A Case Study of Outdoor Education in the Burnaby School District: Supports, Barriers and Suggestions for Future Provision

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to understand the history and current state of outdoor education in the Burnaby School District, in British Columbia, Canada. This qualitative research includes perspectives of a group of educators who have been involved in outdoor education. Outdoor education is defined through the interviewees’ interpretations. Data in the form of semi-structured interviews describe a school district with many small-scale school-based initiatives, with no overarching vision or action plan for outdoor education. The interviewees describe support from parents, students, administrators and the school board for the school-based initiatives. Barriers to further developing outdoor education in the district are identified and categorized as risk/liability concerns, the school board, teacher commitment, unions, and funding. The study offers ideas for building capacity for outdoor education in Burnaby by drawing from relevant literature, pertinent government documents and interviewees suggestions.
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Lastly, I would like to thank the Burnaby educators who participated in this project. Their time and ideas have made this experience valuable. I hope to apply the insight they shared to my career as a teacher and to make a difference to students’ educational experiences.
1.0 Introduction

The city of Burnaby is situated in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (BC), Canada. It is comprised of dense forests, lakes and is a short distance from the Coast Mountain Range. The Burnaby School District includes forty three elementary schools and thirteen secondary schools which educate 25,464 students (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 2009). At present, outdoor education is not included in any of the district’s public documents available on their website (http://sd41.bc.ca/). This suggests that the school board does not take account of outdoor education in the district’s vision, which I believe is a missed educational opportunity.

Outdoor education, as a field of study, is not recognized as a part of the prescribed curriculum in BC. Some students do partake in outdoor education in BC public schools through integrated programmes (embedded into curricular courses such as math, physical education, science, etc…) or via extra curricular initiatives. As a non-statutory part of the curriculum, programme development and long term presence is often vulnerable.

At present there are provincial government initiatives that provide opportunities for outdoor education. Such initiatives include: The Daily Physical Activity Requirements and The Climate Action Charter. They focus on students engaging in a prescribed amount of physical activity as a part of their graduation requirements, and on encouraging environmental responsibility through education, respectively (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 2008a).

As a teacher with the Burnaby School District I became interested in outdoor education during my time working in a programme for disenfranchised youth. After some investigation I found that other school districts in the Lower Mainland ran full-time outdoor education programmes (see Appendix A), and wondered why I had not come across any programmes in Burnaby. During an impromptu conversation with the Burnaby School’s superintendent, I was told that Burnaby was a leader in the field of outdoor education in the 1980s but programmes were cut in the latter part of the decade.
(personal communication, June 2006). As a result, I became curious about the history of outdoor education in Burnaby.

The purpose of this study is to learn about the successes and the barriers to outdoor education in the past and present in the Burnaby School District. My primary intention is to gain a clearer picture of OE in Burnaby, and use the findings to generate suggestions accordingly. It is my hope that by interviewing Burnaby educators and connecting their ideas to relevant literature, that this study may assist those attempting similar tasks. Furthermore, this research can provide practical information to the Burnaby School Board, administrators, staff, parents and students. Although the major drive of this study is local in its scope, the implications can also be extensive, and helpful to any school system which may want to develop or maintain outdoor education in their schools.
2.0 Research Design

The rationale for choosing methods in this study is based on theoretical, practical and ethical considerations. In this chapter each of these issues are explored through the lens of the primary focus of this project: to gain a clearer picture of outdoor education in the Burnaby School District.

2.1 Theoretical Considerations

I am interested in the subjective nature of how people make meaning of their experience, rather than measurable outcomes. This places my study within the qualitative interpretive approach, rather than a quantitative or positivist methodology. Stake (1995) distinguishes qualitative from quantitative studies in three ways: the search between explanation and understanding the purpose of the inquiry, a personal and impersonal role of the researcher, and the distinction between discovery and constructed knowledge. The case study research design is often employed in constructivist research studies. The selected approach for this project is interpretive case study.

Interpretive

The term interpretive refers to seeing individuals’ interpretations of their social context and identifying theory from their stories (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). An interpretive framework can be described as the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe the interpretive paradigm (also referred to as the constructivist paradigm) as “a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (p. 35). Hence the interpretation is generated by the participants, the researcher and the interaction between them.

The primary design of this study involves interviewing Burnaby educators and learning from their experiences and developing theory from them. “Interviews are used as a resource for understanding how individuals make sense of their social world and act within it” (May, 2001, p. 142). Furthermore interpretive research looks at the data as
being “glossed with the meaning of and purposes of those people who are their source” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 p. 23). Interviewing educators with different beliefs, ages and levels of involvement elucidates each of their diverse stories. Collectively their stories yield a range of theories based on their contexts in Burnaby schools.

This research is interpretive not only by the participants but also by the researcher. “Standard qualitative designs call for persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness” (Stake, 1995 p. 41). Robson (2002) furthers this statement by stating that the researcher ought to reflect of their own bias and how it affects all aspects of research. It is suitable that I recognize my characteristics and experiences that might affect the outcomes of the research. Some of these are: I am a white, married, middle-class, Canadian woman with an educational portfolio of an undergraduate degree in science, a post graduate diploma in teaching, and a post graduate diploma in outdoor education. My memories of outdoor education experiences as a child in school or with my family are limited. However, I spent every summer during my school years at a summer camp, where I experienced many outdoor activities. I began pursuing activities such as hiking, camping, backcountry skiing, and bike touring in my early adult years, which coincided with my teacher training and first year of teaching. In that year I taught in an alternate programme in a Burnaby school, with very little alternative education, except that of smaller class size. It was then that I became interested, curious and compelled by the apparent merits of outdoor education. These characteristics and experiences influence this research.

Interpretation of ideas between the researcher and participant occurred during the interviews, and also in the analysis of the data. Cohen and Manion (1994) describe that interview subjects often look retrospectively and reconstruct the past with present feelings which can be influenced by the presence of the researcher. In other words, the retelling of the past is influenced by the lived experiences of the participant after the event, and the experience of being interviewed by someone.
In Stake’s book the *Art of Case Study Research* (1995) he writes about the many roles of the researcher; the interpreter role is referred to as one who “recognizes and substantiates new meanings” (p. 105). From my perspective this role of substantiating meaning occurs after some reflection, once the researcher is working on data analysis. In the analysis of the data I relied on personal interpretation to group ideas and experiences of the participants into categories in order to draw out significant messages from the data. It is clear that this process of interpretation is influenced by the researcher. However, as Hammersley (1993) claims; all data are interpreted at different stages during the research process. In response, concepts of trustworthiness and credibility are important to the validity of the research. As a countermeasure to bias, the interviewees were presented with a draft of the discussion chapter and were given an opportunity to respond. One participant asked that changes be made to some of his interpretations from the interview. I edited the discussion chapter to include these changes.

**Case Study**

A case study is often bound by time and geography and activity (Creswell, 2003). This ‘case’ is focused on the timeframe of 1970s to the present, in the Burnaby school district in British Columbia, with the activity being outdoor education.

Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities. (Stake, 1995 p. 64)

This study attempts to elucidate descriptions and perceptions of the educators of outdoor education programmes. Initially I had to ask myself: What group of people will help understand the issues related to outdoor education in Burnaby? For that criterion, a diverse group of individuals were needed. I sought individuals who were Burnaby employees that represented a range of such characteristics as: role within the district, grade levels of instruction and time period of involvement. It is challenging as the researcher to frame the work at the onset of the study, since many aspects of the case were unknown to me. As I became more acquainted with the case I was able to redefine
issues, and was able to do so with the style of interview which is explained in more detail later in this chapter.

**Interpretive Case Study**

The real focus is to understand the particular nature of the case rather than creating generalizations that can be applied elsewhere. Kvale (2007) explains that researchers should be asking if the knowledge gained is transferable to other situations, not whether it can be generalized globally. This line of thought helps guide the process of the study. Merriam (1988) states that interpretive case studies are “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2) and “can be construed as tentative hypothesis that help structure future research; hence the case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base” (p. 32).

### 2.2 Practical Considerations

A predominant reason for choosing interviews as the primary research method in this project was practical. Practical factors such as access and availability, time limitations and the purpose of the research were the main considerations.

**Access and Availability**

Initially, document analysis was the method that I was going to employ for this research. I intended to collect minutes from the Burnaby School District’s Board of Directors’ meetings during the timeframe of the discontinuation of outdoor education programmes in the district, and use content analysis to explore my main research question.

An archivist at the board office files meeting minutes by date and by main topics. She did not find anything related to outdoor education in the files, so she instructed me to find out about the timeframe of the discontinuation of programmes. I began speaking to colleagues who have been with the district for a while and was connected to a former teacher/school board administrator who was closely linked to outdoor education. The conversation with him highlighted that the story of outdoor education in Burnaby encompasses different timeframes and initiatives, so finding any mention of it in the
documentation at the board was going to be unlikely. It became clear that the method of interviewing would be more appropriate to clarify history in Burnaby.

**Time Limitations**
The scope of this research is limited by the two year period, during which I was working full time. A small sample size was used, and some ideas of interest are not included in this research. Judith Bell (2005) states that although smaller projects rarely dive deeply into validity measurements, they are often able to examine items critically. It is my hope that the data collected from the small sample provides a critical examination of the history of outdoor education in Burnaby.

