



Environmental Studies 400b
Ethnoecology and Environmental Philosophy

**Sharing Our Experiences with Others:
A Report of Field Course ES400B**

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1 Introduction

I had an honor to be invited to UVic as Visiting Professor and it was my pleasure to participate in the field course 400B. I cooperated the field course from the viewpoint of ecological philosophy with Prof. Nancy Turner, ethno-botanist.

21 century is sometimes called environmental age but also should be called life age. This means that environment is the same as life, both of which are two sides of the oneness just like surface and back of one coin.

The ethics of environment and life are the same things in the root, because both environmental ethics and bioethics deal with whole ecological system and lives when considered Only One Earth. So, this time, the field course made us sure of it in the trip.

2 Splendid Nature

During the field trip my students from Konan University in Kobe and I had an experience of splendid nature such as clear air and beautiful lakes, wild animals (eagle, hummingbirds, prairie dogs, squirrels and a bear etc.) and indigenous plants (edible and medical plants).

From the experience of splendid nature, we could reconfirm that normal plants show difference phases which are still available to First Nations as medicine, and that nature is a macro cosmos as well as our body consisting of a micro cosmos from ecological viewpoint.

3 My dear friends

I become acquainted with the First Nations, practitioners for preservation of nature and other people.

As far as the First Nations are concerned, they impressed me and gave us their wisdom as follows;

1) Ida John and her daughter Yvette: in Chawthil

Ida is not only a healer but also a life-teller just like a philosopher. She gave us the following questions; what we are, what we should do, how we live and die. This is quite a philosophical question.

She made me realize the importance of common ground which Mother Earth gave birth to, in other words, the importance of our own belief which makes a cosmology how to live and what to do. Cosmological belief is derived from sound body and mind based on ecological system, both of which must be supported by spirit and a role of Mother Earth and Father Sky.

We also experienced sacred ritual of purifying our spirit with a smudging of sage, juniper and tobacco, which gave us the spiritual starting of our field trip.

2) Ron, Bert, Jay: in Hat Creek Valley

Ron and others guided us to a wild mountain and explained about natural wisdom by practicing their daily life. We have learned lots of indigenous devices such as medicine and technique of living. And also at Ron's house we saw many sculptures and other place of nature next day.

Especially, it was very interesting that Bert and Jay showed us how to make stone knife and arrowhead. At that time I felt that I was in the ancient age and lived together with these people. Surely, I was Self-I (ecological unconscious-I) out of Ego-I (private conscious-I) and recapture my whole-I based on ecological system with a sense of wonder.

3) Mike: in Hat Creek Valley

After telling First Nations' history and environmental issues, Mike showed us a kind of ritual making a circle around a fire. He awakened us the importance of ceremony with circle which is forgotten in modern life. Although he must be passionate for fighting against the destruction of environment, the sound of his drum tempted us to the good old days at that night.

4) Arther: in Sunpeaks

He taught us the difficulty of coordination between first nations and private companies. We have no words, as Japanese, about the policy done in Canada. I could not help but think that balance of sustainability and development is very difficult problem.

Maybe the solution depends upon the concept of richness. Which is better, being happy with richness in economics or happy with richness in nature? The answer is surely latter, so that we should restrict our desire according to what we really need, and enjoy richful nature what we have now.

4) Mary Thomas; in Fly Hills

She is really an expert practitioner for restoration of nature and traditional culture. What is more, she is a healer gifted from Mother Earth. Her way of healing is unconditional acceptance for patience just sitting by him like a psychoanalyst. She tries to make a new circulation between ego-I and Self-I in order to restore inner cosmology.

In my first lecture, I told about four elements, air, water, soil and fire, which are the components of the world according to Democritus. However, they are on the verge of danger of greenhouse effect, polluted water and soil because of less

circulation in nature. It means not only the problem of circulation of ecological system (Macro-cosmos) but also that of the circulation of inner ecological system between Ego-I and Self-I. The way of Ego-centered thinking which is the cause of pollution of inner environment made destruction of outer environment, so that we have to realize the sound circulation for healing our earth. In other words, we have to move the ego-centered thinking to the eco-centered one.

Mary taught us such a thing by her telling stories. Her many stories of traditional legends come from the ancestor's wisdom and her experiences. And in these we could find a clue for restoring the environment.

5) Jeanette and Richard Armstrong: at En'owkin Centre

In order to restore the land to the original state, they tried to expand their network to all over the world. And they put stress on (1) the land knowledge, (2) teaching indigenous people, (3) net working, (4) environmental learning program and its implementation, (5) challenge spirit.

Remember, what Mr. Armstrong told us;

drop to the head, drop to the knowledge, drop to the wisdom.

what is more, adding to Mr. Armstrong's words, we could say, "drop to the heart"

6) Prof. Nancy Turner and UVic people

We have to appreciate Nancy and Ann for running this field course. Ann was so busy that I was afraid she could not study her own research. But she still made good efforts to study through the trip.

And Nancy gave us wonderful opportunity to experience precious knowledge and traditional pit cooking. Pit cooking, as well as knife and arrow making, also brings us back to the peaceful past of thousands years.

UVic students were kind enough to become good friends with my students and help them.

4 Sharing our experiences with others

This time we went beyond normal time axis to thousands-past world and also went beyond normal space-axis to Only One Earth. This thought in time axis of thousands years and in space axis of the earth is the most important idea when we implement environmental education.

I like the word "sharing". We should share our experiences in this course with others, especially with Japanese people.