

Learning is an experience in Acton Walkabout

By SUE LEIN
When I started high school in Acton in 1974, learning was completely a classroom experience. Students attended classes took notes given by the teacher, and occasionally went on a field trip. There was very little thinking done by students during the 6 1/2 hours they spent at school, what was done was memorizing what teachers said.
We memorized the capitals of Europe, mathematical for-

mulas, and wrote book reviews. It was not until 1976 that Clare Henderson introduced a new style of learning, which actually involved thinking, to the Grade 12 and 13 students of Acton high school and not until this past September that I had the experience of Walkabout.

The idea of the Walkabout is adapted from the Australian Aborigines' rite of passage from child to adult. A young

boy is sent alone into the wilderness, and must either survive and return an adult or die. The youth has only himself to depend on for survival and must draw upon his inner and spiritual resources, confront his fears and learn to understand himself as well as the society of which he is a part.

Maurice Gibbons, a professor of education at Simon Fraser University and author of several books dealing with education has put

forth the idea of the Walkabout. In an article he states, "The young North American is faced with written examinations that test skills very far removed from the actual experience he will have in real life... (he) looks forward to (tests on the survival technique of Aborigines) as subjects and tests sucked dry of the richness of experience, in the end having little to do directly with anything critical or even significant that he anticipates being involved in as an adult - except the pursuit of more formal education."

Gibbons continues by saying that students in most schools are deprived of any training in decision making and only rarely make decisions of any importance. They are not taught to implement their ideas and later reassess these ideas, the cycle primary to a pattern of continuing growth.

I agree with Gibbons, as does Henderson, who decided to act on the Walkabout idea when his daughter, in Grade 5 at the time, was given a Grade 6 reader as an enrichment program. Henderson couldn't see this as true enrichment and didn't want this pattern to continue at Acton high school, so implemented his own version of the Walkabout, based on Maurice Gibbons' ideas.

Through the Walkabout, which counts for 20 per cent of a student's final English mark, and must be at least 15 hours long, he hoped to give students a greater awareness of themselves, as well as those around them, which they don't usually get in a classroom situation. The basic test of the Walkabout is in a student deciding what to do and then doing it on his own.

In order to experience the Walkabout, a student chooses what he feels is most interesting and valuable for him to learn from one of the five challenge areas: adventure and

field experience; creative and aesthetic experience; community service experience; practical skills experience; or logical inquiry and research experience.

Students must think of their own challenge, as Henderson refuses to suggest ideas to them. For my own Walkabout, in my final semester at Acton high I chose to write sports articles for The Herald. As Journalism was the career I planned to pursue, I felt this would be a good experience in deciding whether newspaper writing was what I really wanted.

My Walkabout fit into the Practical Skills Experience area, and through it I have gained much experience in my future career. I covered all the specific objectives demanded by the Walkabout: increased knowledge; new skills; experimental; self-chosen; challenging; development of self-confidence; and development of social skills. Through

my association with The Herald I have a basic knowledge of newspapers to take with me to college.

Henderson anticipated three very significant results in designing the Walkabout enrichment program. These involve a student learning to become competent, independent and decisive.

Learning competence involves the ability to accomplish something which is both interesting and useful to the individual, and which the student can be proud of.

The student becomes emotionally prepared to teach himself new and different tasks and teach these new tasks to himself. In this way the learning process can continue after formal education has ended, and in some cases become more satisfying and enriching.

The second goal is individual independence. A student invents his own project, carries it out, evaluates it himself, and

thus gains from the experience. The independence of the entire project helps students to become self-motivated, instead of always depending on others to decide what they should do.

Being successful in these Walkabout projects encourages the student to attempt more self-initiated projects.

The third aim of the Walkabout is to teach students to become decisive. They are able to see many possibilities but choose only the one which they feel will be the most beneficial. This ability to be decisive is one of the basic traits of a happy and satisfied person.

