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**TOURISM IN THE OUTDOORS:  
BUT WHOSE OUTDOORS?**

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**Resumo:** O uso de ambientes naturais para o turismo, recreação e educação é percebido como amigo do ambiente. Entretanto, preocupações têm sido levantadas devido ao aumento na comercialização, a superlotação, a degradação ambiental e as questões de sustentabilidade de longo prazo, como o aquecimento global e a desigualdade social.

Estes problemas são agravados porque as pessoas têm conceitos bem distintos do que os ambientes naturais significam. Ao analisar histórias de experiências ao ar livre o conceito de ambientes naturais como localização geográfica, ganha significado pelo que fazemos lá, o que valorizamos, e como podemos responder emocionalmente à experiência que emergiu.

Sendo que isto tem um importante significado para como os guias e educadores de atividades ao ar livre constroem a relação entre os seus clientes e o meio ambiente.

*Palavras-Chave:* ambientes naturais; aventura; turismo sustentável.

**Abstract:** Using the outdoors for tourism, general recreation, and education is perceived to be environmentally friendly, but as numbers increase concerns of over-commercialisation, overcrowding, environmental degradation, and long-term sustainability issues of global warming and social inequity, are being raised.

These problems are exacerbated because individuals have quite distinct concepts of what the outdoors means to them. In analysing stories of outdoor experiences the concept of the outdoors as geographic locations, which gain meaning from what we do there, what we value, and how we emotionally respond to the experience emerged.

This has significance for how outdoor guides and educators build the relationship between their clients and the environment.

*Key-words:* natural environment; adventure; sustainable tourism.

## 1. Tourism in the outdoors: but whose outdoors?

Using the outdoors for tourism, general recreation, and education has become big business on a global scale. While perceived to be more environmentally friendly than exploitive industries such as mining and forestry, Pfiser & Tierney (2009) note that uncontrolled recreational use of the outdoors creates concerns, such as over-commercialisation, overcrowding, environmental degradation, and long-term sustainability issues of global warming and social inequity. These problems are exacerbated because different people and groups have quite distinct concepts of what the outdoors means to them. Yet debate about meanings of 'the outdoors' has been limited, possibly because 'the' preceding 'outdoors' assumes a certain unitary status, which masks the diversity and complexity of the term. Grasping what the outdoors means for different people potentially develops a clearer conception of how 'the outdoors' affects interaction with it (Barrett, 2006; Fox, 2000). This, in turn, has implications for how to manage, and educate about, the environment.

Whilst 'the outdoors' may have only received modest attention in research, concepts such as place, landscape, wilderness, and nature have been extensively debated in academic disciplines such as human geography, architecture, psychology, and philosophy. What is evident from this work is that meanings relating to these terms are not constant or unitary, but are highly contested and responsive to changes in society (Hay, 2002). This is reflected in the following quote which identifies that meanings arise from cultural perceptions as well as the entity itself.

Mountains, like all landscapes, are cultural as much as they are natural; they are social as much as they are physical; they are not simply "out there" shaped by the wind and the rain; rather, they are formed by the ideas that exist inside our heads (Robertson & Hull, 2001, p. 176).

Language is predominant in developing and sharing meanings as we often make sense of concepts through everyday talk and sharing stories. In general, outdoor meanings have become accepted through interplay of social norms, cultural knowledge, material locations, and individual experiences. Many of these meanings remain contested though, because they relate to basic beliefs

about relationships with the land, as well as beliefs about ‘what is nature?’ and ‘what is natural?’ Paying attention to the range of outdoor meanings is potentially significant, as the way the outdoors is conveyed in tourism and outdoor education organisations shapes the outlook of people in regards to how they value and understand the world they live in, and as Suzuki (2003) notes, it is a world we all depend on and yet its integrity is constantly being compromised.

