with the tensions and uneasiness, the contradictions and paradoxes of discussing race and racism in our [work].

Dei, Hall and Rosenburg, 2000

In addition to gender, the issue of racism is extremely important to environmental adult educators. Racism is not solely about personal prejudice but rather a combination of structural, institutional, embodied, and ideational/ideological factors rendered legitimate by policies, laws, common sense and even science (Thompson, 1997). Anti-racist adult education explores how racism, power and privilege work overtly and covertly to strengthen or uphold this legitimising process. By focusing on issues of power, silences and exclusion, it creates openings "to advance racial equity and justice" (Lopez & Thomas, 2006, p.1).

Lee and Lutz (2005) suggest: "racism is not what it used to be. Ideas of race, racisms, and anti-racisms are in constant motion and our understandings evolve as they take new forms" (p. 3). One of these forms, which require new understandings, is environmental racism. For example, Alcorn (2008) has found that "over 95% of the world's high biodiversity areas overlap geographically with lands claimed by culturally diverse peoples. But all is not well in the lands of bio-cultural diversity" (p. 44). In what she calls these 'lands of beauty' there are beasts. Environmental organisations often unquestionably protect or defend the 'beauty' of these lands rather than support the rights of the traditional people's who have, for centuries, lived off the land and its resources. In other words, the lands are kept in their pristine forms for the benefit of the flora and fauna, and/or for, supposedly, all to enjoy. Although extremely disconcerting, Alcorn's words affirm what we sometimes felt as we worked our way across Canada and around the world. We often witnessed, somewhat ironically, an extremely conservative streak to the environmental movement. Moreover, we saw racist tendencies towards aboriginal peoples, tribal peoples and other traditional cultures in terms of how they understood and used the land. This was certainly not true of all organisations and none in Canada were as excessive as David Foreman of EARTH FIRST! who once argued the famine in

Africa was "a 'natural' measure against over-population which should not be mitigated by human assistance" (Roussopoulos, 1993, p.76). However, we became aware that conservation of an area meant getting rid of the people or when it did include people, it was not about livelihoods but recreational enjoyment, presumably for the rich. In other words, social class was a determinant to environmental enjoyment given those who could 'afford' to reach these pristine areas would be the privileged classes. Although there are notable exceptions, socio-environmental justice was not necessarily the foundation of environmental conservation.

For us, Mikkes David Lengwati (1995) from South Africa still has one of the most eloquent and poignant explanations or descriptions of environmental racism:

> When minerals like gold, diamonds, platinum and coal are extracted but the surrounding communities are among the poorest in the country; when black townships experience the leakage of water pipes and sewers without any hope of the local government attending to repairs; when black township streets lack sheltering trees for shade and ornamental flowers for beautification; when blacks-only areas are targeted as industrial sites... and when a town council decides to dump poisonous waste products from manufacturing in a blacks-only township, racism is clear (p. 103).

Environmental racism includes the active exclusion of people from policy decision-making around the resources that affect and maintain their lives and livelihoods. But it goes beyond politics. Tan (2005) believes the environmental movement in general has failed to establish full and broad alliances with minority communities. Moreover, western environmental issues are often projected as universal concerns demanding universal attention. This narrow, bourgeois view precludes the voices and environmental aspirations of those who struggle against unequal relations and systems of oppression and leads to the simplistic conclusion that the non-privileged are not concerned about the environment. This is patently untrue although the issues are often framed in a much broader way as Tan shows through an example of traditional medicine activists in Toronto.

In essence, the key principles of an environmentally conscious anti-racism include:

- Seeking common ground with low-income and minority communities and recognising their struggles and concerns
- Just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour or national origin in environmental change and decision-making
- The right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where environment is considered to include the ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, cultural, aesthetic, and economic environments
- The equitable enforcement of environmental regulations
- Protecting minority communities from environmental hazards
- The right of traditional cultures to decide how their land will be preserved and/or used

EXPERIENTIAL OUTDOOR LEARNING: INTO THE FOREST AND
UP THE TREES

> It is the very nature of their experience and reflections that mandate that they can no longer see the world as it once was.

