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

of

ELISABETH TILSTRA

BA (University of Tennessee, 2011)

“Mature Girls, Squirrelly Boys, and “Wily” Risk: Gendered Risk in Outdoor Adventure Education”

School of Child and Youth Care

Friday, November 30, 2018
1:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Douglas Magnuson, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)
Dr. Annalee Lepp, Department of Gender Studies (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Denise Mitten, Sustainability Education and Adventure Education, Prescott College

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Katharina Clausius, School of Music, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This thesis critically analyzes how gender intersects with risk processes and practices in outdoor adventure education. I focus on how language, binary logic, and societal norms work together to gender risk and offer three ways that risk may be gendered in the context of youth outdoor adventure education courses with youth. First, I discuss the use of hierarchical language, and the gendering practices of order, labeling, and omission that places girls and girls’ needs as external or additional to a “neutral” masculine norm. Next, I analyze how an adherence to a rigid binary in the definition and conceptualization of risk parallels and perpetuates a gender binary that prioritizes masculinity and boys above femininity, girls, and non-binary youth. Third, I consider how societal norms influence stereotypes, assumptions, and expectations that gender risk on courses. I also examine seven situational practices that embody and illustrate gendered risk on outdoor adventure education courses with youth participants: gender as a risk, group composition, risk policies, challenge with non-binary identities, mom/dad instructor roles, hygiene instructional lessons, and transformation stories. In my discussion, I offer suggestions for what this research might practically offer outdoor adventure education and youth programming broadly.