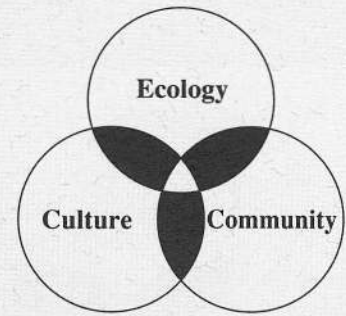


THREE CIRCLES CENTER

for Multicultural Environmental Education

Vol. 1, Issue 3
Winter 1994



Three Circles Center introduces, encourages, and cultivates multicultural perspectives and values in environmental and outdoor education, recreation and interpretation.

Towards a Multicultural Environmental Education

“ Culture contains the seed of resistance which blossoms into the flower of liberation.”
-Amilcar Cabral

The attention of environmental education has been riveted on an emerging area of conceptual redefinition and practice. Driven by demographics and an explosion of environmental consciousness by people of color, the possibility of a multicultural environmental education has emerged as a leading growth edge of the field.

The past several years have been a phase of introduction and advocacy, breaking the ice with the suggestion that a multicultural environmental education is necessary and possible and calling for increased attention and sensitivity to the concerns and issues of children of color in urban and rural settings as they relate to the environment.

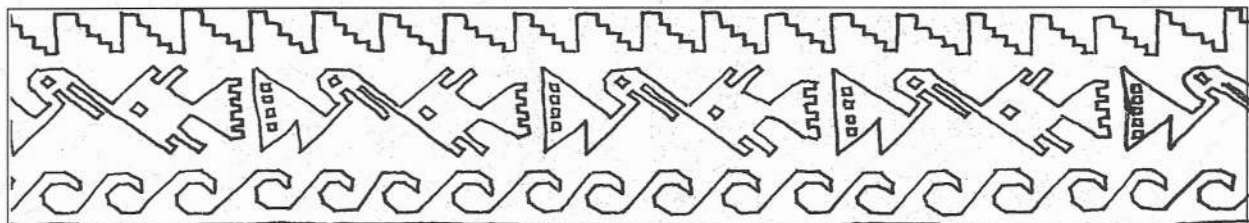
A new phase is now beginning, as it is clearly time to initiate a conversation on what the term “multicultural environmental education” is, what it can be, how it is practiced and what its transformative possibilities are. It is time to initiate this conversation because the fires of multicultural environmental education have caught, and while not raging, are spreading unevenly and at times in contradictory directions. For the long-term, the environmental education community will require some common language, baseline understandings and standards with which to lend direction and integrity to multicultural environmental education.

This article suggests some pathways towards a multicultural environmental education. While not a blueprint, it offers some possibilities, perspectives and principles to be considered and built upon as multicultural environmental education takes further form and becomes defined by the imagination and experiments of educators.

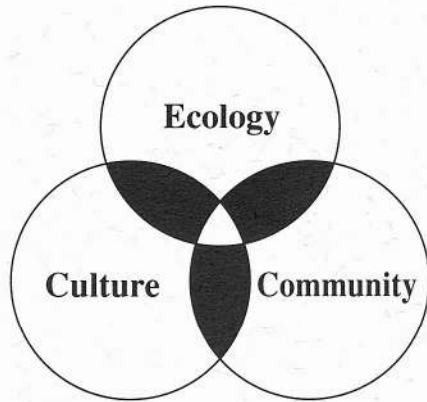
Framing multicultural environmental education

Before exploring the notion of a multicultural environmental education, it is essential to sketch the context of the challenges diversity or multiculturalism pose to environmental education in particular and environmentalism as a whole.

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THREE CIRCLES CENTER



Three Circles Center introduces, encourages, and cultivates multi-cultural perspectives and values in environmental and outdoor education, recreation and interpretation.

Three Circles Center nagsilsil bi para itakilala sa kagitingan at payamanin, buhayin, alagaan, maraming uring patingin sa kabyrungang panglabas ng ta hanan opang kau kasan, paglilibang at pagintindi sa isa ng bagay.

El Centro Tres Circulos sirve para introducir fomentar y desarrollar perspectivas y valores multi-culturales en educación en la naturaliza ambiental, recreación y interpretación.

三育中心之宗旨在於宣傳、鼓勵和培養在環境及戶外活動上的教育、康樂活動及其意義上之多元化的體會及價值觀念。

Newsletter Credits:

Editor: Running-Grass
Editorial Advisors: Board of Directors, Three Circles Center
Photos: Running-Grass
Mission Statement Translations:
Kay Antunez, Caroline Yujuico, Norman Fong
Layout and Design: Julien DuBrow

Three Circles Center welcomes letters and comments and reserves the right to edit for considerations of space. Unsolicited articles should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

About Three Circles

The "Three Circles" of our name refers to the three interdependent systems of ecology, culture and community. *Ecology* is the total of myriad relationships between the biotic and abiotic environments; *culture* is the dynamic total mores, values and traditions to which a people relate as their own; and *community* is the context in which culture flourishes and ecology and culture meet.

Three Circles Center suggests that ecology never stands alone as an isolated system but as one always connected to the sociocultural worlds of humans. The epistemological implications of this are intriguing. Ecology can thus be viewed as a text with an infinite range of interpretive possibilities expressed through the cultural lives of humans in relation to the lives of plants, animals and other living beings.