Henderson feels the Walkabout "changes you positively; adding to your skills and your understanding of self and others. It enhances your emotional growth so that you become a strong, mature, resourceful adult, always learning, always

growing, enjoying fully the richness of life."

Although there will always be those zombies who refuse to become self-motivated, who just drift, through life aimlessly, the Walkabout program helps those others to learn the satisfaction of self-achievement early enough in life that they may change their patterns and realize their full potential.

This type of enrichment program goes a long way beyond the confines of traditional education, and more of these programs should be encouraged, not only as enrichment but also as the basic core of subject courses.

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Attendance, revenues double, CVCA hears

Semi-annual figures presented to the Credit Valley Conservation Authority Thursday show nearly twice as many people attending conservation areas compared to the same period in 1977.

And the membership of the CVCA was also happy to hear that losses on operations have

been cut and revenues have increased nearly 100 per cent to \$47,134.73 from \$22,872.50 recorded for the same period last year.

But while the figures are welcomed, they also reflect the winter program held this year at Terra Cotta conservation Area, figures which were not

calculated in the 1977 comparison.

Frank Laviers, chairman of the CVCA parks and recreation committee remarked that losses on operations at Terra Cotta, the largest CVCA area, have been cut by about \$7,500 and "we are getting close to breaking even."

Attendance at CVCA areas increased to 51,721 from 26,949 last year based on four persons per vehicle and 60 persons per bus admitted.

Terra Cotta received 38,904 of the visitors during the first six months of 1978 up from 17,976 in 1977. But, according to authority chairman Grant Clark, the swimming pool at the conservation area is "still not making money."

He noted that only \$1,446.50 had been received from its operation.

While Terra Cotta earned nearly \$10,000 in revenue the cost of operations at the area reached \$53,021 more than last year.

Revenue from CVCA operations is raised through four areas: Belfountain, Meadowvale, Monora and Terra Cotta.

Restoration studied for area lime kilns

Credit Valley Conservation Authority (CVCA) will investigate the possibility of restoration of the lime kilns at the Limehouse Conservation Area.

The recommendation by the Credit Valley Conservation Authority Foundation, an advisory board to the authority, was approved at the 18th meeting of the authority held Thursday in Steadwale.

CVCA staff is expected to contact Esqueing Historical Society for information on the historical significance of the lime kilns while an Experience '78 employee, working with the

authority for the summer, is to survey surrounding conservation authorities and report on restoration of similar structures.

Authority chairman A.G. Clark said the CVCA will have to consider restoration carefully since several other projects are under way by conservation authorities and other agencies in the southern Ontario area.

He hinted that should the Limehouse kilns provide a uniqueness not shown in other projects the CVCA should consider the restoration.

Assistant approved for nature program

Approval has been given for the hiring of a part-time assistant to teach at Credit Valley Conservation Authority education centres.

The move would eliminate the complete booking of education officer George Roberts early in the season as was the case this year.

CVCA membership Thursday approved \$7,000 to test the expanded program four days a week, 10 months of the year.

The present CVCA education program is run in co-operation with boards of education throughout the watershed a-

rea as an extension of the ministry of education curriculum in schools.

The funds allocated to the program would purchase magnifying glasses, rainwear, rubber boots, snowshoes and miscellaneous materials, and pay for the assistant.

"We have a good education program and George (Roberts, the education officer) is doing an excellent job and in my opinion he's doing far more than he needs to do," Halton Hills CVCA member Gail Mallory said. "He needs an assistant."

Mr. Roberts said the assistant would help to add to the curriculum that is provided students through the schools.

More than 4,000 students have passed through the CVCA education centre as the program got off the ground.

Instead of the maximum capacity of one class per day handled by Mr. Roberts, the use of an assistant could double the class capacity, provide economy of school bus use and eventually work into a full capacity use by school boards.

Education classes are conducted at Terra Cotta and Orangeville.

