

Case Study #4

The Importance of Traditional Woodcraft

When I was a boy I hungered beyond expression for just such information as I have tried herein to impart. It would be a great joy to me if I could reach and help a considerable number of such heart-hungry boys tormented with an insatiate instinct for the woods, and if I fail of this, I shall at least have the lasting pleasures of having lived through these things myself and of having written about them.

Ernest Thompson Seton, 1912

Preconceived notions, especially when one is fairly brought up in their influence, are most difficult to shake off.

Stewart Edward White, 1907

Several days before my class and I departed for our five-night winter wilderness trip, a student asked “What are some of the advancements in this form of travel today?” “Well,” I began, “that’s a great question, one that I have been doing a lot of thinking about of late.” I went on to tell the story of the Boy Scouts Millennium celebration in Quebec where they hosted a huge winter camping gathering to celebrate the New Year. The Scouts had chosen to use large canvas tents with portable gas heaters. But it was so cold that the propane wouldn’t ignite. The kids became extremely cold, the celebration was abandoned, and the millennium was welcomed indoors rather than out. Thus, the word “advancement” raises some good questions.

We then departed on *our* winter trip and also met some extremely cold temperatures: two nights at -35°C and -40°C . Our tents were of a similar canvas, but our heaters were portable sheet metal woodstoves that got hauled in by toboggans and sleds. We had no problem starting those fires. And, oh, how those stoves glowed red with warmth while the trees popped in the Algonquin night. So are propane heaters a step forward or a step backward? All I know is that this question is one small snowflake in a winter’s storm of dialogue.

Mike Erlich – From *Lessons From Trees*

Do gear and practices impact program outcomes? If so: How? If not: Why?

Case Study Resources

- *Camping In The Old Style*, By David Wescott - Introduction pages 19-21
- *The Importance of Traditional Woodcraft Skills*, By Paul Van Horn
- *Lessons From Trees* By Mike Elrick
- *How Much Do You Know About Camping ?*
By Cliff Jacobson
- *How Technology is Designed to Bring Out the Worst In Us*, By Ezra Klein, 2018



* Text Questions to Consider:

1. The Introduction addresses 5 broad themes or reasons for why woodcraft skills should be taught. What are they ?
2. Can the use of a certain type of equipment affect program outcomes ?
3. What 3 arguments does Elrick cite as reasons for including traditional skills in a pedagogy ?
4. What is the difference between "traditional" and "emerging" technologies ?
5. How do they compare when used as a pedagogy ?
6. What is "impact in your face?"
7. How do traditional skills "bring the wilderness lesson home?"
8. What are the main drawbacks to using woodcraft as a modern pedagogy ?
9. How do these articles compare to the image of woodcraft portrayed in Turner's article in Case Study #1?

* Context Questions:

1. Who is Mors Kochanski ?
2. What is a pedagogy ?
3. Who proclaimed that "woodcraft is dead?" Is he right or wrong ?

OPTIONAL READ: *The Importance of Traditional Woodcraft Skills*

By Paul Van Horn (#2 in Resources file)

- Traditional Skills for the Modern Outdoorsman By Thomas Ray
<http://masterwoodsman.com/2014/traditional-skills-for-modern-outdoorsman/>

Really Test Yourself: Extra Credit

2. Why is crafting mentioned so prominently in this paper?
6. "Self-efficacy" is widely used in our field today. What does it mean?

Other Resources: We will discuss Kurt Hahn' *Six Declines* in Case Study #6. They are listed here as an example of what is being lost in our contemporary system of growing kids into adulthood. (#4 Resources file)

Elders Of The Tribe:

- Ernest Thompson Seton • Charles Eastman • William Hillcourt
- Dillon Wallace • Bradford Angier • Townsend Whelen
- Bob Henderson • Cliff Jacobson • Eric Sloane
- Elmer Kreps • Stewart Edward White • Andrew Bigelow Payne
- Frank Chelley • Phillip Fagans • Luis Henderson