### 1.1 The outdoors in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand, symbols of the outdoors as ‘100% pure’, ‘clean and green’ resonate with many people and play a defining role in the construction of national identity (Bell & Matthewman, 2004; Dew, 1999; Ministry for the Environment, 2007). As Dew (1999) notes, “the symbol of clean and green New Zealand provides a very strong cultural resonance which strengthens chains of cultural meaning and provides a strong impetus for action” (p. 53). In addition, images of natural scenery are frequently used to attract overseas tourists. Sometimes these images mask reality, for while Aotearoa New Zealand may pride itself on its natural environment, government policy and farming practices have promulgated “world beating levels of native bird extinctions and wetland loss” and carried out “one of the most comprehensive transformations of indigenous nature the world has seen” (Park, 2006, p. 196). Currently this story of a pristine ‘100% pure’ land is being challenged by many ecologists, but the persistence of the image still influences popular beliefs about how the land is used and valued.

As economic priorities shift from sheep to dairy farming, sacred land to energy production: and forestry to adventure tourism; it becomes important for some stakeholders to actively manipulate how certain areas are valued. In much the same way as the New Zealand Company in the late 1800s promoted the pastoral values of Aotearoa New Zealand by patronising artworks of idyllic farms which entice immigrants and raise the value of the land (Park, 2006), contemporary marketing now emphasises adventure and the clean green environment to entice tourists. As a strategy it has been successful with tourism becoming New Zealand’s second largest foreign exchange earner contributing between 8-9% of gross domestic product (GDP) as well as directly and indirectly employing nearly one in nine New Zealanders (TIANZ., 2014).

Increasing numbers however, adds stress to the infrastructure of National Parks and other popular destinations. Environmental sustainability creates challenges and opportunities for most companies; outdoor related tourism however must face these challenges in a more immediate way as the effects of climate change become more evident. Protecting the environment, not just its ‘100% pure’ image, is an economic priority for Aotearoa New Zealand, this requires tourism operators to act responsibly and respond to environmental challenges visibly and promptly (TIANZ., 2014).

## 1.2 Sustainability

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report (UNESCO, 2004) categorised 60% of the planet as degraded noting that some areas were unlikely to recover in the foreseeable future. The report surmised that if the planet's ecosystems continued to deteriorate they would be unable to sustain future generations. Action to reverse this trend was deemed to be critical, yet many governments remain unwilling to make changes in policy and practice which could help the situation. This lack of action has meant that much of the responsibility to drive change now rests with educators, business innovators, environmental groups, and concerned individuals.

The Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) defined sustainability as practice that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 8). Models of economic sustainability which focus on business competition and economic growth are quite different, as they tend to support a market-driven consumerist society which creates waste, inequality, and the undervaluing of environmental resources. A stronger sustainability model is achieved when economic, social, and cultural spheres of human life are nested within the environment. This means that no decision should be made without considering potential environmental ramifications as ultimately all life is dependent on the integrity of the earth's ecosystems.

One of the contemporary challenges we face is how to encourage people to act in sustainable ways which enables both humans and other life to flourish. This is challenging as not only does knowledge about ecosystems need to increase, but it requires some fundamental changes in behaviour. Just having positive pro-environmental attitudes does not always correspond with making environmentally sustainable choices as even concerned and aware individuals will choose to act in unsustainable ways at times (Bergin-Seers & Mair, 2009; Juvan & Dolcinar, 2014). Often people lead double lives, they are aware of environmental problems but continue to act in ways which exacerbate them. Sometimes change is too difficult, at other times the temptation of pleasure overwhelms their judgement, but often they are bombarded by so many competing and conflicting messages that in their confusion inconsistent attitudes and behaviour arise.

More and more people live in urban areas where they can become estranged from nature's ecosystems. Everyday patterns of travelling to work, eating pre-packaged food, and staring at a screen make it difficult to comprehend that we are an integral part of nature. While formal education can help increase environmental knowledge, a much broader commitment from governments, major corporations and other businesses is required to address the excesses of consumer culture and inequality. This requires people from a range of backgrounds to work collaboratively to clarify messages, address key issues, and lead the way in making tangible changes.

## 2. Researching meanings of the outdoors

The problems of language and the meaning of words such as outdoors, environment, place, natural environments, landscape, and wilderness, create a degree of ambiguity, confusion, and opacity (Barry & Smith, 2008; Bourke & Meppem, 2000). While some terms have an aura of familiarity, which conveys a self-evident understanding, they still mean different things to different people. Certain definitions however gain credibility; a subtle process of demarcation takes place, with some meanings becoming privileged, while others are marginalised (Cronon, 1996). These dominant meanings can influence and limit the type of experiences we have and the ways in which we interact with and care for the environment (Barrett, 2006; Fox, 2000). So while many meanings are not inherent, they can appear to be. Thus, how these terms are used and interpreted “is not politically or ethically neutral; it has implications for who ‘we’ are and the values and practices we have in relation to the land” (Barry & Smith, 2008, p. 565). Thus opening up debates and exploring the multiple possibilities of what the outdoors does and could mean offers fertile ground for unpacking certain assumptions which could enhance the way outdoor-based organisations operate and promote environmental messages.

