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The Three-Generation Community is a unique educational centre. It offers Prem Tinsulanonda International School (an IB World day and boarding school), a dynamic Visiting Schools Program, the exciting Traidhos Camps, an artists’ residency program, an educational farm and the barge program, an environmental education watershed program based in Bangkok.

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Editorial

A community is like an organism, it lives through the mutual interest of its members and only exists because of them. Positive, productive individuals will inspire the rest of the community and ensure it thrives. If we wish to live well, we must all try to help our community and inspire others to be better. Our communities are as strong as we make them.

The Traidhos Three-Generation Community has come together from far and wide, bonded by our shared values and beliefs. We all believe in educating the next generation to maximise their potential. We also share a green ethos, a desire to live sustainably and to leave the natural world undiminished for the next generation. This shared purpose fosters a trust and understanding between us, resulting in successful collaboration and friendship. Two heads are better than one, as the saying goes--an entire community is unstoppable.

In this ‘Community’ issue of Traidhos Quarterly, there is a special cave rescue report direct from Chiang Rai and also an exploration of the associated issue of statelessness. We then tackle period taboos, contemplate community belonging and discuss the global nature of the music community. Finally, we debate the importance of preserving tribal community knowledge and discuss innovative methods of social learning.

To the Traidhos community and beyond, thank you for reading.

Editor Jacob Smith

Cover Image: “Community Rescue” - Watercolor by Hannah Akhtar
From Rice Field to Community

Head of Community Lynda Rolph looks back at the expansion of our Traidhos Three-Generation Community over the last twenty-five years.

When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion, so says an old Ethiopian proverb.

Twenty-five years ago, few people could locate Mae Rim on a map and fewer still made the journey north from Chiang Mai city to the small market town, let alone getting on an international flight to visit Mae Rim. Even fewer braved the further adventure to a small village with neat bamboo fences surrounded by rice paddy, the little village of Huay Sai. Villagers looked on puzzled as to what was being constructed in their quiet village, surprised by the large tractors and delivery trucks supplying endless quantities of materials.

Slowly it became clear, not a golf course nor hotel, but a school village; the vision of ML Tri Devakul, which eventually became Traidhos Three-Generation Community. This educational centre comprises Prem International School, a four programme IB school; a Visiting Schools Program welcoming visitors from around the world for field trips and service learning; an educational farm allowing young people to get in touch with global issues through food and farming; a Cooking Academy promoting local seasonal dishes; a Camps Program offering the opportunity for personal development in school holidays; and in Bangkok, an environmental education watershed program known as The Barge Program, originating aboard a wooden boat on the Chao Phraya River.

What unites these diverse strands of the Traidhos Community? Certainly the provision of education is at the heart of each program with the underlying vision of being an international community, across generations working together for a sustainable future. As Prem students consider sustainability as part of their commitment to being in a Round Square School, the various Programs encourage students to think critically about everyday life and the impacts and interconnections of issues concerning the environment, society, economic factors and personal well-being. The guiding mantra being that it is only when matters are viewed from all of these angles that decisions leading to a sustainable way of life can be made. We need to understand the big picture, if we are going to make a difference with our own little piece.

ML Tri imagined a community that would connect with the natural world, one where learning through experience with family would be at the core and one that would inspire everyone to have the confidence to be a leader in their field or workplace.

What can we expect in the next twenty-five years? It is hard to imagine! But what is sure is that the ideas and experiences of people who pass through the Traidhos community are like those spider webs, floating and landing in new places, combining and connecting with other like-minded people, joining and strengthening, creating positive spheres of influence in communities around the world.

Lynda Rolph has been working at Traidhos Three-Generation Community for learning for over fifteen years. She is a highly respected environmental educator, with teaching experience in the United Kingdom and Thailand. She is the former director of the Three-Generation Barge Program.

Photos: Prem, VSP
I arrive in Chiang Rai as the Moo Pa (Wild Boars) football team are recovering in hospital. It took international cooperation to free the twelve boys and their coach from the flooded Tham Luang cave. After a desperate nine day search, prayers were finally answered when British divers made contact with the lost thirteen. The story instantly became front page news across the world. As the extraction mission began, millions followed every update with baited breath. Tragedy unfortunately struck as former Thai Navy SEAL Saman Kunan passed away trying to save the boys. His sacrifice was not in vain, thankfully and the story had a happy ending with all thirteen successfully rescued. By the end of the two week ordeal, we had all witnessed humanity at very its best.

The world’s eyes are on Chiang Rai for the first time. Chiang Rai’s outgoing governor, Narongsak Osotthanakorn, has won much favour for his leadership and compassion, it has even been said he would make a fine prime minister one day. People at home and abroad are planning to visit the region, inspired by those incredible two weeks. Tham Luang cave is being transformed into an international shrine to humanity: no doubt it will prove a hit with tourists. The soft spoken Northern Thais and their beautiful homeland have captured the attention of a divided world yearning for some good news, for an escape from the usual stories of domestic and international disagreement. But how has this unprecedented event affected locals? I went to find out.