Although I was not able to examine areas of interest such as interviewing educators in other school districts, and interviewing active members in outdoor education related organisations, I did create a database of outdoor education programmes in the Lower Mainland (see Appendix A).

**The Purpose of the Research**
The main purpose of this project is to learn about outdoor education initiatives in the past and present, identify possible barriers and to respond with suggestions for outdoor education programmes in the future in Burnaby. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that the interview can serve as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships. The intent of this study is to try to identify the factors related to programme creation, delivery and, in some cases, demise.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this research. Each interviewee received the same questions, but different probes were used in each interview depending on the nature of the conversation. Semi-structured interviews can help create a basis for comparison in the analysis of the interviews, while allowing room for clarification and a dialogue to build in each interview (May, 2001). Listening to one interviewee’s story helped develop an understanding of the relationship of those variables. Asking the same questions to all of the interviewees allowed for a comparison of variables when overlapping the stories. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview provided an
opportunity for clarification and elaboration of the individual’s explanation of their role and views of outdoor education in Burnaby (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Interviewing colleagues allowed for ideas to flow for the purpose of research, but also provided an opportunity to generate ideas to act upon. In this way the interviews allow for participatory action, by bringing together the stakeholders, identifying a question to generate ideas for collaboration (Esterberg, 2002).

Purposive sampling is choosing participants according to known characteristics (Silverman, 2000; May, 2001; Quinn Patton, 1990). In this study participants were chosen because of their involvement in outdoor education in Burnaby. They were also selected based on their position as teacher, school administrator and school board administrator. The intent was to learn from four to five people in different positions in order to get a well rounded view of outdoor education in Burnaby over time.

At first it was not clear how I was going to find the appropriate people to interview. Yet in my position as a teacher in the district I was able to discuss the project with colleagues and ask them about potential contacts. Initially, two educators were suggested to me. Both of the interviewees suggested a school principal who then suggested I interview a retired Burnaby elementary school teacher, who suggested I interview teacher the district programme consultant for outdoor education. This type of sampling is what is known as snowball or chain sampling. Quinn Patton (1990) describes it as a type of purposive sampling that “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for the study, good interview subjects” (p.182).

The research participants included teachers and administrators, both working and retired. So a recount of the past and present from different perspectives is included in the design of the study. However, these participants represented mostly elementary and intermediate levels educators, whereas secondary staff were not represented. As a secondary teacher I wanted to seek more information. A colleague referred me to Charles
Hou, who is a retired Burnaby teacher. It was important to change the sample size in order to get a wider picture of outdoor education in Burnaby.

The justifications of the small sample size in this study are two-fold. Firstly, the sample size fits the purpose of the research (May, 2001); an examination of variables related to outdoor education in Burnaby. Silverman (2000) explains that it is hard to make generalisations from small purposive samples, but that they are useful when presenting variables related to a main topic. The second reason for the small sample size is due to time and resource limitation as explained above.

Upon collection and analysis of the data, it became clear that information related to the purpose of the study was missing; the range of current outdoor initiatives was not fully understood. In response a secondary method of email questionnaires (see Appendix B) were sent to district administrators (see Table 2 in Section 3.2). These data makes up a small component of the study, yet adds to the current picture of Burnaby programmes.

2.3 Ethical Issues

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) emphasize the importance of the researcher receiving access and acceptance from the participating organisations. This was of particular importance to my role not only as a researcher but also to my position as an employee within the Burnaby School District, and as well as a graduate student at The University of Edinburgh.

There is district protocol that a research proposal must be submitted to the School Board Prior to commencing any part of the research. The research proposal was accepted spring of 2009, and then I began the interviewing phase of the project. I later sought for an addition to the research process, and asked for approval to send an email questionnaire to school administrators. This request was approved.

The Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh also has an ethics approval process. This project falls within the Level 1 categorisation of ethics which
applies to a ‘straightforward' non-intervention study. The application was signed and approved by my dissertation supervisor, Peter Allison.

Kvale (1996) explains the ethics related to the interview process can be broken down into three components: informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interview.

Silverman (2005) explains informed consent with these three points: relevant information about the research is given to interviewees to make decisions about their participation; ensuring that subjects understand the information; and ensuring the participation is voluntary. Each participant received a one-page programme outline (see Appendix C) and a Confidentiality Statement and Informed Consent (see Appendix D) sent to them via email prior to the interview process. These files outlined the main goals of the project, explained my role in the process and described that teachers and administrators were being interviewed.

Issues related to confidentiality were also included in these files. As Gray (2004) asserts, promises of confidentiality need to be well considered, and kept. Upon consideration, it was my preference to use participants’ names and roles in their organisations in the report, to help elucidate the social context behind their stories. Participants were given the option of having their identities concealed, or have their names used in the project. Each participant stated that they did not mind having their names and Burnaby positions included in the dissertation. I explained to the participants that the information gathered will be reported in the dissertation. I also stated that if other institutions, such as the Burnaby School District or educational journals, are interested in the report interviewees that I will ask them for permission, and, as stated earlier, provide a copy for them to read prior to publication.

2.4 Description of Interviewees:

Ron Pearson is a retired school counselor. He worked for the district of Burnaby starting in the early 1970s. He worked for twenty years in the Challenge Programme, a
therapeutic programme for ‘kids who couldn't fit the regular school system’. The programme was based on providing outdoor challenges to kids.

Dino Klarich is currently a school principal at Glenwood Elementary. He first began teaching in Burnaby in the early 1990s. He worked with Ric Tesan at Kitchener elementary and helped further develop the outdoor education programme at the school. He brought outdoor education initiatives with him to the other schools he’s worked at, and to his current school.

Ed Silva-White Ed taught in many school districts and ran an outdoor pursuits business during his career. His primary role in Burnaby was Supervisor of Physical Education and Athletics and it evolved to encompass outdoor education. He ran professional development outdoor education workshops for teachers, and developed policy around outdoor education at the district level.

Ric Tesan is a retired Burnaby elementary teacher. He is currently facilitating outdoor field trips in various Burnaby schools. Ric ran outdoor education programmes and spent most of his career at Kitchener elementary. At Kitchener, he developed a winter outdoor skills camp with both Dino and Ron. Over his career he collaborated with other teachers interested in outdoor education with the intent to build more outdoor programmes in the district.

Tammy Wirick: Tammy is the current Physical Education, Athletics and Healthy Schools Programme Consultant with the Burnaby School District. She completed a minor in environmental education at Simon Fraser University. She taught in Surrey and Burnaby schools. She ran many outdoor initiatives for intermediate grades.

Charles Hou is a retired Burnaby secondary social studies teacher. He spearheaded outdoor trips such as the Harrison Lilooet Gold Rush Trail, and canoeing trips to Fort Langley. He integrated curricular learning with experiences the outdoors. Currently, he facilitates trips with school groups and just completed a book about the history of the Brigade Trail.
3.0 Presentation of Findings

The information gathered about outdoor education in the Burnaby School District is organized into four main sections.

3.1 Description of the term ‘outdoor education’
3.2 An overview of initiatives
3.3 Support of provisions
3.4 Barriers and implications for practice

The data are composed primarily as quotes from the interview process for sections 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4. The overview of initiatives in section 3.2 and the synopsis of section 3.4 are presented in the form of tables.

3.1 Views of Outdoor Education:

Outdoor education is amorphous by name and definition. It can be referred to as adventure education, environmental education, experiential education, wilderness education, etc. At times, terms are used interchangeably; they can also reflect a difference in philosophy, pedagogy and goals. I chose to leave a definition of outdoor education open in order to understand how interviewees constructed a meaning of outdoor education for themselves. I asked the interview subjects two questions to help elucidate their ideas of outdoor education:

1- Can you describe the process you went through to get involved in outdoor education?
2- In your opinion, how do you think outdoor education should be incorporated in Burnaby schools today?

Through the interviewees’ interpretations, I discovered that they gleaned their sense of outdoor education through their own personal experiences and their experiences as educators in Burnaby. For example, Ron stated early on in the interview process that he no longer uses the term outdoor education; he uses ‘experiential education’. Quite
simply, experiential education can be considered as learning through experience. John Dewey (1938), the early authority of experiential education asserts however that “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely educative” (p. 25). The Association for Experiential Educators (2002) claim: "Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences" (p. 5). So, experiential education is characterised as a method of learning. Although experiential education can happen in various settings, many educators use this process when learning and teaching in the outdoors.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to make justification for or against the merits of outdoor education. Furthermore it is not my intention to make a case for the use of one term over another. My aim is to understand the motivation and values of educators who explored and practiced their own understanding of outdoor education; and to connect these ideas to broader literature on the subject of outdoor education. I also want to discover if there is a general ethos of outdoor education in Burnaby and to see if that is reflected in the districts’ programmes.

The responses from the interviewees show some overlap of ideas, yet also represent a diversity of views. The values and views of outdoor education, as described by the subjects, fell into three categories: personal and social development, outdoor physical skills and environmental education. The categorization of views as expressed by the interviewees represents ideas held in the general discourse of outdoor education. Outdoor education is often described as interplay between environmental education, personal and social development, and outdoor activities (Higgins & Humberstone, 1999).