This article is drawn in part from the author’s doctoral dissertation (Straker, 2014) which explored meanings of the outdoors from the perspective of outdoor educators. A narrative approach was used to gather and analyse the data in order to unpack the individual constructions whilst drawing attention to the relational aspect of meaning making. The analysis revealed five themes which contributed to meanings of the outdoors: locations, activities, emotional responses, relationships, and experiences of living simply. The five themes reflect the concept of the outdoors as geographic locations, which gain meaning from what we do there, what we value, and how we emotionally respond to the experience. While the initial research was strongly focused on outdoor education, many of the findings have relevance for organisations and individuals who are involved in recreational and tourism activities.

### 2.1 Locations

Locations which first came to mind when the participants spoke of the outdoors included wide-open spaces, honey scented beech forests, towering cliffs, sandy beaches, or relaxing by flowing water. These are often the well documented landscape images with which Aotearoa New Zealand is presented to the world and the participants accepted them as significant outdoor locations. Their childhood stories about the outdoors however, included more references to picnics on the beach, farm visits, playing in backyards, and the family batch. These early recollections were more about homeliness, play, and good times with friends and family and were very different from their adult conceptions which

accepted the rhetoric of scenic images which portrayed Aotearoa New Zealand as '100% pure'.

Many stories referred to the outdoors as natural environments away from cities, although what was deemed natural was complex, as one participant explained:

I know it is not all natural, when you are on the Two Thumb Range and look below you, it is not all natural, but a hell of a proportion of it is, so it is inherent just taking a deep breaths there, you know the air up there just seems right, it is hard to explain it isn't it?

This comment reveals three key aspects of naturalness. Firstly, most land in Aotearoa New Zealand has, in some way, been changed by human endeavour deliberately or through indirect action. Secondly, many people assume the presence of an inherent quality within natural environments which is often associated with positive experiences. Thirdly, the sensations experienced in such places can be hard to explain.

The difficulty of defining naturalness meant it was sometimes easier to describe the outdoors as non-urban or free of technology. At the time of the interviews all participants lived in Christchurch, but implicitly, and at times explicitly, blamed human endeavour and urban expansion for destroying the natural environment. One participant revealed some of the dilemmas when he noted:

The soil under the city is still the same, the plants are the same, but it has just been so dominated by human endeavour and design, which you would think would create a utopia, but that is so not the case, and it isn't until we are taken out of the city that we see it as a contrived superficial, and I believe ultimately destructive lifestyle and environment for people.

His comments build on the narrative of the outdoors being an utopia and an antidote to the corrupting effects of city life, which arose during the Romantic era's response to the industrial revolution (Park, 2006). Several other participants emphasised natural environments as pure and morally superior, with cities being angry or unhealthy places. However, some participants remained adamant that the split between cities and nature was a major problem that needed addressing, as it undermined awareness of the interconnectedness of life systems.

## 2.2 Pursuit-based activities

Many stories included a range of activities when describing the outdoors, with the main ones being tramping, climbing, kayaking, surfing, rafting, mountain



biking, skiing, and mountaineering. At times, there was even a suggestion that the activities were such an integral part of the outdoors that the activity was more important than the location.

While some of these outdoor activities are considered adventurous, the participants downplayed their predilection for danger or taking risks. Many enjoyed the activities because they encouraged full engagement with the environment and this helped them develop a deeper respect for, connection with, and understanding of, the outdoors. They spoke of rock climbing for example, where every movement and every hold demanded full focus and attention to the point they would feel part of the rock. Likewise, others developed deep respect and affinity with the sea whilst surfing as one participant evocatively stated I felt hugged by the waves. While they spoke of their personal experiences of building connection and respect through adventurous activities, they often commented on the way 'other' recreationalists treated the outdoors as an adventure playground. Noting that adventure often generated attitudes of competition and conquering which reduced the ability to build reciprocal connections with the environment. The outdoors and adventure activities are strongly linked in the marketing of Aotearoa New Zealand and hence while personal experiences may generate feelings of connection a dominant marketing message can still sway general beliefs.