A Community’s View

Most people I meet have clearly been moved by the story and are excited to talk with me. Janijira Auymae, owner of Heaven Burger, lights up when I mention the rescue. She has been helping feed the volunteers at Tham Luang cave, joining many others in the local market to cook and deliver fried pork with garlic. She tells me the rescue has changed her outlook on life: “The Thai mindset is already positive and we are a happy people but this has really strengthened our hope. After a week had passed I didn’t think the team could survive without food. I was worried it had been too long but everyday I was given renewed hope with another piece of news, so I kept believing. When they were found and rescued, I promised to never lose hope again.”

Wi, who runs The Smiling Moon Cafe, echoes Janijira in having her faith renewed by the miraculous rescue. She lived and breathed every twist and turn of the story, an emotional rollercoaster from start to finish. It has strengthened the love she has for her family and reminded her how precious life really is: “We must enjoy today because we don’t know what will happen tomorrow.” It has reignited Wi’s passion for helping others, which she now vows to do whenever she has the opportunity: “We must always help when we can. If we help our community, when we are in need our community will help us.” Her boyfriend Kevin tells me Chiang Rai’s expat community has been abuzz with the story. Although he acknowledges the moment will pass, he is thrilled to see such well intentioned international cooperation. Like many of us, he is troubled by growing domestic and international division. The cave rescue has been a welcome relief. It is a reminder of what’s possible when everyone pulls in the same direction, all working towards a shared goal.
The internationality of the rescue is a big reason the world’s eyes have been so drawn to the story. Wi is thrilled to see her home town at the centre of a unifying moment but anxious that the positive momentum is not lost when the cameras leave. Janijira says she is grateful to the international community for helping with the rescue: “I was very surprised by all the help we received, I have not seen anything like this in Thailand before.”

The level of help received is indeed unique. The owner of my hostel, Smart, tells me he is very surprised by how big the story became. He explains that it is common for people to become lost in the caves. In fact, just a few years ago there was a similar situation in Tham Luang cave that received very little attention. Suthiroj Phonyutthasart, a professor from Mae Fah Luang University became lost after going inside for several days to meditate. It was months later when he found his way out—a miracle in itself. He too praises the international response but admits he thinks the media reaction is overblown. Other recent news like the sinking of a tourist boat in Phuket, killing more than fifty people, was glossed over because the news cycle was so consumed by the rescue. Janijira is 23 years old and thinks young people in Thailand are better informed because they use the internet and social media to access news. They are therefore more aware of public opinion and have a broader view of events, beyond just what traditional media chooses to cover. In contrast, the older generation are used to getting their news through papers and television, and so have a more uniform perception of events.

Tanakit, a Chiang Rai native I meet at dinner, jokes that the Moo Pa football team overshadowed the FIFA World Cup. “Thailand has Moo Pa, we don’t need to play at the World Cup!” It’s true that much of the world has followed their story more closely. Even in my football obsessed homeland, England’s first semi-final appearance for 28 years was only a secondary story behind the cave rescue lead. The World Cup’s stars were following the story too. France midfielder Paul Pogba dedicated his nation’s semi-final win to the team, tweeting: “This victory goes to the heroes of the day, well done boys, you are so strong.” Sadly, the team was still in hospital on July 15th, meaning they were unable to take up their World Cup Final invitations. Perhaps one day, a Moo Pa player will represent Thailand and help them qualify for the finals. Tanakit certainly hopes so, he tells me he dreams of the boys representing his beloved Chiangrai United and making the region proud once again.

There have been several high profile attempts to reward the team for their bravery, including a life changing offer of thirteen full scholarships to study bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees at Naresuan University. These offers have been a point of contention in Thailand, with many viewing the thirteen as survivors, not heroes. They argue the boys have already received extraordinary help and their reward has been survival. Their rescue also came at the price of a man’s life and so many view the volunteers as the ones deserving of a reward for their selflessness.
Janijira thinks the boys are too young to think about university study. They should work hard and receive a scholarship when they have proven themselves ready for such an undertaking. In her opinion, a holiday for the boys, perhaps involving a football match abroad would be more appropriate. They can enjoy a treat and then promptly return to their normal lives without being kept in the media spotlight unnecessarily. Wi on the other hand believes the scholarships will be good for the boys because with that, they can work hard, gain expertise and one day help others in need. The scholarships will make the world a better place and benefit society across a lifetime.

Four of the thirteen were previously stateless, a common issue among members of Thailand’s northern hill tribes. They had applied for citizenship before becoming lost and have since been granted Thai citizenship after their rescue, a clear acknowledgement of their importance as ambassadors of Thailand on the global stage.