Thus the notion of a gestalt of interdependent systems—where the totality is greater than the sum of the parts—can serve as a useful and necessary starting point to rethink environmental education and the paradigm of environmentalism in general.

Three Circles Consulting

Three Circles consults with organizations around the country on issues of cross-cultural communication, staff development, curriculum and program design and community outreach and liaison. Recent clients have included:

- Video Project, Oakland, CA
- USDA Forest Service, Camino, CA
- Junior League of San Francisco
- Environmental Careers Organization, Boston, MA
- Colorado Department of Forestry

For more information about consulting services, workshops and presentations, please contact our office.

Please note our mailing address has changed to:

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The lead article in this issue:

This article is excerpted from a longer article to be published as a booklet by Three Circles Center in 1994. A version of this article will also be published in 1994 in a monograph on Multicultural Environmental Education, edited by Kathy James and Sue Lewis for the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Financial Disclosure

Three Circles Center is a non-profit organization which has received its tax exemption from the IRS. All contributions to Three Circles Center are tax-deductible.

Multicultural Environmental Education

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The task of defining a multicultural environmental education is but a single piece of a much larger set of challenges. Yet the notion of multicultural environmental education is deeply embedded within each individual challenge.

The challenges and development of a multicultural environmental education can be characterized as three layers or levels: *access, authenticity and vision*.

Access relates to the multiple paths toward making environmental education experiences open and accessible to people of color, especially children. This includes opening programs through language and direct participation, and providing programs which reach children where they live and where they attend school. Access to environmental education is an issue directly connected to equal access to educational opportunity and educational resources for children of color. This on-going struggle has a history that extends back to the origins of the United States. Current examples of this history include the legal and electoral struggle over school funding, detailed in Jonathan Kozal's latest book, Savage Inequalities.

The second level of a multicultural environmental education deals with *authenticity* of instruction. Once we have created access to programs, how do we serve children of color in a culturally authentic manner? How do we structure programs in ways which speak to their consciousness of themselves and their communities?

Authenticity refers to the idea that multiple cultural perspectives need to be employed in environmental education. It proceeds from the obvious but little acknowledged fact that all cultures have a relationship with the natural world and their environments. The American environmental movement and environmental education often begin with the assumption that what is truly "environmental" is the invention or prerogative of a single class and cultural grouping.

Authenticity suggests that it is important for instruction to be delivered by role models reflecting the children being educated; that curricula and materials reflect multiple perspectives and be delivered in multiple ways into which culture has been factored, and that cultural learning styles should be taken into account in the delivery of environmental education experiences.

Authenticity also suggests that the lessons and experiences of environmental education be transferable from the rural or wilderness settings to the suburban and urban core settings.

The third layer of a multicultural environmental education is that of *vision*. The question here is, what is the vision of multicultural environmental education—what kind of multicultural society does it envision and how is it going to get us there? It must be as concerned with the future as it is with asking the right questions about the past, questions such as, how have our communities, our region, our nation and world, and our lives become the way they are and how is environmental education going to help transform them? We must ask not only how has the natural environment become the way it is but how have the social environments, the cultural environments and the relationships in these spheres become the way they are?

Environmental Justice and environmental education

No discussion of a multicultural environmental education would be complete without taking into account the emergence of the new movement for Environmental Justice.

Despite the fact that a parallel environmental movement has been building in communities of color for over ten years, the Environmental Justice movement took the environmental movement by surprise.

Events prior to and since the *First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit* in 1991 have revealed the significant differences between the mainstream environmental and the Environmental Justice movements.

(A summary of the Environmental Justice Movement and its implications for environmental education were discussed in the August '92, Three Circles Center Newsletter. For more extensive background on the Environmental Justice Movement, read Robert Bullard's Dumping in Dixie. Also, read Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards by Paul Mohai and Bunyan Bryant, both of the University of Michigan. Both books are published by Westview Press in Boulder, Colorado.)

What are the implications of the Environmental Justice Movement for environmental education?

Environmental Justice connects environmental issues with social justice issues such as civil rights, equal protection under the law and worker safety. Environmental education has clearly not reached most children and communities of color. Therefore, access to environmental education by children and communities of color is connected to the

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Strybing Arboretum Society Initiates Ethnobotany Project

Imagine 70 acres of plants from all over the world, set in a beautifully landscaped park. Imagine this setting as a resource for environmental education programs, offered free to the Bay Area's diverse population of school children. Imagine no further...it already exists.

The Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens in Golden Gate Park features plants from Australia, New Zealand, Cape Province, Chile, Mexico, and Asia. These regions have climates similar to ours, which allows us to successfully grow their native plants.

The Strybing Arboretum Society (S.A.S.), the non-profit support group for the Botanical Gardens, offers free, docent-led walks of the Gardens to Bay Area school children on a daily basis. These walks are based on six themes: a *First Look at Plants* walk (basic botany for grades K-1), a *Flower* walk (more botany for grades 2-5), an *Ohlone* walk (how Native Americans used plants for food, tools and medicine), a *Redwood Forest* walk (about the Redwood ecosystem), an *Evolution* walk (plant development from algae on), and a *Plant Travelers* walk (about seed dispersal). We also have Teachers' Resource Guides, with classroom activities and slide sets for each theme. These popular walks fill early in the school year. We are, for example, already booked through December and are now signing up schools for Spring.