<div align="right">Carry Wittmer & Brian Johnson, 2000</div>

Experiential learning or learning in situ has always been an important aspect of adult education. The belief behind this practice is that knowledge is not only learned from experience, but in or through experience. At its heart lie three concepts: flexibility, participation and contextualisation. Flexibility hinges on adapting programmes to meet local needs. Participation is often reflected in how actively learners are engaged in the educational activity and the degree of decision-making they have around the experience. Often in the more standardised experiential learning programmes developed in museums, there is an expert who organises and leads and the learners follow and learn. The more contextualised a programme or less standardised, the more likely it is to be locally personalised or meet an individual's needs (Taylor, Neill & Banz, 2008).

Outdoor experiential education, as the name suggests is learning in, about, with and through the out-of-doors. It can refer to recreational activities such as nature hiking, plant identification or bird watching. In essence, the aim is predominantly to develop knowledge about and a re-connection to the natural world – sometimes by learning a skill such as kayaking. Others, however, use outdoor education to illustrate human impact on the natural environment (Clover, 1998).

Outdoors education can occur in any type of setting: swamps, meadows, forests, shores, deserts, and all other biomass. But it can also include the built or human created environments – a cemetery, a gravel pit, or any type of urban renewal or development project (Ford, 1986).

There are a number of key principles or philosophies behind outdoor education that helped to guide our thinking as we developed environmental adult education:

- Teaching a commitment to human responsibility and environmental stewardship of the land
- Learning certain facts and concepts such as the inter-relationship of natural resources to each other and with humans, their societies and their customs
- Linked to the above, the integral relationship between the survival of the natural world and the survival of the planet
- Understanding the integrity of nature – things are alive and have the right to live
- Understanding the cultural and spiritual value of the out-of-doors in the lives of different cultures (Ford, 1986; Wittmer & Johnson, 2000)

Teaching and learning in the outdoors is a means to recognise and respect the vital functions of nature in our lives, beauty, rights and even, the pedagogical importance of the natural world as a life-long educator. For others, the value in teaching outdoors

is how it fundamentally changes the traditional role of teacher or educator from knowledge expert to facilitator of experiences (Wright, 2000). Although seldom acknowledged as such in outdoor education, the educator is actually the natural world, or the built world. Knowledge and guidance lay in its hands and we gratefully and thankfully threw ourselves in to the midst.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION: TRANSFORMING HUMAN-EARTH RELATIONS

Environmental adult education respects and nurtures patterns of knowing that are rooted in the spirit and the land; provide opportunities to critique, reflect and experience. It encourages hope, imagination, creativity and action.

Darlene E. Clover and Lilian Hill, 2003

When environmental adult education began to take shape in the late 1980's and early 1990's it was a very different world from today. Although adult education had come to terms with issues such as gender and class oppression, as noted above, it had all but ignored the environment. Even Paulo Freire went to great lengths to separate humans from the rest of nature (Clover, 1999). Although environmental justice as a concept was beginning to make in roads worldwide, anti-racist adult educators seldom used or included the discourse. Traditional environmental and outdoor education was either aimed at children/schools or not particularly critical or social in its orientation. Further, the practice of arts-based adult education did not focus on the rest of nature or environmental issues other than to perhaps use environmental materials but without the critical analysis. Environmental adult education had to also be environmental in two respects: the content and the methods and means.

Our challenge was what to do with or about the rest of nature and how to do it. We needed to draw on the above theoretical understandings and principles, but more importantly, methods and processes that would give us new language, new practices, a new theory, and a new praxis. We needed to go beyond simply adding environmental issues to adult education or adults to outdoors experiential education and stirring. We had to create a process of identifying and using ecological knowledge, weaving the socio-political and the environmental, and building critical and creative capacities in pursuance of a more healthy, just, and sustainable world.

Environmental adult education is an amalgam of methods, analytic practices, theoretical perspectives, discursive lenses and epistemological technologies. Our starting point for its development was the fact that the environmental crisis was multi-faceted, local, yet global; it touched every aspect of lives: our health, the quality of the environment, our social relationships, livelihoods and economies, our cultural practices, our politics. What happens in Canada affects the South Pole and the lives of people in Africa.