Inspirational Human Spirit

In Chiang Rai’s Night Bazaar, stall owner Ken tells me: “It is mission impossible: complete.” The story has certainly highlighted our innate ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable adversity.

Firstly, there is Ekapol Chantawong, the Moo Pa assistant coach. His journey has been one of redemption. He initially faced criticism for taking the boys into the cave, despite the risk of flash floods during rainy season. He clearly felt responsible and apologised to the boy’s parents when contact was first established. Instead of blaming Ekapol, the parents thanked him for keeping the boys safe. Once they were trapped, he instantly set about ensuring they had the best chance of survival. Instead of drinking the dirty ground water, he taught the boys to collect water dripping from the cave walls. According to rescuers, he was among the weakest physically because he gave the boys his share of the limited food they had brought. Crucially, he was able to keep their spirits up. A former Buddhist monk, he led the boys in meditation to will away the mental demons brought on by the darkness of their predicament. His spiritual fortitude and safeguarding has captured the imagination of many in Thailand and abroad. He is a hero and a role model: taking full responsibility and tireless in his efforts to make amends. We can all recognise ourselves in Ekapol because we all make mistakes. Clearly it was not his intention to become lost and he responded in the best way. “If he didn’t go with them, what would have happened to my child?” said the mother of Pornchai Khamluang. “When he comes out, we have to heal his heart. My dear Ek, I would never blame you.”

As for the boys themselves, their stoic courage in the face of hunger, darkness and desperation is truly awe inspiring. Imagining ourselves in their situation is enough to cause sweaty palms and a quickening heartbeat. Yet the twelve boys, aged as young as eleven, remained unbroken. The first messages the boys sent to their parents were words of reassurance. While facing the most testing situation imaginable, they actually looked first to comfort their worried loved ones—an inspiring act of love and selflessness.

Of course we must remember the loss of Saman Kunan, who made the ultimate sacrifice. He was courageous enough to help those in need, no matter the danger he faced. We can all learn from Saman and strive to put others ahead of ourselves. His heroic sacrifice helped save the lives of thirteen others. His bravery has no doubt inspired countless others around the world to put those in need before themselves, no matter what.

Every step of the way, this story has exhibited the power we have both as individuals and as a community. The Moo Pa boys never gave up hope and neither did we. The hope of rescue, of improvement, of a brighter future—we must never lose our hope, or we risk losing our humanity.

Jacob Smith is the Editor of Traidhos Quarterly and Outdoor Educator at Traidhos VSP. He is a football fanatic and hopes to watch the Wild Boars play one day.

Photos: Jacob Smith, Google Images
Drawing: Mai Jacknight
Our Traidhos Three-Generation farm is an organic farm providing the opportunity for people to connect with nature and farming in a holistic, multidisciplinary approach. Our farm is home to many domesticated and free ranging animals. We house animals that represent all groups, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Our organic farming methods support and sustain all the vital organisms that are necessary to sustain a healthy environment for our crops to grow.

Traidhos farm houses domesticated animals like buffaloes, pigs, chickens, goats and a very special African spurred tortoise.

Buffaloes – Our buffaloes are one of the most calm and beautiful animals on the farm. They like to spend their day in the open fields surrounding our farm, grazing and then later, ending the day with a swim in the farm’s water bodies. We have one male and five female buffaloes. They are a favourite for our visitors to spend time with.

African Spurred Tortoise – Stella is our only reptile friend on the farm. She is ten years old and is a major part of our farm. She loves to meet and interact with new people. She is a herbivore and happily eats flowers, cucumbers, watermelon, long beans and lettuces.

Goats – We have several goats and kids on our farm. They spend their day in the open fields around the farm with our buffalo. Our goats love young bamboo leaves and like to be petted by our students. But beware; they love to chew on your clothes as well.

Adoption details

Our farm animals are looking for people to connect with them, to learn more about them and to sponsor them to cover their food, shelter and veterinary care costs. Our farm animals are available for adoption through our Adopt a Farm Animal Program. By adopting an animal you will help provide the necessary support for the husbandry and care of our farm animals.

To sponsor a farm animal, choose the type of animal that’s right for you and write to us and we will provide you with a link to the online form. Sponsors can make monthly, quarterly or pay for an entire yearlong commitment to their favourite farm animal. In return, you will receive a sponsorship certificate with a colour photograph of your adopted friend, three visits to our farm to interact and spend time with your animal and also regular updates via text or email (your choice). Private tours to visit the animals can be scheduled during visitor season and otherwise as staffing permits. It’s also possible to sponsor an animal for your friends and family as a special gift.

Privileges of Adopting

- An A5 colour photograph of the adopted animal
- Visit our farm and spend time with your adopted animals
  - For monthly adoption programme, you get to visit our farm once
  - For quarterly adoption programme, you get to visit our farm twice
  - For yearly adoption programme, you get to visit our farm four times
- Certificate of adoption
- Regular updates via text or email (as you choose)
- A shout out on Facebook and Instagram, as a token of our appreciation.