Because of this increasing demand for Botanical Gardens walks, and a limited supply of docents to lead the walks, S.A.S. has developed a new walk that teachers will be able to lead themselves. Now teachers can bring their classes to the Gardens whenever it is convenient for them and still have an informative and exciting adventure.

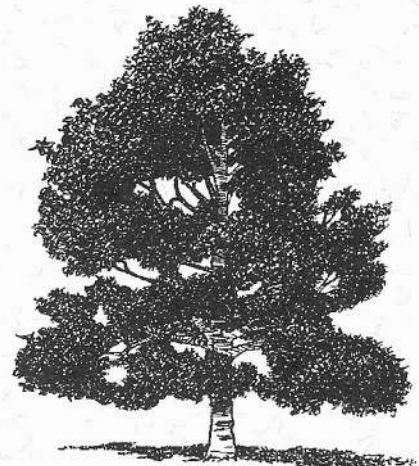
The theme of this new walk is *Ethnobotany*--how indigenous peoples used native plants for food, tools,

shelter, fiber, medicine and cultural beliefs. Teachers will be provided with a 50-page resource guide with background material and classroom activities about several cultures from four different regions (Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America). This interdisciplinary resource guide, while focusing on two plants from each region and the cultures that used them, will develop students' skills in science (botany), social science (history, geography), and the liberal arts (reading, writing, art).

We will train teachers through a series of teachers' workshops that will cover the use of the resource guide, do some of the hands-on activities from the guide, and practice the scripted walk that will lead them through the Gardens to the plants they've been studying. The first workshop will be offered on Saturday, October 30, 1993.

We have chosen an *Ethnobotany* theme because we feel that by studying the vital history of peoples' relationship to plants, we can better understand the need for preserving all endangered species. We hope to help build a greater appreciation for nature and at the same time emphasize the importance of diverse cultures' contributions to our lives.

Diana Colby
Director of Volunteers
Strybing Arboretum Society



Multicultural Environmental Education

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continuing struggle for equality of educational opportunity, historically a civil rights concern.

This lack of access to environmental education enters into the discussion on Environmental Justice. One of the unacknowledged causes of environmental injustice is the lack of accessibility to environmental education and experiences for people of color and the poor.

A second implication of Environmental Justice for environmental education has to do with "locus of concern." That is, environmental education has focused predominantly on the individual and their behavior. Environmental Justice suggests that environmental education needs to pay attention to the needs of entire communities in order to develop programs leading to environmental literacy and action.

Relatedly, Environmental Justice suggests that the individuals' behavior may not be the appropriate level to focus in a program but rather that systemic forces and collective responses to those forces may be more compelling.

Thus, rather than focusing on the impact an individual might have by recycling or conserving energy, an environmental education program might, for example, seek to assist a community to understand the pathways by which lead can enter individuals and the social forces which cause and maintain the problem of lead poisoning, and then help that community identify the sort of collective actions which it can take to remedy, ameliorate or fundamentally solve the problem.

A third implication of Environmental Justice is the issue area on which it focuses. Recycling, energy conservation, (as referred to above), wildlife and the other typical issue areas of environmental education may not be the appropriate focus in communities struggling for environmental justice. Massive toxic waste dumps, poor water or air quality, use of pesticides, perceived inequities in the administration of environmental laws and understanding differential environmental impacts based on race or class are clearly more appropriate issues on which to focus.

But the most important and fundamental implication of Environmental Justice for environmental education is actually the same as it is for the environmental movement in general: that the oppression of nature and the oppression of humans are two sides of the same coin and that to end the destruction of nature we must simultaneously stand with oppressed people against the forces and structures which gain through their continued oppression.

Standing up against the deforestation of the rainforests makes no sense unless we stand up also for the indigenous peoples who have made it their home for generations and who are now subject to genocide.

What role does Environmental Justice have in the formation of a multicultural environmental education?

Because the Environmental Justice Movement is asking society critical questions about the distribution of environmental justice, about the distribution of negative environmental impacts, about the role of community empowerment in the attainment of environmental justice and about the socio-economic and racial dimensions of environmental issues, it sets the standard for a multicultural environmental education that is critical in orientation and delivery and which seeks empowerment as an end-goal, beyond environmental literacy or the formation of environmental values.

Environmental Justice is a movement constructed by people of color from our experiences within our communities. The most appropriate environmental education for us will be one that is multicultural in its approach, and which reveals, sustains and celebrates the varied cultural traditions and connections we have to our environments.

Towards a multicultural environmental education

What are some of the principles of multicultural environmental education? Three Circles Center would like to advance some preliminary ideas as a platform for the continuing discussion. We welcome your comments.

In order to develop more inclusive models, a multicultural environmental education acknowledges that children may have different needs based upon and shaped by their places and conditions of residence.

Environmental education must challenge its image of being for people living in certain areas, such as suburbs, and not for others, such as those living in the industrialized rural areas or in the urban core.

The renewed interest in urban environmental education illustrates the extent to which environmental education has not fully concerned itself with the environmental imperatives of urban areas and their residents. Urban environmental

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Multicultural Environmental Education

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education must now necessarily be multicultural in its perspective and content.

A multicultural environmental education illuminates the essential idea that all cultures have a relationship with the natural world which they and all others can draw upon for understanding and for inspiration.

The natural environment is the "lebenswelt" of all cultures and an important source of cultural vitality. Cultural expressions of relationship with the natural world and the deep understanding of place which have allowed various cultures to thrive for thousands of years are essential, yet missing pieces of the picture to which western environmentalism aspires.