The foundation of environmental adult education had to be political in orientation It was not going to be enough to nurture and instil a love of nature and a yen to

preserve the green spaces. We had to recognise that no matter how many trees we hugged they would still all be cut down in the name of raw development and the accumulation of global profit. We had to realise that no matter how well we washed our bottles and cans for recycling, unilateral decisions to send them to landfill and not to a recycling depot could be made by governments (see Chapter Five) and that indigenous peoples would continue to lose their lands where the resources used to create those cans and bottles were found. A political focus meant educative-activism. People needed to realise they had to act collectively and politically for systemic change to occur. This meant grounding environmental adult education in the notion of environmental citizenship, even with its challenges. We framed citizenship as not only rights, responsibilities and duties people have towards one another, but also towards the rest of nature and the planet itself. Environmental citizenship, drawing from feminist and critical adult education, is people as actors who can influence not only the context of environmental decision-making but policy-making vis-à-vis natural resources.

Another element, very much linked to the above, to be woven into the new fabric of environmental adult education is the concept of ecological knowledge. In spite of protestations that people are totally disconnected from their environment, we discovered that for the vast majority this was simply not the case. Although often numbed with scientific facts and data to the point of green fatigue, people, when asked, did in fact understand things such as where their drinking water came from or the medicinal uses of diverse plants. This by no means suggests that everyone knew everything or that there was not more to learn, but workshop participants continually illustrated various fascinating forms of ecological knowledge. We will never forget the vast repertoire of knowledge found in the clock repairman about the multiple chemicals seeping in to Lake Huron. Indeed, there was often a deep, healthy relationship with the rest of nature, even if this was just in the form of caring for potted plants in an apartment in the concrete jungle of São Paulo. Disconnection had far less to do with a lack of knowledge as had been suggested in the many books on environmental education we perused and far more to do with misunderstandings of what counts as knowledge and who has it. As in all forms of adult education, environmental adult education had to begin with where people were at, tap into their rich store of ecological knowledge and build on that through active engagement. In other words, preaching about environmental dangers, which everyone was fully aware of, and dishing up the statistics (which few could keep up with anyway) were out.

Building on this, environmental adult education had to be hopeful. It had to be creative, fun, enjoyable and memorable. It had to make people feel powerful, energised, and strengthened for the long struggle that would need to continue long after the workshop. Since workshops can only ever be fleeting learning portals, particularly important was building more lasting relationships amongst the participants in the room (or under the tree) as well as encouraging them to make stronger connections to broader environmental justice and social movements and organisations outside the four walls.

And speaking of four walls, we not only used the community as a teacher and site of learning, but we had to learn ourselves to trust the rest of nature to do the teaching, to be the leader, the storyteller, the truth holder, the knower, the facilitator, the guide. And she never once let us down. As alluded to above, when things became complicated or tense, we turned to the rest of nature, most often combining this with the arts. Even when she showed us her pain (i.e. clear-cut) the affect was calming and restorative for reasons we are unlikely to ever fully understand.

In essence, environmental adult education is about the fundamental transformation of human/earth relations. The main inter-weaving principles include:

- Stimulating a critical socio-political analysis of humanities' response to itself and oppression such as humans over nature, men over women, whites over minority groups and so forth
- Encouraging the re-connection in a more sensory, spiritual and emotional way with the rest of nature in both urban and rural environments through experiential learning
- Critically examining the root causes of the environmental crisis (such as unequal power relations, capitalism, cultural imperialism, economic development, scientific frameworks, militarism, fear of change)
- Making links between environmental and other social issues and examining the ways in which our views and perceptions of the rest of nature are culturally mediated
- Being experiential, inter-active and participatory
- Using creativity, passion and emotion
- Using the human aesthetic dimension; stimulating creativity and imagination through the arts
- Beginning with people's own experiences and locations; encouraging and tapping into ecological knowledge
- Using people's own potential to solve problems and bring about social and political change
- Making links between local and global issues
- Empowering people to see themselves as agents of socio-environmental change