**Personal and Social Development**

Many researchers and practitioners connect personal and social development to outdoor education. Hopkins and Putnam (1993) claim that the holistic nature of adventure lends itself to personal growth. The Schools’ Inspection Report in Scotland (Ofsted, 2004, p. 1) sought “to identify good practice and the unique contribution made by outdoor education to enhancing young people’s personal and social development.”
The nature of Ron’s programme reflects his beliefs about its potential to nurture personal and social development. He explained:

I was running it basically as a therapeutic programme…my priority I think was working with the unwashed.

Ric elaborated on how Ron’s programme could benefit his students. He said:

Ron looked at what those programmes did for kids who were special. And I saw as for all kids, but even the special kids, that had issues, they were able to be in an environment were they were able to have real success and they rose to that occasion. So, for me the value of outdoor education is so important.

These notions are supported by many. Miles (1995) writes that activities in nature and the wilderness itself can contribute to enhancing self worth. He claims that people can experience their own competence and gain from the range of stimuli to cope positively with change. Most recently in the American bestseller book “Last Child in the Woods” Louv (2008) validates programmes for troubled youth: “The positive effects hold true whether the programme is used as an add-on to more traditional therapy or as a therapy in and of itself; it can be seen when outdoor programmes are not specifically designed for therapy.” (p.229)

Dino referred to the educators’ role and the merits of outdoor education with ‘different kids’:

We talk about differentiated instruction. That's really trying to get at different kids who have different interests. These kinds of activities of outdoor education are really getting to those kids. Something they value, and have an interest to build up their skill set.

Dino’s point of view correlates strongly with Gardner’s newest addition to his list of intelligences. Originally, Gardner listed seven intelligences including: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. This list of multiple intelligences has widely been used as rationale for differentiated instruction. In 1995 the ‘naturalist’ intelligence was added to the list (Gardner, 1995).

Ric explained that experiences targeting ‘naturalist’ competencies required students to rise to the challenge. He said:
The whole idea is to put the kids in an environment where they have an opportunity to succeed. I have held the philosophy, in all the years I have ever been to camp, we are talking about 30-35 years, and I have only not taken one student. In other words you have to be a major screw up for me not to take you. The reason for that is some of my major screw-ups are my best kids at camp. I can tell you Alex, Phil, names of kids who are at the office everyday. At camp, Phil won the camper award. He was making the fires, getting the fire wood… My big thing is self-esteem. You build a kid's self esteem; he or she can learn anything. You destroy their self-esteem. For me experiential education builds a kid's self-esteem.

Self-esteem can be defined as the ability to acknowledge one’s skill (Stolz, 2000). One of the most agreed upon benefits of outdoor education is the connection to nature; and learning from the challenges and experiences it presents (Higgins, 2001b; Mortlock, 1984; Unsoeld, 1995; Stolz, 2000). Mortlock (1984) asserts that demanding situations and being in nature forces an individual to acknowledge their skills.

Ed personified the role of outdoor education and its potential for transformation. He said:

Sometimes outdoor education is the facilitator for the child. It is a way for the child to separate from their day to day environment, into one they have to adjust to understand and accept and also have to survive it.

A limitation of personal and social development is that, in practice, it is complex and unempirical. This can be seen as a drawback in the public school system where quantifiable results are highly valued. However, the statements made by the participants in no way profess that outdoor education is a prescriptive solution for all; rather they refer to outdoor education in relation to personal social development in terms of ‘values’ a ‘philosophy’ and a ‘way for the child’. Since outdoor education is not embedded into the curriculum many students may not ever experience these values or philosophies. I suggest implementation of a district wide goal that every student in the district partakes in an outdoor experience, with a focus on personal and social development, during their school years. Ric made a similar suggestion that is detailed further on in the report in section 3.4.

On another note, outdoor education could also be embedded into alternate programmes (for students who have not been successful in mainstream classes) in the district; where
students can be introduced to an alternate setting rather than segregated into a separate school or classroom.

**Outdoor Physical Skills**

In the realm of outdoor education, physical skills have been termed ‘hard skills’ (Loffler & Warren, 2006). These hard skills encompass components such as technical and safety competencies. Traditionally, outdoor programmes were of a militaristic nature, with a focus on physical training (Parker & Meldrum, 1973). It is easy to see why, firstly outcomes are easy to assess and even measurable; an individual can make it to the top of a climb, or paddle a quantifiable distance. Success is achieved. Secondly, when the focus is physicality, outdoor education can be incorporated into the more mainstream goals of increasing physical activity for children in schools. These two points can be seen in the statements made by Ron, Ric, Ed and Charles.

Ron explained the merits of outdoor education in terms of activities:

> I really liked the ski camp, where they actually developed skills; they learned how to ski. I think there any many outdoor camps that are nice trips for the kids, but really have no educational objective that I can see.

Ric spoke about a winter outdoor skills programme run by a group of teachers:

> We are going together, you are doing the cross country skiing, I am doing the snowshoeing, winter survival-this person is doing that this person is doing this. We did snow studies. We did it all.

When asked about how he became involved in outdoor education Ed said:

> So I took up mountaineering. At least I wanted to do rock-climbing. I ended up climbing […] We actually had our own company, which did high ski touring and climbing.

Cinnamon and Raiola (1991) claim that one of the most important foundations of outdoor adventure education is that participants are provided with the necessary skills, both mental and physical, to enable them to experience success in the outdoors. Both Ron and Ric spoke of an experience that highlighted the development of safety skills learned by a student in one of their programmes that led to a triumph in the outdoors.

Ron explained the story:
One day one of our kids didn't arrive on the Monday. He got lost on Mt Seymour with his brother. Because the older brother was in outdoor programme the previous year, he knew what to do in terms what to do in terms of building a shelter… So there was actually a demonstrable outcome from that portion of the programme.

Ric also referred to the same story:

The guy attributes his reason for survival, because he learned his skills at our programme.

Typically, physical activity in schools is managed by physical education departments. In 2008 Canada’s report card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, as a whole, the country scored a ‘D’ grade. The grade represents an insufficiency in appropriate physical activity opportunities available to the majority of Canadian children and youth (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2008). The emphasis of this report reflects the current societal belief in the value of being active, and the push for the education system to respond.

During the same year the Daily Physical Activity (DPA) initiative was instated in BC. Students are expected to complete a specific number of hours of physical activity each day, and the schools are expected to monitor the students (Ministry of Education, 2008a). In response, schools are looking to build physical activity into many curricular areas, and further develop their physical education departments.

Charles spoke about the nature of being physical and the need for kids to burn energy.

Charles described a social studies field trip:

The first time I took students to Fort Langley we went by bus. I found that they weren’t burning enough energy so we came up with the idea of canoeing to the fort. The next year we went up the river nine miles and canoed to Fort Langley. I just found that the physical aspect was important for the kids. The more senses that you engage – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch – the more students learn and the more they enjoy it. That worked really well. So we did the canoe trip for several years.

The interviewees articulated clearly the relevance of physicality in outdoor education. Many of the current Burnaby outdoor initiatives (see section 3.2) are one to three day experiences in activities such as canoeing, skiing, etc… All of these experiences provide opportunities for experiencing new physical activities and personal and social development, yet there is little focus on physical skill progress or longevity. I am not
implying that it is not positive to expose students to new activities. What I am purporting is that at present there is a real opportunity for developing extensive year-long outdoor education programmes, with the push of initiatives from both the federal and provincial governments, as explained earlier. Such programmes could generate measurable outcomes such that students can build long term commitment to various physical activities.

**Environmental Education**

The Ministry of Education of British Columbia uses the term ‘environmental learning’ which refers to “a range of approaches to environmental issues, including environmental education, ecological education and education for sustainable development (Ministry of Education, British Columbia 2007, p.15). I believe this can be stated more simply. For instance, Jickling and Spork (1998) frame environmental education as education in, about and for the environment. The statements made by the participants of this study relate to Jickling and Spork’s definition.

Ric explained the *in* and *about* of an outdoor experience:

They [students] were studying beavers up there. We looked *at* beaver dams and habitat. It was a really neat little thing.

Dino spoke about his personal interests, and his passion of being *in* nature:

I have always had an interest in outdoor education, further appreciating the environment along with becoming involved *in* various activities… we are *in* this wonderful environment, especially the lower mainland, a place we should value in nature, and do it in a way that kids will eventually turn into adults and do some of their own activities because of some of the experiences they had in school.

Charles described some of the initiatives he developed *for* the environment:

In subsequent years we ended up hiking on an old Hudson’s Bay Fur Brigade route in the Fraser Canyon and on an early gold rush trail from Harrison Lake to Lilooet Lake. So for me the history and the environment are very important. You don’t just take kids on a field trip – it has to be part of the curriculum… After a mining company destroyed the historic remains of buildings at Port Douglas I decided to involve the students in the democratic process. At Burnaby North we produced calendars promoting a park along the gold rush route and the kids each sold ten copies. It worked – we lobbied the government and they made the trail into a heritage trail.
Joy Palmer (1998, pp 145-146) states: “Educational experiences should be provided that enable pupils to acquire an appropriate range of knowledge, understanding and concepts about the environment, so that critical judgments can be made concerning people’s inter-relationships with it.” Tammy’s views of outdoor education corroborate this idea of generating actions from experiencing education in the outdoors:

I really like that some groups whether they are alternative education or the job training programmes and behavior programmes are recognizing the benefits of using and learning about the outdoors and connecting kids with nature and some of the action-projects that they are doing.