If the ethical understanding environmental educators want to accomplish is a sense of universal responsibility for the Earth, then we have to acknowledge that valid cultural sources of knowledge and practice exist outside our own cultural context and often, understanding. To preach an environmental ethic from an unacknowledged cultural perspective, (our own), is to open ourselves to the charge of being "ecological imperialists," and rightly so.

A multicultural environmental education uses the opportunity to help children become aware of, understand, accept and celebrate other cultures and their environmental traditions.

Environmental educators must also become cultural workers, seeking to ensure the survival and enhancement of the natural world and the varied cultures it sustains. We must teach the values of diversity as well as the practical ways of valuing diversity. In an increasingly diverse society and one which is historically in conflict about diversity, we must mobilize our energies to create the conditions and institutions for a new society.

A multicultural environmental education critiques the forces which have oppressed people as well as nature. To critique these forces means to seek their transformation through research, imagination and concerted action.

The environmental destruction of North America and the destruction of indigenous people on the continent can both be tied to colonialism. That is, the colonization of North America was the beginning of its history of environmental decline and resulted in the diaspora and genocide of numerous ethnic groups.

Biodiversity and cultural diversity are two sides of the same coin. To successfully resolve one we will have to address and resolve the other.

A multicultural environmental education envisions a multicultural society at peace with the natural world and itself. Such a multicultural environmental education models its vision as part of charting a path to a society in the process of becoming healed, more inclusive, and more just.

The process of "diversifying" environmental education is an essential prerequisite for becoming multicultural. We have to become a profession with a vision and practice which models the multicultural society we are projecting as the preferable ideal.

Conclusion

Gary Snyder wrote, in a poem entitled The Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution, that "The most oppressed classes were the grasses, trees..." and other beings of nature. Environmental education has sought to alleviate that suffering and oppression by educating people in the ways in which natural systems work and with the ethical imperatives which would instill "environmentally responsible behavior." What Snyder was suggesting, and what is frequently missing in environmental education, is the connection between the suffering of nature and the oppression of people and the common chain of socioeconomic and political structures which effect and maintain—indeed gain from—their oppression. It is with this insight that multicultural environmental education begins.

Clearly there are elements present in environmental education and essential threads in multicultural education which can be expanded and fruitfully grafted. The construction of a multicultural environmental education will require some new skills, new perspectives and prolonged experimentation on the part of environmental educators. Among these requirements will be the need for a new image of what we do. We will need to be cultural workers as well as environmental educators. In a sense we are community builders, circle builders creating ever larger circles and within them, webs linking the entire diversity of life.

Running-Grass

Organizational Profile

Organizational profiles are included in the newsletter to illustrate the efforts of organizations to deal proactively with multicultural concerns. We hope that profiling agencies will increase the dialogue and discourse leading to strategies and solutions that work.

Appalachian Mountain Club Invites Discussion about Diversity

How would a more diverse membership, staff, and board affect the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and its mission? This issue is raising more questions than answers among board and staff members.

Some say the AMC must diversify in order to reach its conservation and recreation objectives. Others caution that diversity could force the AMC to become all things to all people, blurring its mission and goals. To address the questions surrounding diversity, the AMC's Board of Directors formed a committee to open club-wide discussion and to consider the implications of a diversity plan for the AMC.

Though the Diversity Committee has the benefit of preliminary recommendations made by a task force of AMC staff who volunteered to look into the issue, the committee sees its work as just beginning. Its working definition of diversity uses a wide range of characteristics that differentiate people, including age, physical ability, race, gender, religion, sexual preference, and ethnic and socioeconomic background. The Diversity Committee includes interested Board members, chapter members, and staff. "The committee will be in existence for five years or more," said Preston H. Saunders, AMC president and Diversity Committee chair. "Our first step is to determine how diversity fits within the AMC's goals and objectives. Currently, we are gathering information that will help direct our diversity efforts."

Diversity already has been discussed at recent AMC membership meetings, prompting conversation and more questions. AMC members are asking, "How diverse are we now? What does the AMC have to gain from becoming more diverse?" As we all begin to educate ourselves about diversity and what it could mean for the AMC, hopefully the answers will emerge.

At the chapter level, Regional Director Harry Westcott reports that AMC chapter leaders are beginning to evaluate existing diversity in chapter programs and membership. According to a report by Westcott, the Diversity Subcommittee of the Chapters Committee entertained some 'spirited discussion' at the chapters' retreat in June. While noting that several chapters offer activities for people with disabilities and outreach programs for inner-city and low-income youths, the committee concluded that more could be done to foster and expand diversity in the AMC.

The AMC is not the only conservation group examining the diversity of its membership, staff, and board. Lately, the national media has given attention to the largely white, middle-class composition of the "green" movement, leading conservation groups to ask themselves hard questions about their lack of diversity. The Sierra Club, for example, having worked on the issue since the 1970s, has begun to question the environmental soundness of its tradition of distancing itself from cities and, therefore, urban environmental problems, to focus on wilderness landscapes.

Though we are joining others who are asking similar question, the AMC is a unique organization, with a long history and a large, involved membership, all of which may help us find original solutions to our questions.