Ravine project set, method undetermined

Negotiations are expected to take place between the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and Halton Hills on the methods and costs of erosion control along the Metcalfe Ravine in Georgetown.

A full authority meeting Thursday accepted report showing cost of erosion control

on the ravine as between \$194,300 and \$466,100.

Halton Hills Coun. Les Duby, a member of the authority, was given assurances that the initial start on the project would be maintained within the approximately \$55,000 available for funding through the municipality for 1978 with

the balance being budgeted in future years.

Joan Rollings, information officer for the authority, said the conservation authority will be discussing whether the town is prepared to use corrugated steel, concrete construction or gabion walls for the project. The project is expected to begin this year.

The ravine has been the subject of continuing complaint by Metcalfe Court residents who have seen their backyards slowly slip away.

Approval of the project must also be received from the Ontario ministry of natural resources.

Insulator blamed for blackout
A pole-top fire on the 8th Line south of the Glen Williams distributing station was responsible for Friday afternoon's two-hour power blackout.

Peter Greenway, manager of the Ontario Hydro office in Brampton, said the cause of the fire was probably contaminated insulators.

"Dirt piled up on top of them for a long, long time, without any water to wash them off," Mr. Greenway said. The fire caused a 44,000-kv line to drop on to a 4,800-kv line lower on the pole, causing the circuits to short out.

The area affected by the blackout included parts of Georgetown, Glen Williams, Ballinatal and Erin. Power was out for two hours and four minutes in some areas, and two hours and eleven minutes in other areas. About 1,900 to 1,100 customers were affected.

Mr. Greenway said that in spite of drought conditions, Ontario Hydro is not expecting a rash of such fires. In this case, he said, there was a long dry period, then rain, then the fire. He also said that road conditions were exceptionally dirty in that area of the fire, because of road reconstruction going on in the area.

"We do our best to wash the insulators down, but there are a lot of lines," Mr. Greenway said.

Stop log controls eyed for area dam

The latest in a series of reports on alleviation of ice jamming and flooding at Glen Williams recommends the installation of a control structure at the Paper Mill Dam.

The recommendation adopted by the Credit Valley Conservation Authority Thursday for further study was made by the consulting firm of Cryslar and Latham.

The control structure, also to include a fishway for migration of salmon and trout along the Credit River, would contain stop logs for control of the water level.

Cryslar and Latham report says the alternative, which would eliminate a previous recommendation for removal of the dam, is "feasible to mitigate the ice jamming in Glen Williams by channelization, dredging and installing a

control structure at the Paper Mill Dam."

CVCA chairman Grant Clark said the proposal would require the approval of the Ontario ministry of natural resources.

He also recommended that the CVCA consider discussions with Halton Region for preliminary design work. Negotiations would also have to take place with the owner of the property abutting the dam.

Meanwhile the ministry of natural resources is investigating installation of a fishway at the Reid and McCarty Dams at Streetsville to allow salmon and trout to move upstream.

CVCA has also approved a staff recommendation that a soils test be conducted at the Norval (Julian Reed) Dam to determine whether fish can migrate over or under the structure.

Lawn watering important

Watering is an important part of summer lawn care, according to horticultural experts in the lawn and garden section of Canadian Industries Limited.

Lawns tend to brown out and go dormant in dry, hot, mid-summer weather, and require both food and water if they are to be healthy and green.

According to the CIL experts lawns should be watered thoroughly just once a week. Never give it a daily sprinkle. If only the surface is wetted then the grass roots will develop close to the surface and a few days of dry, hot weather will do more

damage than if the roots are deep in the soil.

To determine how much water you are putting on the lawn, place a large, empty can on the area being watered. When it has collected two inches of water you've applied enough. You can then move the sprinkler to another part of the lawn and repeat.

If puddles form, you are watering too fast. Reduce the water flow, and aerate the lawn with a fork so puddles drain away.

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