The views of the participants are relevant and in accordance to literature related to environmental education. However, education for, in and about the environment was not discussed, by the respondent, as much as the personal and social development and outdoor physical skills. The reasons could be that the participants assume that environmental values are a given when it comes to outdoor education, so they don’t state them explicitly. It could also be a reflection of the time period of the careers of the interviewees. For instance it was as recent as 2002, that the Canadian Government developed a broad vision for environmental learning as outlined in the document Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability in Canada (Environment Canada, 2007).

At present the push for developing environmental education is ubiquitous. The BC Ministry of Education makes no mention of the term ‘outdoor education’ within any of its documentation, however they do have the “Environmental Learning and Experience: An interdisciplinary guide for teachers” (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 2007). The BC government is also working towards a Carbon Neutral 2010 campaign, where each school district has its own carbon reduction goals (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 2008b). Burnaby School District’s report outlines ideas such as increased recycling and environmental clubs, but does not include specific objectives for course or programme offerings with environmental foci (Carbon Neutral Action Report, 2009). I include these points to suggest that a more explicit focus of environmental education and how it relates to outdoor education in Burnaby would be in-line with the current political discourse and vision.
3.2 Burnaby School District Outdoor Education Initiatives

Data show that many people with the Burnaby School District have held value in, and continue to believe in outdoor education. These beliefs have resulted in a fragmented history (see Table 1) and a disjointed yet diverse range of school-based activities at present (see table 2).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>The New Democratic provincial government created possibilities for alternative education. Ron Pearson worked in initially was the Bonsor Programme, which then became the Windsor programme for those kids not finding success in secondary schools.. The Windsor programme began to develop a recreation programme, and the elementary programme became the Challenge programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1994</td>
<td>The Challenge programme expanded to servicing four schools in Burnaby, schools that had high needs. The Challenge programme ran district wide for one year, through district services. The following year District Services was cancelled. The Challenge programme was abandoned, until Youth services took the programme within their mandate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1999</td>
<td>Charles Hou ran an outdoor programme connected to social studies curriculum topics such as the fur trade, gold rush, geology, first nations' history and culture, and BC industrial development. The programme included a one-day hike, an overnight trip and a six-day trip from Harrison Lake to Lillooet Lake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-78</td>
<td>Staff who were doing outdoor education programmes came together to talk about outdoor education in Burnaby. Some people were not interested in having a residential setting for Burnaby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>A list of outdoor education field trip was generated as a resource for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1992</td>
<td>Programmes ran at Evans Lake and Thetis Island for students at Kitchener Elementary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1980s</td>
<td>Some teachers looked into Burnaby getting a permanent outdoor facility. It did not materialize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1990s</td>
<td>Ed Silva White was the first physical education consultant at the district. He had an outdoor education background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>Burnaby school could bring their students in grades five, six and seven for a three to four day Earthkeepers (a patented international environmental programme) experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-2003</td>
<td>Staff developed and ran a winter programme that focused on cross country skiing, winter survival and downhill skiing for three elementary schools. Ric Tesan left Kitchener Elementary at the end of 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2008</td>
<td>The Harrison Hike continued at Burnaby North, Burnaby South, Moscrop and Byrne Creek, and Charlie Hou continued to volunteer for the programme after he retired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The outdoor education programme was no longer delivered at Kitchener Elementary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2005</td>
<td>The Harrison Hike continued at Burnaby North for many years, and Charlie Hou continued to volunteer for the programme after he retired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>Parkcrest elementary ran an outdoor education programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>Lakeview elementary ran outdoor education programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>A district superintendent was transferred to another district. Upon his move, support for outdoor education at the district level diminished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Kitchener students went to camp Elphinstone for two to three nights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2008</td>
<td>Burnaby staff interested in outdoor education had meetings to start an experiential style school, but they couldn’t get it to the next level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Clinton Elementary ran outdoor education programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>A teacher brought the Harrison Lake Hike to Moscrop Secondary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Each interviewee spoke of outdoor education initiatives that they were involved with. The table includes modified explanations of these initiative organized in chronological order.
### School-Based Outdoor Initiatives during the 2009/2010 School Year in Burnaby

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Initiative (category of outdoor education)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Secondary</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Grouse grind hike (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burrard inlet clean up project (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kayak/camp up the Burrard inlet - twin islands or camp howdy (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surf camp in Tofino (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/11/12</td>
<td>Downhill skiing at Whistler/Blackcomb (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dragon boating on false creek (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ecology/canoeing at Burnaby Lake (OPS and EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socials Department</td>
<td></td>
<td>The North Shore watershed tour/hike and geocaching at Lynn Canyon (OPS and EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby Mountain Secondary</td>
<td>PE Girls 11</td>
<td>Wind Surfing, hiking, kayaking (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Bike touring/camping trip, downhill skiing (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>Ecology centre, Squamish geology field trip, Reed Point Marina (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reed Point Marina (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School club</td>
<td>Urban Farming club (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby North Secondary</td>
<td>Leadership class</td>
<td>Outdoor camps for retreats (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior PE</td>
<td>Some hiking and some kayaking - other paddling - snowshoeing- cross country skiing (OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne Creek Secondary</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Slope Elementary</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>three-day camp each year (boat trip to camp, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, nature studies,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nature crafts, cooking, archery, ropes course, ocean studies) (PSD and EE and OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Two-day camping trip and stay in tents, cook their own food and do ocean studies. (PSD and EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-3s</td>
<td>Two-day camp every second year (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor Elementary School</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Camp every second year (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Salmon spawning field trips (EE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Hill Elementary</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Grouse Grind Hike (OPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Three days at Camp Elphinstone (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seasonal nature walks alone trail (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaforth Elementary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outdoor camp, canoeing (PSD and OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederation Park Elementary</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Alternate between a summer-type experience one year and a winter-type experience the following year (i.e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evans's Lake &amp; Manning Park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkcrest Elementary</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westridge Elementary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outdoor camp (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckingham Elementary</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Skiing at Whistler (OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton Elementary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Camp Elphinstone 3 days (PSD and OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Canoeing (OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Camp (PSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Snowshoeing (OPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table shows data received from an email survey sent to Burnaby school administrators. Out of forty-three elementary schools and thirteen secondary schools ten elementary school and four secondary school administrators responded. I categorized the initiatives as Personal and Social Development (PSD), Environmental Education (EE), or Outdoor Physical Activity (OPA).
The diverse range of views of outdoor education and programmes represented in section 3.1, and the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 reflects the diversity of views and practices held in the field of outdoor education. In order to understand outdoor education, it is important to break down the philosophy which it is based on, the methods used by its educators and the projected goals (Nicol, 2003). What became clear during the interview process is that individuals had developed their own ideas, own programmes and attempted to make objectives. Although there have been two junctures of outdoor education collaboration meetings, the first in the late 1970s, the second was as recent as 2008 (see Table 1), these groups no longer meet.

It was surprising to learn about the current initiatives in the district. There are a lot more outdoor activities occurring than I had originally anticipated. No clear statement of belief and action defined by anyone at the district level, or by a group of teachers, came to light through this research. There are drawbacks and benefits of this fragmentation. Many of these benefits will be brought to light in the section 3.3 on support. The drawbacks will be accentuated in section 3.4 on barriers.
3.3 Support of Provisions

In this section the support of outdoor education in the district as described by the interviewees are categorized and connected to ideas in pertinent literature.

During the interviews the following question was asked:

-How did you feel those in the district perceived your work in outdoor education?

The following prompt followed the main question:

-How did you know it was supported?

The supports mentioned in the interviewees’ responses are parent/student support, school administrator support, teacher commitment and school board support.

Parent/student support

The interviewees mentioned enthusiasm for outdoor education as a form of support. The enthusiasm from students and parents is encouraging for running programmes, and in turn for doing this research. Louv (2005) writes about the role adults have in connecting children to nature: “If children sense genuine adult enthusiasm, they’ll want to emulate that interest—even if, when they’re teenagers, they pretend to lose it”. (p. 166)

Ric explained parents’ enthusiasm to his outdoor programme:

Parents loved it. Were 100% behind it.

Dino gave his opinion from his role as an educator and as a parent himself:

I would say nine out of ten parents fully support outdoor education. I know the community fairly well in Burnaby, through my own kids too. Kids really like outdoor education programmes. Kids remember most things.

Ed also spoke about students’ experiences:

The students would come back from an outdoor education experience and say this is what we accomplished. This is why this experience is valuable.
Ric also experienced similar responses from students:

Whenever I met kids, after they had been involved in outdoor education initiatives, they would say Mr. Tesan: Do you remember camp? Do you remember Evans Lake?

Events that take students out of the norm of the classroom into a new environment often serve as an opportunity for a rite of passage for many youth. A rite of passage can mark a stage of attainment of social maturity. These events are what remain in the memory of students and encourage further involvement later in life (Collinson & Hoffman, 1998). Ric, Dino, Ed and Ric spoke of students finding value and building lasting memories from their outdoor experiences. Ric also made mention of students being involved as volunteer leaders in programmes after they have participated in them:

The neat thing about it was that I was able to bring my old students as counselors… every kid that I have ever taught, every student and teacher that have come on these programmes, they all saw the value.