There will be a discussion session entitled "Diversity and the AMC" at the Fall Volunteer Weekend, in Hebron, Conn., Oct. 23. All members are encouraged to attend. In the meantime, comments and ideas are welcome and should be mailed to the Diversity Committee, AMC, 5 Joy St., Boston, MA 02108.

*Jennifer Yoder for the Diversity Committee;
Sandy Saunders, chair*

The Earth Bridge Project

Program Profile:

The Earth Bridge Project: A Pre-College Intercultural Environmental Leadership Program

"What you are doing in this beautiful sacred place is bringing these three major communities together. What really excites me about the Earth Bridge Project is that I'm a first-generation college person too, and this work of empowering and instilling self-confidence in these young people is crucial. I see this as the first of many."

Nedra Darling, Director of the National Center for the Production of Native Images

Introduction

Sometimes a new idea comes around that is so good it spreads like a windblown prairie fire. The Earth Bridge Project is such an idea. In an innovative way, this program helps young Native American, Chicano/Latino, and Anglo students from rural communities in New Mexico to better succeed in their post-secondary studies and to learn the leadership skills and gain a powerful vision of the critical role they can have in affecting the environmental and cultural preservation issues which confront their communities. Though still in its first year, The Earth Bridge Project is gaining widespread approval and support from local community leaders who want their youths to be involved in the project or who wish to have the program relocated in their communities. The National Center for the Production of Native Images has created a twenty-minute video to inform other communities in New Mexico of Earth Bridge and to better share the nature of this project with others across the Southwest and the nation who wish to use this model of youth empowerment as a basis for workshops at community and national educational and environmental conferences.

The Problem

"When Native American students drop out of college they don't drop out because of poor grades, they drop out because they feel they don't belong."

Katherine Tijerina Harris, President, Institute of American Indian Arts.

The future of our planet rests on today's youth and their ability to think critically, make informed decisions, respect the cultural heritage of others, and articulate and effect responsible public policy. The development of leadership skills and the attainment of strong educational backgrounds are important attributes for these youth. Yet, when lower income, rural students—particularly those from minority backgrounds who are first generation college—go on to higher education, most feel a sense of separation and culture-shock that affects their self-esteem and consequent academic performance.

Alienated and sometimes lacking understanding and support from home, too often they drop out. In New Mexico, where the majority of high school students are lower income, and/or Chicano/Latino or Native American, this syndrome of dropping out results in a dearth of well-educated young leaders. Higher education and leadership are particularly critical in our state, for effective protection of sacred or wild lands and cultural traditions currently in jeopardy and subject to degradation.

Our Solution

"We need to change the dream. We need to dream an earth-honoring dream, the dream that other cultures are dreaming. In fact, everyone of us here comes from a culture, if we go back far enough in time, that was an earth-honoring culture... How long does it take to change this dream? It can be done in one generation."

John Perkins, economist, speech at 1991 Seeds of Change Conference.

Southwest College Horizons (SWCH, the founder of Earth Bridge, is a New Mexico nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase awareness of post-secondary educational opportunities for lower income, rural students and their parents.) To address the problem, SWCH has joined with the Santa Fe Mountain Center, (a nonprofit resource center for education and health services that conducts experiential and adventure-based programs in educational, therapeutic and professional arenas), and 14 other New Mexico non-

A Pre-College Intercultural Environmental Leadership Program

profit organizations, in sponsoring the Earth Bridge Project, a wilderness-based, intercultural environmental leadership program. The purpose of this project is to heighten self-esteem, deepen understanding and respect for one's own cultural heritage and that of others, improve intercultural communication, and build leadership and wilderness skills. Our pilot group consists of 12 promising rural Native American, Chicano/Hispanic and Anglo junior and senior high school students. Building on the earth-honoring traditions of many of our students, we focus on wilderness living and concepts of land preservation, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture. These activities help engender a heightened awareness of the connectedness of people with each other and the land, and provide motivation for students to act for the earth.

Program Activities

"What makes multicultural education so societally important is that it provides an avenue toward a more equitable America. And what makes it so educationally compelling is that it fosters the development of more enlightened, creative, and analytical students, more capable of weighing alternative perspectives and better prepared to deal with the inevitable future of an increasingly multi-ethnic nation and globe."

Dr. Carlos Cortes, Professor of History, U.C. Riverside

There are three phases to this project; orientation, expedition and follow-up. In the late spring of 1993, to orient our students, we hosted two weekend activities which included parents. In July, we completed a sixteen-day wilderness expedition—our metaphor for a new and challenging experience, much like college. Real outdoor travel and living tasks, problem-solving and team-building initiatives and unicultural and intercultural discussions focusing on heritage, values, environmental ethics and leadership styles facilitated learning.

Midway through the course, an impressive array of organizations and individuals volunteered their time to present workshops during a two-day base-camp section: Seeds of Change, Native Seeds/SEARCH, Permaculture Drylands Institute, the Tracking Project, the NM Environmental Law Center, Tony Trujillo of Amigos Bravos, Dr. Greg Cajete (Ethnobotanist, Santa Clara Pueblo), Felipe Ortega (potter and Jicarilla medicine man), and Tieraona Low Dog (medical student and herbalist).

During the fall and winter, three follow-up weekend activities are organized for the group to get together, including rock climbing, backcountry skiing and winter survival, a ceremonial sweat, and a flight over Northern New Mexico, provided by Lighthawk, to view environmental damage and gain an overall perspective on our lands. SWCH also works extensively with students, both individually and in group workshops, on college counseling. Internships are also coordinated with local nonprofit environmental and community-based organizations for those students who are interested.