### 2.3 Living simply

The participants delighted in simple pleasures, fresh air, and open spaces and spoke about learning to live outdoors by just doing it and being there. Crawling in the flax, building dams and tree-houses, or fossicking in rock-pools, trying to unravel the mysteries of their surroundings were significant childhood memories. Many of these experiences had different qualities from the technical pursuits discussed in the previous section. They were playful, requiring fewer skills and little equipment, other than imagination. As they grew older some of the activities changed, but the focus was still on having fun, relaxing, socialising with others, and living simply.

They believed that being outdoors kept them in touch with living simply and responsibly. In urban areas, the participants felt there was a disconnection between actions and consequences; toilet waste was flushed away, rubbish collected, and food pre-packaged. Outdoors however, they needed to be more self-reliant and focus more on the basics of friends, food, and warmth. They saw this as a way of treading lightly on the earth and in doing so became more conscious of reducing their 'ecological footprint' or the amount of resources they personally consumed. This supports Ballantyne & Packer (2009) and Heimlich & Ardoin (2008) who note that building positive emotional connections with the environment through multi-dimensional experiences helps to enhance pro-environmental behaviour.

## 2.4 Emotional responses

Many outdoor stories conveyed a sense of joy and happiness, freedom, positive well-being, and feelings of belonging. A few stories reflected on moments of grief or frustration, but the majority were about positive and rejuvenating responses. Even in inclement weather, leaning into the wind, drawing their hood tight in a storm, scraping ice from goggles, peering into the mist, or getting cold and wet, there was an overwhelming sense that the outdoors was a great place to be.

There were also personal examples of how the outdoors had contributed to their health and well-being. Some spoke of how being outdoors helped them overcome depression, build confidence, or give them a sense of purpose. Those stories suggested the outdoors was more than a place to have fun or relax, but that it was invested with the attributes of improving health, thinking positively and developing a moral stance.

The emotional responses described by the participants indicated a deep connection and commitment to the outdoors. Part of this attachment emerged from their playful engagement with the outdoors as children, which had generated pleasant memories, memories they did not want to lose. Hence observing a degrading environment where they could no longer swim, eel, or gather kai moana caused a personal sense of loss. They also spoke of being angry and frustrated when they encountered outdoor-based educational programmes and organisations which promoted consumerist values and appeared to support unsustainable practices. Most participants had taken some direct action to slow down or reverse the trend of environmental degradation and each felt a commitment to live sustainability and reduce their own impact on the environment. They rode bicycles, recycled, favoured experiences over consumer items, used biodegradable products, and tried to eat locally grown foods. They were also passionate about sharing ideas of sustainable living and promoted these values and practices in the programmes they ran.

## 2.5 Relationships

The enjoyment and love of the outdoors for many participants arose from spending time with others. Thus, being outdoors was not usually a time for the participants to search for solitude, but a time to engage with others. While for some, a key benefit of going outdoors involved getting away from the hype of the city, they still enjoyed sharing the experience with others and building relationships with friends and family.

Equally important was building a relationship and connection to the wider world and they felt this was enhanced when there were no walls around them. What they meant by connection at times seemed vague and intangible, but developing an intimate connection was highly valued and spoken of with

pride. It appeared to occur in five main ways: a feeling of belonging by having ancestral or family roots in the area; gaining sustenance or food from the land; experiencing intense enjoyment; being comfortable and relaxed often from having numerous experiences; and having an identity which is bound up in the outdoors. However, whichever meaning they were using, connection seemed to add shape and purpose to their lives, as they felt they were part of something beyond the human realm.

The relationship some of the participants had with the land was quite spiritual. The participants who self-identified as Māori, referred to spirituality as an inseparable part of their outdoor experiences. As Wiremu explained there is the physical land, and there is the spirituality of the land too that's really important. Others also acknowledged a special element in their interactions with the land, but were sometimes reluctant to refer to it as spiritual. Others however, rejected the presence of a spiritual life-force outright, describing the environment as a bio-sphere with no external force controlling it.

