



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA Hon (Dalhousie University, 2013)

“Connectedness with nature and mindfulness on in-depth nature experiences with adolescents: an exploration of a combined approach to combat crises in environmental and human health”

School of Environmental Studies

Thursday, April 12, 2018

10:00 A.M.

David Turpin Building

Room B255

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. James Rowe, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Duncan Taylor, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Lenora Marcellus, School of Nursing, UVic

Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory look into the use of mindfulness practice on in-depth nature experiences to determine if the practice has benefit to the participant, their outdoor experience, and overall connectedness with nature. An original research project examined three groups of adolescents from St. Michaels University School Outdoor Education program in Victoria, BC, Canada, as they hiked the Juan de Fuca trail. Two of the three groups undertook a simple mindfulness protocol to determine its outcomes. Mindfulness practice was determined to be a useful instrument towards alleviating stress and anxiety associated with aspects of in-depth outdoor experiences, such as morning preparations. Participants who practiced mindfulness on the trip asked fewer questions about the future and remained present more often than those who did not practice mindfulness. A further finding was that there are aspects of mindfulness inherent in in-depth nature experiences, such as sitting around a fire. These inherent mindfulness moments should be encouraged as they provide benefit to trip experiences, and potentially towards greater connectedness with nature. Overall, evidence suggests mindfulness as a useful tool for the benefit of human well-being and nature connection. However, more research is needed to further identify the magnitude and mechanisms of the benefit.