The Video:

Excited by the potential for empowerment of lower income rural young people offered by the Earth Bridge Project, Nedra Darling, Peabody Award-recipient, director of the National Center for the Production of Native Images, and co-producer of the award-winning PBS special, Surviving Columbus, offered the services of her center to produce a video of the project. It is noteworthy that this is the first time her group has focused on a multicultural project.

The footage illustrates the values of wilderness education in developing future leaders with a clearer understanding of the connectedness of people to each other and to the land. It also brings to life an innovative program which helps prepare lower income rural students for post-secondary studies. But most importantly, the video introduces the Earth Bridge Project to communities in New Mexico and the nation who wish to have their young people involved in such a program. These communities may also use the Earth Bridge video as a model for developing their own experiential education program. Indeed this video can serve as a model for leaders across the nation to develop innovative and effective intercultural environmental leadership programs.

Further Information:

For more information on Earth Bridge and the video contact: Dr. Whitney Laughlin, Executive Director, Southwest College Horizons, P.O. Box 564, Placitas, New Mexico 87043. Phone (505) 867-3897.

Program Profile:

The Underground Railroad

“For several decades, around the time of the Civil War, the Underground Railroad was a system of secret escape routes out of the South, invisible to all except for courageous Africans and those that dared to help them flee to freedom in the Northern States or Canada.”

Today, Kamau Kambui at the University of Minnesota, a licensed social worker and certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, is the founder and inspiration behind The Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad is an experiential learning adventure that takes youth and adults through a simulation of an escape to the North. The program helps people to reenact the life and times of Africans during the period of the Civil War. It works to counter racism, while at the same time teaching about the natural environment and how it relates to the African American struggle today and in the past.

The inspiration for this program, according to Kambui, came from reoccurring dreams he had as a child after listening to the stories of the European slave trade. One of the stories kept alive was that of an aunt born a hundred years before Kambui, who was forced from her home in Madagascar to work as a slave laborer in the United States. These stories inspired Kambui to put together a reenactment of the underground railroad as a means to facilitate a “healing spirit.”

The six-hour program begins with a lecture on the contribution of African Antiquity to world culture today. Kambui simulates a walk through time starting from the beginning of humankind in the Nile Valley and bringing us up to date with the contributions of Africans to world culture. He discusses cultural development through the availability of natural resources relative to the environment, and specifically the climate of Africa.

Then the group hits the trail. Groups of students from schools and universities, employees of corporations, families, outdoor education programs, self-help groups and social service agencies participate in the program. The adventure takes place in the dark of night, and the group starts by identifying wild edibles and medicinal plants that were used by the escaping Africans. Kambui (the leader) talks about how these plants have contributed to society through early African sciences and medicine. For example, they discuss how Harriet Tubman, like many African scholars, was a scientist, which allowed her to use the practice of root and herbal medicine to sedate scared passengers and children who might cry during the long journey to freedom. She also used these skills as a nurse during the Civil War.

During the adventure, the group bushwhacks through undergrowth and learns how to walk softly without leaving a trail. They discuss impact on the trail and in general upon the Earth.

“We are all going into the woods and we will meet spirits, some of which will be bad and some good,” the leader tells the group. One of these is the spirit of Harriet Tubman who appears several times during the journey. A woman who plays the part of Tubman talks to the group about the specific struggles they may be facing in their lives. If it is a self-help group countering grief, she talks of the struggle of overcoming a loss. If it is a drug rehabilitation program she relates the struggle for freedom to the participants’ own internal struggle to stay drug-free. She talks about issues that are close to the heart in order to make “kindred the struggles from the past with those of the present.” She helps people get in touch with their sorrows and the need to heal. The group will also meet other spirits along the way such as those of William Still, Thomas Garrett, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The participants may enter a Native American village and discuss the great exchange of information and culture that occurred between the Native Americans and the Africans that allowed the two peoples to pool resources and work together in a similar struggle.

Some of the other spirits the participants meet are not so helpful. At one point the group is chased by slave hunters with real dogs, into a waist-deep swamp. Kambui explains his reasons for leading the group through these miserable conditions, “These were not fair-weather freedom fighters.” Lastly, within the reenactment, the participants will have the opportunity to do a fifteen-minute solo, in the dark, for personal introspection, prayer and reflection.

At the end of the journey the group reaches a safe-house, can change clothes and receive food, drink and towels. There they meet “abolitionists” who provide a lecture on countering racism. This is also a time for discussion and processing what occurred along the journey. Participants have an opportunity to generalize their experience to some of the social concerns of today, and discuss how they may make a positive impact in the future.

The cost of this adventure is negotiable and Kambui will travel in order to bring the program all over the country, because, as he explains, the Freedom Train was all over the country, and not along only one route.

For more information Kamau Kambui can be reached at: 1407 Golden Valley Road, Apt. 3, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55411

Jennifer Suskind
Intern

Parker School a Magnet in Environmental Science

Parker Elementary School in East Oakland, the site of the Inside Out Academy, has taken a bold step in the past school year: the staff has voted to accept the magnet school designation from the Oakland Unified School District.

The designation will allow the school to build on six years of the Inside Out Academy and participate with the Commencement 2000 program of the U.S.D.A Forest Service.