Being outdoors helped the participants interact with both people and the land in ways which increased the enjoyment and significance of their experiences. While there were differences in how they perceived their relationship, it generated a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, in highlighting relationships and deep emotional connections, they dissolved some of the notions of being separate from the environment, signalling instead their interdependence with the world.

### 3. Discussion

The outdoors was not just a location, but a kaleidoscope of activities, feelings, people, memories, and relationships. Each participant responded differently as not only did they attach meaning to the outdoors, but they received meaning from it. While the focus of the initial research was on education, several points are relevant for all enterprises which use the outdoors for recreation and tourism, in particular, the role of location and activity, feelings of well-being, and enhancing sustainable behaviours.

#### 3.1 The role of location

Many outdoor tourism ventures include visits to areas with spectacular views. In Aotearoa New Zealand, pristine, mountainous, and uninhabited areas have gained special status. While Cronon (1996) problematises the concept of wilderness as an unnatural social construction which "hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural" (p. 69), this does not necessarily lessen the experiences of the many people who have had positive emotionally fulfilling encounters in natural environments. These encounters are supported by a growing body of research, which suggests that

locations in which people experience sensations of awe can help them feel more alive and connected to the wider world (Heintzman, 2003; Taniguchi, Freeman, & Richards, 2005).

Contrarily, it is also possible to become encultured to look for pictorial images even when experiencing 'the real thing' because aesthetic appreciation has been filtered through privileged images and esteemed paintings (Hull, 2006; Park, 2006). Certain images become so dominant that people have difficulty appreciating landscapes when they do not fit within those parameters. This can mean that when the visual environment does not conform to the image sought, the experience itself is diminished. For example, there are many photos of Aoraki/Mt Cook as a towering snow clad peak with a bright blue background and, instead of appreciating its many moods; a visiting tourist may feel disappointed at missing this ideal image.

Tuan (1991) cautions that too much focus on appreciating landscape in an aesthetic way which is detached from the practical concerns of those who live there can be superficial. This detachment results in diminished appreciation of ecological processes and can result in land becoming valued for what it looks like in an untouched state it. Such a focus on special and pristine landscapes can also create the impression that we are separate from the ecosystems of the earth rather than recognising that wherever we are and whatever we do, we are part of and dependant on the planet.

To be with nature, arguably one of the tenets of living sustainably, is not about going somewhere to be with nature; it is about conceiving that we are already part of nature (Ingold, 2000). To do this, however, would require challenging the discourses in which humans are categorically bad and nature is categorically good. Ingold argues that being with nature is neither a state of idyllic harmony, nor a battle where only the fittest survive. It just is.

### 3.2 Adventure and excitement

In Aotearoa New Zealand there is a strong association between being outdoors and adventure. This has been further promoted by the adventure tourism industry in their strategies to attract tourists (Clope & Perkins, 2002).

Not all adventures are dangerous, but most involve some level of risk, as the outcomes of setting out on an adventure are generally unknown and challenging. One consequence of linking the outdoors to adventure is that "nature is understood as an assault course, gymnasium or puzzle to be resolved and controlled. It is a resource to be commodified instead of a home to which to relate" (Loynes, 2002, p. 114). By implication, including the term adventure potentially suppresses elements of caring for and learning about the outdoors as the emphasis is placed on personally overcoming or conquering environmental challenges.

As the participants identified though, certain adventurous activities can help build a strong relationship with the land. Simmel's essay *The Adventurer*, identifies that "in the adventure we abandon ourselves to the world with fewer defenses and reserves than in any other relation" (Simmel, 1910 [1997], p. 225). Furthermore as Gadamer (1990, p. 60) contends, adventure "lets life be felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength". He goes on to note that, we emerge enriched from adventure and carry these exceptional experiences back into the on-going context of our lives. This is not to say that all adventure achieves that, as some adventure is packaged for easy consumption, whereby thrills can be instantly enjoyed without on-going commitment (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Foley, Frew, & McGillivray, 2003; Loynes, 1998). This commodification of adventure which removes responsibility for planning and execution can also detract from forming caring relationships as the focus is on creating a safe sanitised experience (Cloke & Perkins, 2002).