Tammy explained support for programmes during her time teaching in schools:

In terms of recognition, there was usually a great deal of recognition often more at the school level, and sometimes through the parent advisory council and often through the administrator.

**School Administrator Support**

In Burnaby, the school administration is comprised of principal and vice principals in secondary schools; and principal and head teachers in elementary schools. Repeatedly, the need for school administrator support was mentioned in each interview. Ron described the support he received from many school administrators when the Challenge programme was at risk of being shutdown:

But the elementary counselors and principals went directly to the school board trustees, who had not heard the programme had been cancelled, because the school board administrators had not told them, and so it was reinstated at that moment.

The BC Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association president Marilyn Merler (2009) defines the role of school administrators: “Our job as principals and vice-principals is to establish a collective responsibility for students’ outcomes and well-being, with a focus on student capacities, not limitations.” (p.19) However the changing context of the school administrator is tending towards a business model, where accountability to the
school board, parents and students is based on grade success, budgeting and mitigating risk (Moos, Krejsler, & Kofod, 2008). So the administrator is left responding to various stakeholders and needs to make decisions accordingly. Charles explained his account of a principal’s tentative decision making process, resulting in support to an outdoor adventure trip:

The principal at McPherson Park, the first year we did the Harrison Lake trip... I think he was pretty nervous about the whole thing, but he supported it. As long as you had a good track record, there was never a problem. The administrators knew the kids were happy, so they liked the programme.

Both Dino and Ric stated that support of the principal is the key element to outdoor education success within the school. Dino described the importance of the role of the school administrator:

I mean if you don't have a principal or an administrator that supports that then… There has to be support for outdoor education programmes. If the administrator is willing to take the risk, or willing to take that on, the programme in your school should happen.

Ric explained his views:

In order to make an effect in the school the principal has to be behind it. No matter how strong the staff is.

If an administrator shows commitment to outdoor education it can encourage an ethos within the school. For example, in a case study of school engagement with National Parks and Nature Reserves in Scotland, one head teacher developed a school based commitment to outdoor education by recruiting teachers with an interest in outdoor education (Allison, 2009). No clear examples were stated of administrators’ leading outdoor education initiatives in Burnaby schools and the reasons for this are likely related to the ever growing demands of school administrators, as stated earlier. Yet administrators can support the direction of outdoor education in schools without being the key leader. The interviewees referred to administrator support-support in the form of trust in teachers.
Teacher Commitment

Teacher driven initiatives penetrate every component of this research. The hard work ethos and passion from teachers is evident from the variety of programmes both in the past and present as can be seen in section 3.2. The driving factors behind these committed teachers seem to be a belief in outdoor education for the reasons explained in section 3.1. Dino, Tammy and Ric indicated that teacher commitment and collaboration aided in the propagation of outdoor programmes throughout schools in the past. Dino stated:

There were two other schools that were looking at the programme, and part of it is because the teachers who were originally at the first school had gone, and they branched off and brought it to others. There was a real good feeling amongst those schools that this was a good programme to continue.

Tammy explained, like Dino, about the propagation of programmes:

They have been teachers at some point at the same school. So they have carried that tradition to the school they have gone to. They can draw on each others expertise. So they may have started at the same school, where one person was in charge of teaching the kids how to do the survival snow forts and someone else was more coordinating the ski events.

Ric is one the teachers that both Dino and Tammy referred to. He spoke about his commitment:

I was happy with doing my own little programme, and running the programme, it worked really well. You know we were involved in regular teaching. I was also involved in coaching. And so this [outdoor education programme] was like the third prong on the fork… because as a teacher, it all depends on you. If the teacher moves, the programmes leave.

Ahuja (2007) points out the correlation of teacher turnover and programme continuity in her research of urban schools. She asserts that programme longevity is directly linked to a committed teaching staff with little turnover. It is easy to accept this point, yet teachers change schools, retire, and or change professions. Then what happens to the programmes? Ric described his commitment to experiential education before he retired:

Near the end of my career, I actually tried to get a group of people to start an experiential style school. That would be the focus of the school. All these people had outdoor education experience. They all have it in their background.

The goal of creating an experiential elementary school has not yet materialized. However there are plans for a new Burnaby elementary school, with an environmental focus.
(Burnaby School District, 2009b). I can only speculate that perhaps some of the enthusiasm and ideas from the group of teachers that Ric mentioned had some influence on the development of the new school’s goals.

Teacher commitment to outdoor education is not limited to those teachers who are directly running programmes. The commitment extends to teachers supporting and encouraging students to partake in school based initiatives. Ron explained support for the Challenge programme:

By and large most of the staff, they would recommend the kids to the programme. I didn't select the kids. I got whatever they sent me. Most of the people who recommended the kid had an investment in seeing the kid do well in the programme.

More generally, Dino made mention of teacher support and the union in the past:

There was a lot of support within teachers, who belong of course to a union. There weren't very many restrictions in that sense.

Dino stated at another point in the interview, that he considers the union to potentially restrict teacher commitment currently in the district. This obstacle along with many others is examined in section 3.4. Even with such obstacles, Tammy stated:

I find that there are a lot of teachers that are doing outdoor initiatives. Like I am actually surprised, considering in the elementary school how many are continuing, like even now. Looking here [Burnaby Mountain Secondary], there is a kayaking trip going form the PE department and I know that they do a bike trip in the late spring over night, so with those obstacles that I spoke to, I am surprised at some of the initiatives.

School Board Support

The Burnaby School Board is comprised of school board trustees (elected positions), and the school district administration which includes positions such as superintendent of schools, assistant superintendents, educational consultants and others.

Is the vision and support for outdoor education coming from the ground up or from the top down? There have been instances where the vision has come from the school board administrators. Dino explained the school board support during the beginning of his career, from a school board consultant:
Ed Silva White was the first Supervisor of Physical Education & Athletics that I worked with. He fully supported, he was a firm believer in outdoor education. At that time we had a specialist, he was a specialist. At that time there was a real belief in outdoor education at the district level, and so a lot of schools supported that.

Ed described his role while working as the school district, specifically related to his role of supporting teachers:

We took them [teachers] into the environment as if they were the student. The other tactic we used was we took students and they would teach the teachers. We did this during professional development days and afterschool workshops.

He explained the support he gave to one specific teacher:

Well we [school district administrators] had to substantiate that he was capable of bringing a large class out, it was a long trip. That the teacher had those skills, let alone what his project was, it was quite historic. It was getting my colleagues to that point, where they just said it was going to happen. We gave the teacher support and credibility behind it. And say yeah, this is thought out; these are some of the things you bring back.

He described the ethos at the district:

Certainly the board, the superintendent, and my colleagues there, we worked together on this [supporting outdoor education programmes]. We knew the challenges and we accepted those challenges. We also knew we had to educate ourselves, all of our colleagues.

Ed’s role of Physical Education Supervisor represents a point in time where some direction for outdoor education existed at the school board level. The more general trend for outdoor education in Burnaby is that initiatives are being driven by teachers (bottom up) and the supports from the school district are that bureaucratic limitations are not imposed. This point is further analyzed in the barriers section, as it relates to risk and liability. Charles explained:

The school board was never a problem as long as you filled in all the paper work and brought back the kids alive and in good condition.

Ron spoke of the development of the Challenge programme and the support from the school board:

For quite a few years that worked nicely. Eventually [the school board] they did give us a bit of funding. The initial premise, both for the secondary school kids-the Bonsor programme, and for the Challenge programme was you can do whatever you want but you don't get any money.
In *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence*, Smith and Piele (1989) sketch an educational leader as someone who is pro-active, aware of their goals, aware of the rules, yet recognizes that compromises are needed. Ron and Ric gave examples of district administrative leaders who fit this sketch. Ron described:

> They [the school district administrators] tolerated the programme. Actually, there was one assistant superintendent who was actually quite sympathetic…During a strike that assistant superintendent said-well I want to keep the programme going, if you can get enough volunteers to go, I will take from my discretionary fund enough money to fund the activities.

Ric also referred to a supportive assistant superintendent:

> He told me he needs other people to push it [an outdoor education programme]. He could push it from where he was (at the board), but if it didn’t have people from underneath supporting him and saying yes, this is what we want. It is better that we [school based staff] come up with the idea, and express that this is what we feel. He was totally 100% in favor of this [development of a district outdoor education programme]. And then he got transferred.

The response from this district administrator refers back to the question where does the vision for outdoor education need to come from?

Given the variety of support from different stakeholders over time, it is clear the opportunity for vision does exist. In stating that, I think the more important question is how can the support be extended beyond individuals and be sustained within the organization? The next section on barriers explains some of the reasons why no clear vision has yet to emerge in the district for outdoor education.
3.4 Barriers and Implications for Practice

This section will examine the barriers to outdoor education in Burnaby from the perspective of the interviewees. Their ideas will be linked to literature in the field and relevant government documents. Furthermore, suggestions are included from the participants, and I also offer suggestions for building capacity for outdoor education in Burnaby. Key ideas will be summarized in a table.