The Inside Out Academy is an environmental education program founded by Running-Grass and a group of progressive teachers at the school. The first organizational sponsor of the program was American Youth Hostels. During the third year of program-funding, it became the first official program of Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education.

The San Francisco Foundation provided financial support for the program for three years prior to the magnet designation.

The founders of the Inside Out Academy first saw the importance of providing environmental education to children of color in an urban core environment. But they also saw the possibilities of linking the program to overall school reform, which they did by participating broadly in the renovation of the curricula and the development of a positive leadership climate under the direction of the school Principal Mr. Jerry Payne.

Many ideas about a multicultural environmental education were developed at Parker, where the student body is over 90% African American with an increasing number of Latino and students of S.E. Asian descent. Three Circles is in the process of writing about our experiences at the school with a focus on how we did environmental education in such an ethnically diverse context.

Three Circles staff conducted a three day in-service for Parker teachers recently to bring them up to date on the six-year history of environmental education at the school, including the curricular development, work with the parents and field study trips with the students.

The Inside Out Academy is a featured case-study in a book by Abby Rusky, being prepared for publication by the College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. The book is titled,

K-12 Environmental Education Initiatives Handbook, and is scheduled for publication in the autumn of 1993.

For further background information on the Inside Out Academy please see Issue 1 and 2, Vol. 1 of the Three Circles Center Newsletter.

San Francisco Foundation Publishes Report on Environmental Education in the Bay Area

In the autumn of 1992 the San Francisco Foundation, a major funder of environmental education, commissioned a study on the status of environmental education in the Bay Area. Two consultants, Running-Grass of Three Circles Center and Steve Christiano of Christiano and Associates worked closely with Jack Chin, Environmental Fellow with the San Francisco Foundation, and Jane Rodgers, the Program Officer.

After interviews around the Bay Area and review by an outside panel, the report was published in March as Status and Opportunities for Environmental Education in the Bay Area. The report investigates emerging challenges to the profession, such as cultural diversity, school reform and restructuring, partnerships and collaborations, career development issues and environmental ethics.

The Foundation is very interested in comments on the report. For a copy, please write to Jane Rodgers, San Francisco Foundation, 695 Market Street, San Francisco, CA.

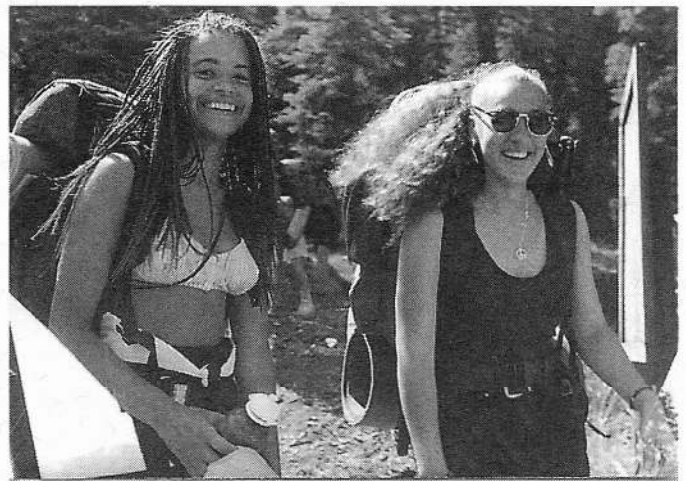
A Rebirth for the Echo Lake Environmental Education Camp?

The Echo Lake Environmental Education Camp, well-known to the children and youth of Berkeley, California, who attended it over the years or found employment as counselors, did not occur during the summer of 1993. In a move that was expected by some but which took the community by surprise, CAMPS, Inc., the nonprofit which ran the session and the well-known Cazadero Music and Arts Camp, ceased operations late in 1992.

Three Circles Center had a major role in designing and implementing the program during the summers of 1991 and 1992. We found the setting at Echo Lake and the diversity of the children and staff conducive to experimenting with culture, art and environment. The program during the summer of 1992 came very close to our intentions of creating a multicultural environmental education experience in a residential setting.

The staff at every level, and the campers were representative of the ethnic diversity of the East Bay. The program design closely reflected Native American and Caribbean cultural and artistic traditions. We were fortunate to have playwright White Cloud and poet Avotcja Jilantiro on staff to help in those regards.

Jennifer Dobertin, formerly of Slide Ranch, worked the art deeply into the fabric of each day.



Lisa Cohen, a graduate of Antioch New England and now Head Teacher at Slide Ranch, brought in the best of environmental education through day hikes and a memorable simulation around the camp fire about development of park land in Berkeley.

Kirk McLaughlin and Sharon Barstow did excellent jobs on the backpacking and worked closely with White Cloud and Avotcja to incorporate ceremonies into the trips.

Mori Constantino continued his service as Camp Nurse, firemaker, counselor to staff, etc., and saved the day with his Apple Stylewriter.

Three Circles interns, Yve Susskind of the University of Michigan and Shirley Thompson of Harvard University, were indispensable assistants and analysts of camp dynamics.

Kathy Robinson of Richmond brought her exceptional and warm people skills to the job of Head Counselor and went the extra mile for students and staff alike.

Lela Hill was excellent as "Mother of All" and her behind-the-scenes work was always visible to the discerning eye.

