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A Book Review: A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor education for a changing world*

Reading and reviewing this book couldn't have come at a better time for me. I was about to take 15 undergraduate students to the islands of Haida Gwaii off the coast of Northern British Columbia and examine how the students and locals connect to this place. Essentially I began reading a book that I could envision as a required text for future years and this book certainly delivered. Wattchow and Brown begin their book by quoting Wendell Berry who once said, "if you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are" (p. ix). This is the crux of the book; we as society need to know where our 'place' is and understand how that place is changing for ourselves, for our families, and even for our visitors. It is this final point that connects to the eRTR.

As an Aussie/Kiwi author team, Wattchow and Brown also showcase how their discussion focuses on their own places – "far flung former British colonies", but also challenges dominant biases. Wattchow and Brown reflect on their programs, and their participants, considering signposts to move forward. In the first three chapters we gain an important sense of where the book arose from, where the authors start their journeys and how the interconnected terms relate. It's not often that one sees a chapter sharing personal narratives, but that is what Chapter two does, sharing Wattchow's time on the Franklin River and Brown's appreciation for the sea. Chapter four offers a well written synopsis of how place and outdoor education merge. Specific research noted in chapter four offers scope for the case studies that follow – case studies of change and the relation to place.

Chapters five through eight offer case studies written by either Wattchow or Brown and serve to expand the theoretical underpinnings explained thus far in the book. Of these cases, Chapter six where Brown outlines changes he has made to a specific course so that it is more place responsive, and Chapter eight, the sharing of a story by one of Wattchow's former students, that an outdoor educator struggling with putting it all in practice are the most useful. For me they both resonated with how I was thinking about myself and my course while in the field.

Chapter nine concludes the book with signposts of reaching a place-responsive pedagogy in outdoor education. This chapter brings the text full circle and nicely matches it to other recent works (see Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). The four signposts that Wattchow and Brown propose are:

1. "Being present in and with a place.
2. The power of place-based stories and narratives.

3. Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places.
4. The representation of place experiences.”

(p. 182).

These signposts resonate to tourism as a positive tourism experience engages a person to care about where they visit, they share it with others upon their return, in many instances they grow by re-visiting destinations consistently, and they certainly represent their experiences in their own perceptions of the initial visit.

Wattchow and Brown have written a book that is readable, and actually enjoyable. It mixes enjoyable personal narratives, with well structured reviews of academic literature. The book recognizes a challenging ideal and a changing world. It is an excellent addition to the body of literature and will definitely give me ‘food for thought’ in both designing my next placed-based field school on Haida Gwaii and using *A Pedagogy of Place* as a key text.

* Wattchow, Brian and Mike Brown (eds.). (2011). *A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor education for a changing world*. Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Australia. (xxix+214 pp; paperback ISBN: 978-0-9806512-4-9, Web ISBN: 978-0-9806512-5-6)

References:

Gruenewald, D.A., & Smith, G.A. (Eds.). (2008). *Place-based education in the global age*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.