During the interviews the following question was asked:
-How did you feel those in the district perceived your work in outdoor education?

The following prompt followed the main question:
-What did some of the barriers look like?

Each interviewee was also asked:
-In your opinion, how do you think outdoor education should be incorporated in Burnaby schools today?

The responses from interviewees ranged from barriers such as risk/liability concerns, unions, teacher commitment, school board and funding. These categories link closely to themes outlined in a major outdoor learning research report conducted in England, and to research on barriers faced in integrated programmes in Ontario, Canada (Rickinson et al., 2004; Horwood, 2002).

Risk and Liability

Risk is not implicit to all forms of outdoor education, yet is often a key component of adventurous activities. Many educators in the field of outdoor education view that the elimination of risk from outdoor programmes is not an option, for students must learn responsibility and safety in order to manage themselves (Hunt, 1990; Unsoeld, 1995). Chisnall (2004) asserts that “The chief problems faced by many outdoor educators may involve the public’s general perception of risk and, conversely, its ignorance of actual risk” (p. 6). Some cases of safety concerns and risk related to outdoor education have
garnered public attention in Canada. Dino, Charles, Ed, Ric and Tammy talked about risk as it relates to some of these historical cases.

Dino stated:

Another concern is the whole aspect of safety, the legalities of it too. There have been a number of cases.

Charles made mention of one of the cases:

The big problem with the canoeing trip to Fort Langley, was that some teachers in Ontario took some students in large voyageur canoes on Lake Superior; they got caught in a storm and some students were killed.

Upon further research, the event that Charles was referring to was a canoeing accident resulting in the death of twelve students and one teacher on Lake Timiskaming, Ontario in June of 1978. The incident is described in great detail in the book *Deep Waters* (Raffan, 2002). In short, the staff members were not charged with criminal negligence although the coroner did reproach the school for planning mismanagement. Raffan listed inappropriate canoes, little canoeing experience amongst the staff, no defined leadership plan, and a lack of communication strategy between boats as some of the mistakes that led to the accident. Charles explained the implication of this accident on teacher training requirements:

So after that the school board made it a requirement that the teachers and students take a three-day canoeing course at the beginning of the year. It was difficult to organize three canoe sessions as well as the canoe trip in September.

Ric made mention of a local public case against an outdoor education teacher and the effects on furthering outdoor programmes in the district:

A group of us were in the beginning stages of a proposal for an outdoor education school in the district… and then the guy from the Treck programme at Prince of Wales got busted. There was a bunch of us who were still trying to push the outdoor education school. The response from others was: ‘are you out of your mind?’ I mean look at the optics of the situation.

The case is focused on a teacher who taught in a well established outdoor programme, Quest at Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver BC. One teacher was charged with gross indecency and indecent assault in connection with six students between 1972 and 1983; the girls were between 15 to 18 years of age. (Hall, Culbert & Steffenhagen, 2006). The Vancouver School Board, the federal and provincial governments along with
an external auditor implemented protocols and procedures for alternative programmes. Some of these protocols and procedures include training of employees on issues related to sexual abuse and harassment, appropriate gender supervision for overnight activities and ongoing dialogue with students (Vancouver Board of Education, 2007).

Ed described his views of cases, generally, from his position at the district:

If you look historically at some of the court cases we have dealt with then, it starts to say why some things don't occur anymore. Cause if you are not experienced in the area you definitely are going to start to hold back. If someone doesn’t explain those court cases out, then this is the statement of concern we should be addressing, a lot of these incidences never got to the court, never got the challenging questions, was this acceptable practice or not? So you have to sift this out and say so in outdoor education, is this acceptable?

Tammy also explained her perception of outdoor education, generally, over time:

I would say over the last 20 to 25 years, what has become a bigger obstacle is the liability issues…I don't think from the district level that outdoor education is being emphasised as much, and I think that is all to do with the liability… I don't even think it is the administration office that is making those decisions. It is things coming down like on rulings, like someone choosing to snowboard in a certain area and now legal problems related to that, or some case of harassment that has take place because there was a group that went where something happened maybe even 20 or 30 years ago[referring to the Quest case].

The documentation set out by the BC government states that in BC “operating guidelines in outdoor programmes are not set by legislation, but by generally accepted procedures known as practices” (Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, 2003). This confirms that these legislative barriers related to outdoor education in BC need not be limiting. In stating that, I do not suggest that safety and concepts of risk are not serious matters for planning and implementing outdoor programmes. This holds especially true, in light of these high profile cases that have tainted the general public view of outdoor initiatives (Chisnall, 2004).

The Timiskaming canoeing accident and the incident at Quest are horrific. The implications have been increased attention to safety in outdoor education by the general public, which has resulted in some positive responses. For instance, guideline documents for outdoor education have been generated in British Columbia. The BC government
released *Risk Management for Outdoor Programmes* (Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, 2003), geared at administrators and instructors. There is also *BC School Off-site Experience Resource for Parents and Guardians* (Youth Safe Outdoors, n.d.,a) and *Self-reliance in the Outdoors Instruction Resource for BC Schools* (Youth Safe Outdoors, n.d.,b), customized for teachers and students. All of these resources provide tools for creating risk management plans for all parties involved in outdoor education, even students. Involving students so they can develop the skills and experience to keep themselves safe is what Gill (2007), in his book *No Fear*, states will help build resilience and increase safety.

If an accident does occur then the courts check whether the risk was foreseeable and what steps were taken to reduce or eliminate those risks (Leckie, Parry & McGee, 2008). If a risk management plan is created, agreed upon and is followed by staff, students, parents, and administrators then it would be hard to claim negligence in the courts.

The Burnaby School Board has policies for basic and special field trip experiences. The considerations differ based on the location, the time duration and the nature of the activity. If the initiative is considered a Special Field Trip then a field trip form needs to be submitted six weeks in advance and is reviewed by a panel at the school board (Field Trip Manual, 1992). I found no documentation stating that a risk management plan is needed for these initiatives. This reveals that there are minimal bureaucratic processes limiting adventurous pursuits. I speculate the lack of planning has been deflected to a general perception that outdoor education has legislative barriers.

There is little mention of the school board rejecting outdoor plans during the interview process. In fact, data from section 3.2 demonstrates the willingness of the board to accept outdoor initiatives proposed by teachers. Section 3.2 gives evidence of many small school based initiatives running with varying risk levels. These points beg the question: Is the ‘riskiness’ of further pursuing outdoor education in Burnaby a perceived barrier?

I suggest that change with regard to this believed barrier can come with using already existing resources. For instance, there are the government risk management documents
referred to earlier on in this section. There are also many outdoor programmes in the Lower Mainland (see Appendix A), all of whom will have had to respond to the concepts of risk. Teachers and/or the schools can generate risk management plans (with the use of templates) to mitigate potential problems. The plans are designed to articulate good decision-making practices, so they minimise risk or provide a suitable response to a dangerous situation.

**The Employee’s Union**

The nature of some outdoor education programmes is that they run beyond school hours and often outside of school boundaries. This means educators could be working beyond the parameters of their contracts, and the extra time is deemed as volunteer time. Ron discussed two instances where educator unions’ decisions affected his programme:

There was a strike or something like that, and so all of a sudden I had no workers to come out with me. I guess there was a CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) strike… Youth service workers kind of looked at it like-this is okay, we'll do this, as part of our job description, but this isn't our priority—which you really need in outdoor programme.

Ron continued to explain an instance with the teacher’s union:

Then at the end of the year we had work to rule. So we couldn’t run any of the programmes out of school hours.

Charles also encountered this problem:

It takes a tremendous amount of time and work to organize a six-day hike (and a preliminary one-day hike and an overnight hike). The work to rule destroyed my efforts as well as the enthusiasm of students who had not only looked forward to the hike but had also purchased hiking equipment in anticipation of the hikes.

Work to rule is a union action where staff commits to working within the school hours yet do not take part in extracurricular activities. During the time of these actions there are consequences for an outdoor education programme in that educators volunteering out of school hours are breaking union agreements. The last teacher’s union action in BC was a two week strike in September, 2005. The reasons for this strike were class composition, wages and the government claiming teaching as an essential service (Knickerbocker, 2005). There is no mention of the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) or Burnaby Teachers’ Association (BTA) advising teachers not to partake is extra curricular...
activities, except during time of job action on their website (British Columbia Teacher’s Federation, ).

In 2004, one of the largest teachers unions in the UK advised teachers against taking school trips due to societies’ views of safety in outdoor education (Rickinson et al., 2004). The advisory no longer exists and the union now states that “members should consider carefully whether or not to participate in non-contractual educational visits. If members undertake educational visits then every effort should be made to minimize the risk “(Nasult Health and Safety, 2009, p. 34). There is no such advisory or mention of risk with the BCTF or BTA (British Columbia Teacher’s Federation, 2006). However Ed and Dino both make mention of the affects of the union.

Ed commented on the role of the teachers’ union:

The union must represent all aspects and services of education from the point of view of the teachers’ role. A colleague may want to pursue an interest such as outdoor education activities or field trips. This can often go beyond what understood as the responsibilities of a teacher on a normal school day calendar. This sometimes can make it difficult to get collegial support and services to help you pursue the activity. It is a little different than an extracurricular experience as it occurs incorporated into the educational curriculum.