The participants in this research commented on how adventures which become overly staged or spectacular do little to build the knowledge and skills needed to help people understand the integrated nature of their role within the world. Similarly, research by Martin (2005) and Hill (2012), noted that a sense of belonging and sustainable behaviour was limited when adventurous activities with elements of competition and individualism were encouraged. However, some balance is required as removing all adventure and excitement can also reduce opportunities to build intimate relationships with the world. The consequences of including adventure in education and tourism are in some ways dependant on the way it is marketed and integrated into activities. Outdoor guides and educators can have a lot of influence on how clients and students relate to the land so they need to be cognisant of what they do, what they say, and how they present activities, especially if adventure is to positively enhance personal responsibility and build understanding about our interrelatedness with ecosystems.

### 3.3 Well-being and enhancing sustainable behaviours

On the whole, responses to outdoor environments were positive and enhanced a sense of well-being. Just being outdoors appeared to provide a rich and fertile setting for many stories and contributed to feelings of living life to the full. This supports the growing body of research on the effects of green spaces and fresh air as important factors in overall well-being, recovery from stress, improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and reduced attention fatigue (Florez, Martinez, Chacra, Strickman-Stein, & Levis, 2007; Hartig, Evans, Jammer, Davis, & Garling, 2003; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1994; Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2001).

The holistic elements and interrelatedness of being outdoors increased levels of responsibility, and encouraged people to consider their dependence on non-human life and the ecological cycles of the planet. These observations support some recent empirical investigations into human-nature interconnectedness and the degree to which a person's feelings of closeness to nature also predicts their

pro-environmental values and behaviour (Davis, Green, & Reed, 2009; Heimlich & Ardoin, 2008; Mayer, Frantz, Bruehlman-Senecal, & Dolliver, 2009; Perkins, 2010; Schultz et al, 2005; Schultz & Tabanico, 2007).

In addition, when feelings of well-being are generated then a desire to care for the environment appears to increase. Research on positive emotions (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009) indicates that experiences, which enhance happiness, help to develop resilience, social skills, and physical health. Fredrickson (2006) asserts that positive emotions broaden perspectives whereas negative emotions narrow our focus as problem solving and survival needs dominate. Hence, positive feelings encourage creativity and exploration, extending options for how we live, solve problems, and manage future threats.

The issue of changing behaviour to live more sustainably is, of course, much more complex than providing positive outdoor experiences. Harré (2011) however contends that starting people on the journey of social and environmental consciousness is an important step, and many well guided outdoor experiences appear to mobilise an interest in caring for the land and the local communities. Doyle, ATTA Executive Director-Europe, supports this practice noting that the best way for the tourism industry to become more environmentally responsible is to influence travellers to become defenders of destinations and the local cultures (Leclerc, 2013). Research also indicates that tourists are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability issues and often seek out socially and environmentally conscious companies that benefit the host community (Leclerc, 2013).

#### 4. Conclusion

Feelings of interconnectedness often develop when living, working, travelling, and recreating outdoors. This growing awareness of, and attachment to, the outdoors frequently awakens interest in the growing demise and degradation of the environment and engenders the desire to take action to protect it. Promoting pro-environmental behaviour is complex, and requires more than one or two trips to visit some scenic sites, but outdoor guides and instructors are often in a position to influence sustainable behaviours and suggest practical steps that can help promote positive environmental behaviour and actions.

Recognising that there are many 'outdoors' helps avoid some of the entrenched and idealised perspectives that potentially limit tourism, education, and recreation from fulfilling their role in promoting pro-environmental values and behaviours. Accepting and valuing the plurality of subjective meanings can, as Hull (2006) notes, overcome the limitations of polarising debates and encourage broad community engagement which seeks common ground. This is essential if groups are to work together to address issues of climate change, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and inequality.



While awareness of socio-environmental issues continues to grow the next challenge is to mobilise people to make changes that address them. This requires a concerted effort on all fronts and by all sectors of society. Nature-based tourist operators and educators are well placed to help this movement by promoting the value of experiences rather than the consumerist mode of acquiring goods. When those experiences also lead to greater understanding about our interconnection with the wider world and caring for the integrity of all ecosystems then the possibility of a sustainable world where human and other life flourishes increases.

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