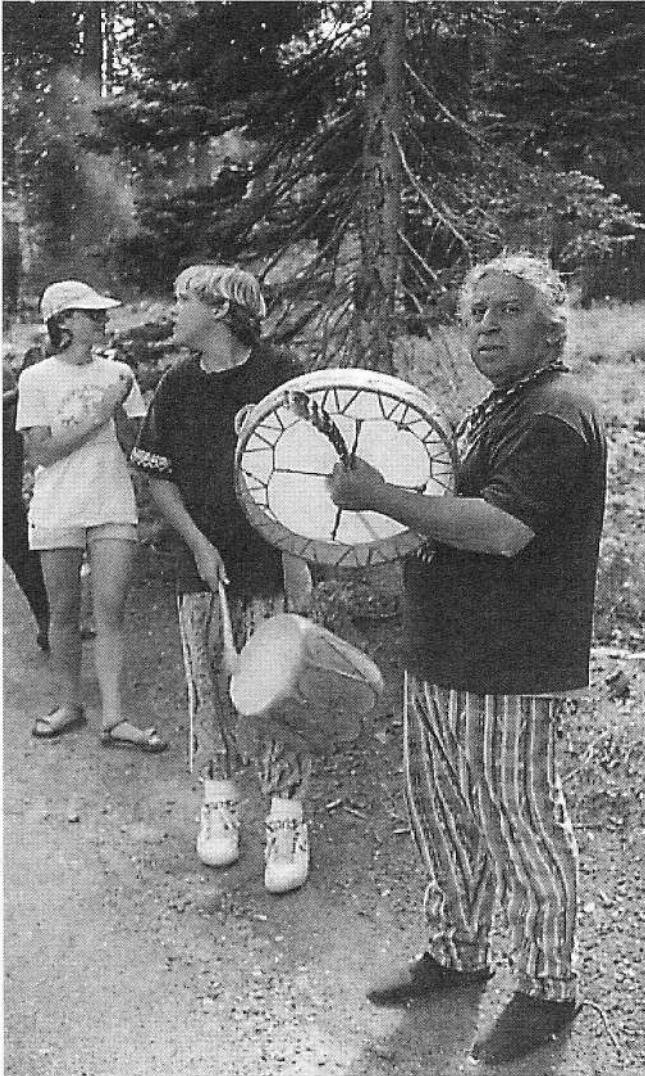
Dan Benevidas and Lisa Abel kept the site together day by day, as chief caretakers.

Running-Grass, the camp director, was summoned back to San Francisco late in the session to deliver his child, a daughter, Ajouah Grass.

Three Circles Center is now seeking funding to continue the Camp and its development of a residential multicultural environmental education experience in the Sierra. Plans call for the camp session to be woven into a year-round program involving a Berkeley middle school. We hope to initiate this program with a summer session of the camp in 1994.

Running-Grass

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION BIBLIOGRAPHY



Photos:

Above:
White Cloud led the camp in shield-making, and his authentic use and instruction in ceremony kept our activities on a higher plane.

Opposite Page Top:
Shirley and Niema returned from the backpacking trip with a strong friendship.

Opposite Page Bottom:
Avotcja

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Three Circles Center Receives the Environmental Achievement Award

During an awards ceremony in San Francisco last May, Three Circles Center received an Environmental Achievement Award from the Environmental Careers Organization.

The Environmental Achievement Award "honors organizations and people whose works have noticeably improved environmental quality in the communities." Criteria for selection included:

- They used innovative approaches to respond to complex problems;
- Created improbable alliances;
- Set standards for environmental quality;
- Created cost-saving solutions, good for the environment and, good for business;
- Created opportunities to diversify the next generation of strong and wise environmental leaders.

In the award, Three Circles Center was noted for, "it's commitment and hard work in bringing programs for multicultural education and training to the environmental field, and demonstrating the common bonds that link the environment with people of all races, nationalities and ages."

Three Circles Center thanks the Environmental Careers Organization for the award.

*Photo Credit: Environmental Careers Organization, 1993
From left to right: Terry Hove, ECO Regional Director in San Francisco, Running-Grass, Director of Three Circles Center, Jeff Cook, Executive Director of ECO.*



About the Border Design in this Issue

The border design used in this issue is contributed by Kay Antunez, a board member of Three Circles Center and the California Coordinator of Project Learning Tree. This design motif originates from the coastal Chancay culture of modern Peru, 1200-1400 A.D. The iconography consists of a wave pattern, suggesting the ocean, a step pattern representing the mountains, and an interconnected bird and fish. These three elements are frequently found in Chancay textiles and demonstrate the interconnectedness of art and the environment in ancient cultures.

Three Circles Center Receives Major Grants

Three Circles Center has received a major grant from the Goldman Environmental Fund of San Francisco to evaluate and develop our workshops and trainings on multicultural issues. The development of these offerings will greatly benefit the environmental education community who attend our educational events, as well as our consulting clients. We have also received a grant from the San Francisco Foundation to offer technical assistance on multicultural issues to environmental education programs in the Bay Area. A grant was also received from the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation. We thank the Goldman Fund, the San Francisco Foundation, and NEETF for their commitment to environmental education and their confidence in Three Circles Center!

Three Circles Center Receives Seed Money to begin Monograph Series

A small seed grant has been received from Garland Wood to begin a series of monographs on the environmental perspectives of American ethnic groups. The monographs will be written as provocative historical essays to highlight the environmental values and perspectives of various ethnic groups. The first essay will take up the African American experience.