He continued:

When you are restricted within the guidelines of the union, it can be limiting. You are often in 24 hour experiences and colleagues may still feel that it must fall within expectations of normal school environment. You have to get the support of the people who see outdoor education as a critical factor to the education of a student at all grade levels.

Dino spoke about the changing nature of the perception of the union:

A little bit of changing reality with the teacher's union. I think the perception is that this is extra and that it can no longer be done based on other conditions that have come up in the teaching profession.

Dino used the term perception. This perception likely differs in each school and with each individual educator. Yet there is no public documentation that places limits on the amount of time involvement by the teacher (except during job action), nor is there any advisory telling teachers to refrain from taking students out of the schools on the BCTF
website. In fact, the BCTF supports options within a publicly funded school system, and uses outdoor education as an example for a programme option (BCTF, 2006). So if individuals have specific opinions or perceptions of limitation imposed by the union, then I suggest that they research union documentation and/or provide feedback to their local unions. There is also an opportunity for the union to promote outdoor education and debunk any perceptions of union limitations of outdoor education in schools.

The Role of Teachers
The role of teachers is central to running outdoor education in schools. The roles can take many different forms and are often met with barriers, as explained by the interviewees.

One of the roles involves the subject or generalist classroom teacher, and their acceptance of outdoor education. There is a perception that outdoor education trips can disrupt classes since students are out of school during the regular school schedule. Ron spoke of this time conflict:

Every now and then you would run into a staff- remember I am taking kids out of the school sometimes for a day sometimes for a half day- that said no, this kid can't go, he needs to be here. He is not doing well in school so he should be in school doing school things. That would happen now and then.

These scheduling conflicts arise due to the timetabling nature of schools, especially in secondary schools. I suggest some responses to this barrier. If overall support for outdoor education within the school is developed and coupled with well planned articulated timing of out-of-school excursions at the beginning of the school year then teachers could plan accordingly. The second response could be to develop specialty programmes such as many of the integrated programmes running in Ontario secondary schools. These programmes are often run with one group of students, where they complete their curricular requirements embedded into an outdoor education framework. “To free the programmes from timetable constraints, many are physically separated from the school itself.” (Horwood, 1994, p.89). Examples of these specialty cohort programmes exist in schools in the Lower Mainland (See Appendix A).
Ed also spoke about subject teachers’ views of outdoor education and explained.

Remember they [teachers] are marking papers, and trying to keep up in their subjects. And then you come and ask them to do this and that [related to outdoor education], and wonder why it doesn't click? There are a percent of colleagues who will never feel comfortable [running outdoor education initiatives].

Teachers as curriculum specialists can be viewed as a barrier to running outdoor education programmes. Drasdo (1972) claims that the process to achieve the goals of traditional education begins with training teachers as specialists in their subjects. He further asserts that this approach to training generates a myopic view for teachers and more general aims of education are often forgotten or unexplored. I believe that teachers can specialize and still maintain overall goals of education. Indeed one might ask how teachers can teach in any meaningful way if they do not have some underlying aims of education informing their teaching. Tammy described that specialists can actually share their ideas to generate opportunities for outdoor education:

Well I think that if people in one area had opportunities to collaborate or communicate in another area, especially at secondary then obviously time would be freed up and more expertise to support those programmes would evolve.

It is clear that Drasdo (1972) believes in large scale education reform. Seaman (2005) interests also lie in school reform. He sees a role for the outdoor educators to advance outdoor education in a system wide change. He claims that one potential reason that this does not occur is that few educators have the skills or the know how to advance change in schools. Evidence from my research suggests that the reason is due to time constraints and the wide range of demands on teachers. These views are articulated by Ric: “So basically, I didn't have the time or energy to push it [outdoor education at the district level] past my own programme.”

He continued:

Because as a teacher, it all depends on you. Because if the teacher moves, the programmes leaves... So what you put into it, it is really difficult to develop succession (of programmes). Cause as a teacher I have no control over who follows me into the classroom. Will they run the programme?

Tammy also implied that teachers are being stretched: “So it is another step that the teacher has to coordinate.”
Both Dino and Tammy suggest that bringing teachers together is important for outdoor education in Burnaby at present. Dino stated:

The district should support it by allowing some time or even some conversation of what they value and then carry it out in various ways in the district. They can provide some resources, or even some release time for teachers for taking it on. So they have some vision.

Tammy also explained what could facilitate an outdoor education programme in secondary schools:

Well I think that if teachers in one area had opportunities to collaborate or communicate in another area, especially at secondary then obviously time would be freed up and more expertise to support those programmes would evolve.

Most recently I met a teacher, Elisa Lee, who has launched a sustainability working group for the district, where teachers and school board administrators meet (personal communication, November 12, 2009). I suggest they run a similar group where educators involved in outdoor education can collaborate to articulate, justify (by making connections to government initiatives as explained in section 3.1) and deliver outdoor education programmes.

Charles made clear what he experienced towards the end of his career in Burnaby:

After I retired teachers in the school continued the hike for a few years and I returned as a volunteer leader. The tradition ended when the school ran out of teachers who would volunteer for things like this.

The nature of teaching is that there are a lot of demands with time constraints and there are no requirements to take students out of school. These factors might account for Charles’ recent experiences. Another explanation of the challenge of finding teachers who are willing to volunteer for outdoor education trips could also be related to Dino’s views of the changing nature of the teacher’s role in Burnaby. He referred a gap in the role of teachers as outdoor education mentors:

I think there are a number of the teachers that believe in outdoor education are gone, some have actually retired… So the younger people maybe don't have the skill set or the knowledge or the confidence to carry on some of these programmes.

Dino suggested a response to this gap could occur at the post secondary level:
One thing that should start is a Professional Development Programme (PDP) so that everyone has to participate in outdoor education. So for example in elementary education everyone has to do a course, both theoretical and practical. It would be great that if PDP demonstrated the value of outdoor education in the teaching profession.

This suggestion is supported in a report from the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers network. The report suggests increasing the profile of environmental education within faculties of education by involving more senior scholars so practice and exposure can be improved (Environmental Education in Canada, 2006).

How should teachers juggle the various roles and expectations? Should it be the responsibility of teachers to develop, teach and advocate outdoor education in educational institutions? Should they go as far as pushing educational reform while working within the public school system? The section on Supports demonstrates that teachers played an integral part in outdoor education initiatives in Burnaby, resulting in school based activities running in isolation, with no long term district plan. Data also suggest that the various roles of the teachers determine the fate of outdoor education programmes in Burnaby. If that is the case then suggestions need to be made to help facilitate this role for teacher commitment to outdoor education.

Currently the Burnaby School Board is supporting Independent Directed Studies where secondary students can earn school credit by outlining a learning objective, creating goals and achieving those aims, within a given time period (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 1995). This learning design can involve teachers and community members as specialists, like Tammy refers to. This is another potential model for running outdoor education in Burnaby schools, where the initiation of the learning begins with the students, and the teacher role is that of a mentor. In stating that, Independent Directed Studies is in its infancy in Burnaby and such a model for outdoor education still requires a committed teacher and supportive administrator to develop many of the logistics.
The School Board

Seaman (2005) is an educator who designs and delivers workshops for teachers. He finds that teachers involved in school reform workshops discover that school change always involves micro-politics. The nature of politics, as a barrier, was articulated by the interviewees when they spoke about implementing outdoor education programmes within the school district.

Ed explained his perspective of the school board in the past:

I guess the reservation from a head office concern was how valuable are some of these initiatives, which is always a reality that the board will have to justify to parents. Those days they wanted the student in the classroom more than you see today.

He continued:

There were Board Members that were adamant that their interest wasn’t in outdoor education and they had to be educated to value outdoor education for students in the district. It was hard to get the superintendents office to take those initiatives to the table, deal with the politics, deal with the politics of the colleagues who would not want to do programmes.

Ron explained his experience:

One year, just the way the Burnaby school board operates, an administrator came to me and said: ‘next year the Challenge programme is going to be district wide’. Nobody had asked me…but it ran without any forethought. Nobody talked to me about it.

Ron described feedback he received when he gathered a group of staff interested in developing and outdoor education district programme in the mid 1970s:

Oh some people said Burnaby is not interested in doing North Vancouver outdoor model, they are not interested in having a residential setting for outdoor education.

The North Vancouver Outdoor School is a residential field school and educational resource for experiential environmental studies, that has been a part of the North Vancouver school district since 1968 (North Vancouver School District, 2009). Burnaby never did purchase a centre, but Ed also spoke of residential outdoor centres:

Any school that wanted to do an outdoor camp in the springtime-we set up so many weeks they signed in and we booked them in to Sasamat. We did it until '94. We had all the resources so we could truck them out there. Sasamat allowed
us to store them there. We do workshops out there. It is an example like Camp Capilano for Vancouver School Board, except an Earthkeepers programme.

Sasamat is an outdoor facility operated by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver and is within a twenty minute drive from Burnaby. This Burnaby School Board rented the camp. This programme represented the district’s commitment to the residential outdoor during the early nineties, yet the programme no longer exists.

In the UK residential centres have been at the core of outdoor education. In 1999, Cooper researched the changing nature of outdoor education centres in Britain. He stated: “There are over 1200 day and residential centres provided by local authorities…It estimated that 2-3 million young people take part each year in a vast range of outdoor education programmes” (1999, p. 43). He examined two centres and explains that the centres have each developed their own ethos which helps articulate their goals. It should be noted that provision of outdoor education in the UK is changing. Many of the government run residential outdoor centres have closed, leaving existing centres with the task of substantiating their existence. They are working to build relationships with participating schools and developing curricular connections in the programming (Allison & Telford, 2005). It is still of interest to consider if the school board had purchased a residential centre whether it would have been the impetus to have developed a long lasting ethos of outdoor education in Burnaby; and helped articulate its goals. As it stands Ron, Charles and Dino all stated that the district does not prioritise outdoor education.

Ron elucidated:

The main barrier is the administrative school board. I don't think the people there see the value of outdoor education. And I don't know why. Some people look at reading, writing and arithmetic as the main thing and their view is pretty narrow because that's quantifiable.

He continued:

I don't think it's a high priority for anybody at the school board.

Charles put it very simply:

I don’t think the district prioritized outdoor education, but I was always impressed with Burnaby. I could do anything I wanted, within reason. They never said no.
Dino described his view:

So that is what I see as a limitation particularly in Burnaby, where there is a perception of that outdoor education is an extra and not a requirement.

Organizations that can articulate its goals can transfer these goals through the practitioners and to the participants (Ewert, 1993). Yet these ideas need to be put into action, and it takes the initiative of individuals in key roles. Both Ron and Ed suggest the need for leadership at the school board.

Ron made clear that for Burnaby to have on outdoor education programme:

It would take somebody from the school board who would really like it to happen. It would likely take the support of the school trustee. If the trustee said this is a priority, this is what I want to set up.

Ed described what it would take to start an outdoor education programme at the district level:

Well, I think it takes leadership. It takes someone to take some pivotal responsibility. Or it takes colleagues to get together now, when you haven't got a head office person who doesn't have all their time they can spend on that.

In *A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning* key questions for the education sector are suggested. One main question is: “To what extent are there policies in place to promote high quality outdoor education as an entitlement for all students at both primary and secondary schools?” (Rickinson et al., 2004, p. 54). There are no policies directing outdoor education from the Burnaby School District.

Ric explained his views:

It would have been so much better if the district had a policy. Where they said okay, grade fours do this and the grade sixes do this and the grades sevens do that. And had a programme they could run through the years in all Burnaby schools.

He suggested that:

If you don't have the marketing, you are doing your great little programme and nobody knows about it…I'd get the newspaper to come up, and look at what we are doing. The reason for that is once you got them involved, the school board loves it. It gives them a higher profile. Marketing is huge. That's what drives some people's agendas.
Some agendas are related to the type of programmes that the district can support. Charles spoke of the school board providing more support for programmes:

> I think it would take very little, to help develop outdoor education for alternate programmes. Allow for kids on the margins to experience success.

In order to create an ethos at the district many things need be considered. Suggestions made include: leadership, programme models, articulation of goals, increasing prioritizing of outdoor education and perhaps investing in a residential centre. The rationale behind the school board acting on any of these suggestions is to implement some form of policy related to outdoor education. Without policy the programming rests solely on the commitment of teachers, as it currently stands, and limits the longevity and commitment of outdoor education programmes in Burnaby.

The question remains. Whose role is it to take on these leadership responsibilities? In a similar study administered in 1974, for the Port Washington school District, Wisconsin, seventy six percent of teachers felt that there was a need for an outdoor education specialist in their district (Gatzke & Starkey, 1974). An outdoor specialist in Burnaby could oversee a district development of outdoor education, alleviating some of the barriers of teacher commitment while supporting existing initiatives.

**Funding**

With outdoor education run as an alternative, elective or extra-curricular, funding can be a challenge. The issue of funding came up with in many of the interviews.

As Ed described:
> When money became difficult it was a challenge. When a district is growing it isn’t as challenging, and then there some money floating around and then it’s justified.

If outdoor education programming is considered as additional to the core priorities then the question is: Who covers the costs? Families? Schools? School boards? Governments?
Dino described some of the barriers from his role as an administrator and during his time as a teacher running outdoor education initiatives. He spoke of funding issues at a familial level:

There are some families that find it difficult to afford an excursion.

Tammy explained issues related to funding based on government regulations:

I think from within the schools, and connected to the district everyone is looking for funding, when there is a cost of a programme. With rulings [from the provincial government] that any programmes related to graduation cannot have any costs attached. So you are sort of eliminating the integrity of something by saying this is just an optional trip, even though you have very good reasons for doing it. Because you can't say it is required because it would have to be at no cost attached.

Tammy is referring The B.C. Supreme Court decision in 2006 stating that schools can no longer charge fees for the official education programme in BC schools. Specifically it states that if something is not required for course completion, or if it is for an extra-curricular activity, students cannot be required to participate or pay a fee. The decision was made to ensure that all families will have equal opportunity for programmes regardless of economic status. This information is described in full by the BC Advocate Institute on the website School Fees in BC (2006). In 2007 the government amended this legislation, stating that under Bill 20 school boards can offer specialty academies with the approval of the school planning council and parents. The academies can charge fees that must be approved annually by the school planning council (News Legislation, 2007).

Burnaby currently runs hockey and soccer academies (Burnaby School District, 2009). With the academy model already in place in Burnaby, an outdoor education academy could be a programme option, where families pay for student participation; hence the funding would run independently of the school board and or government.

Barron (1996) explains funding struggles with running an environmental programme in Ontario. He states:

Public knowledge that the programme does not cost the board one penny has helped programmes to gain acceptance and support within the school, among staff, and with parents. It may be that independence is critical in helping
integrated programmes avoid vulnerability to both criticism and budget clawbacks. (p. 33)

Ron spoke about how budget cutbacks affected a school based programme:

The Windsor programme began to develop a recreation programme and both of these things had to be funded on nothing. Nobody was giving any money.

He continued to explain the funding problems that faced the Challenge programme:

It happened quite often, the final year of when they (the school board) said-no no you can't carry on, there is no funding, we are stretched beyond our limits, and so the programme will not exist next year… Each year we managed to struggle through. It ended up in existence for about twenty years. But basically always on the premise-you may or not be around next year.

Ron also described his view:

The school districts are always strapped for funding. There are never any spare funds, and I don't know where the money would come from. Again, it comes back to priorities. We can fund some things and we can't fund others.

Prioritising outdoor education can happen at the government, board or school level. Yet there is the current reality that outdoor education is not deemed a high priority at present at the Burnaby school board or at many Burnaby schools. Ric explained that years ago a supportive assistant superintendent explained to him:

He told me he needs other people to push it (an outdoor education programme). It is better that we (school based staff) come up with the idea and express that this is how it can happen, and this is what we want.

So the options are to lobby bodies to include outdoor education into curriculum and district policies and/ or propose programme options with funding models. Ed explained his view of funding over time:

Money - getting more money is very difficult now. Where can you get money outside of the situation? Who wants to fundraise for something? What can you charge and what can't you charge if you are making it a valid programme? It got tough over the years.

As mentioned earlier an academy model is one option, but charging full costs to families can limit those who can participate. There are other funding models for outdoor
education programmes. In BC, some outdoor education programmes are also delivered by various public and private organisations. The sector is rather disjointed and seems to lack a foundation to build from. In contrast, the provision of outdoor education in the UK is rooted in the birth of outdoor initiatives with private institutions such as Outward Bound and the state system of Local Education Authority Outdoor Centres. However, even with the longstanding history of outdoor education, reports from local authorities in Scotland show that funding has dropped in the last twenty years for outdoor education, and centres are closing (Nicol, Higgins, Ross & Mannion, 2007; Allison & Telford, 2005). As a result, outdoor education delivery is distributed to the private and charitable sectors as well as through local government.

There are examples of these funding models in the Lower Mainland, BC. For example, a teacher developed an independent charity to support the Take a Hike Programme for at risk youth, in the Vancouver School District (Vancouver School District, 2007a). Other initiatives are run by companies such as the Sea to Sky Outdoor Centre that services public schools. Trek, a school based programme charges a fee and encourages students to fundraise (Vancouver School District (2007b).

It should also be noted, that outdoor education need not be expensive. Ron stated:

Outdoor education is great because you don't really have to spend anything to take kids hiking. And the same thing, in the winter programme we can take them out and do things with them, that didn't cost money, which was basically hiking, walking, whatever.

Many barriers are presented in this section. These ideas are interpretations of the interviewees’ experiences, over varying time periods. Furthermore, the implications of the barriers (see Table 3) vary depending on the nature of the outdoor education initiative. For example, a one day field trip for grade six students presents fewer barriers than developing an outdoor education integrated full time programme for grade ten students. There are other barriers involved in developing a district-wide outdoor education policy. Given all the diversity of ideas, the interviewees and I make a wide range of suggestions for outdoor education in Burnaby. Not all of these suggestions are applicable for all situations, nor is the intent for the district to make all of these changes.
I do hope however that this research presents a variety of options and or possibilities rooted in academic literature, the expertise of the interviewees and my own competence.