If you have any questions, or for assistance with your adoption, please contact us by email: farm@threegeneration.org or call us at 053-301500.
The epic rescue of the Wild Boars football team from a cave in northern Thailand gripped the world. When it emerged that some of the boys are stateless, the news headlines changed in subtle ways from "Thai boys in the cave" to "boys in Thai cave". Amid the widespread joy over the successful operation, the rescue has drawn attention to the broader issue of statelessness in Thailand.

My research into the lives of stateless youth in Northern Thailand, like those trapped in the cave, shows that classic theories of state succession and state dissolution do not explain the phenomenal number of stateless persons in Thailand.

Instead, uneven economic growth, erratic labour migration policies, bureaucratic failure, legal loopholes and endemic discrimination against non-Thais, especially highlanders (also known as "hill tribes"), are the most frequent causes of statelessness.

Stateless diversity

The exact number of stateless people in Thailand is unknown but it is likely more than two million. Stateless people cannot vote, buy land, seek legal employment or travel freely.

The umbrella term "stateless" might suggest a homogeneous population completely unrecognised by the state, but my ethnographic research reveals a complex and heterogeneous reality. The stateless population ranges from highlanders to children of migrants, who were born in Thailand and do not have ties to their parents’ country of origin.

The various types of non-Thai ID cards issued by the Thai state reflect this diversity. The ID card limits their physical mobility to the province under which they are registered and dictates respective possibilities of Thai citizenship. Until very recently, stateless persons were legally confined to 27 low-skilled occupations. However, this legal amendment only applies to stateless highlanders, and not stateless children of migrants.

Since 2005, all stateless persons have been able to access basic education and health care. In a school uniform, stateless children can appear and feel undifferentiated to other Thai citizen students: they all sing the national anthem, say prayers and play with friends. My research shows that it is only around the teenage years that they become more aware of the limitations of their status and start learning about possible legal pathways to becoming Thai citizens.

Citizenship: right vs deservedness

Following the cave rescue, the boys have since been inundated with offers of help, including full scholarships for university study up to doctorate degrees. The public raised the question whether the boys’ courage and will to survive should “earn” them legal citizenship.

Such citizenship debate is usually framed under the question of "deservedness" rather than a right. Often, this follows media stories about exceptional migrants that counter the negative stereotypes of the non-citizen "other" painted by right-wing politicians.

A case in point is that of Mamadou Gassama, a Malian migrant in Paris, whose bravery and extraordinary climbing skills saved a French child and earned him the title of...
“spiderman of Paris” as well as French citizenship. In the wake of exceptional events like these, political will often follows the media spotlight on the heroes.

**Blood, soil and paper**

Stateless persons must provide proof that they were born in Thailand. This seemingly straightforward and objective process masks the state’s own erratic registration practice of the non-citizen “other”. A birth certificate is now commonly issued to non-Thais, but this wasn’t always the case. However, failure to register a birth is often attributed to the “lack of knowledge” of these non-citizens.

A birth certificate alone does not guarantee citizenship. In principle, Thai citizenship laws recognise both jus sanguinis (right of blood) and jus soli (right of soil citizenship by birth). In practice, claiming citizenship by birth requires a child to present not only his/her documents but also those of his/her parents. The result is a complex system of unevenly applied regulations that distribute citizenship via combinations of blood, soil and paper.

**A long road to citizenship**

Changes in citizenship laws in late 2016 are said to open a path toward citizenship for 80,000 stateless persons. The UN High Commission for Refugees’ global campaign on ending statelessness by 2024 and the late King Bhumibol’s platinum jubilee have been cited by politicians and rights activists I met as the main motivators for the unprecedented urgency to solve this issue, especially regarding children.

However, these changes still reflect criteria based on “deservedness” rather than a more fundamental right to have rights, highlighting the complexities of contemporary migration. Among the requirements are loyalty to the monarch, good conduct and evidence of educational achievement (completion of a Bachelor’s degree).

Read in this light, the complex situation faced by the stateless members of the Wild Boars begins to clarify. Their path to citizenship certainly benefited from the media spotlight and helped them avoid the bureaucratic ordeal endured by thousands of other stateless individuals living in Thailand.

Janepicha Cheva-Isarakul is a Ph. D. candidate and Teaching Fellow in Anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington.

This article was originally published in The Conversation, August 3rd, 2018. Republished under Creative Commons license. The article has been amended to reflect the successful granting of citizenship on August 8th.

Photos: VSP
Students entering Grade 11 at Prem International School have the option of two pathways; they can enter the Diploma Programme (DP) or the Career-related Programme (CP) through the International Baccalaureate (IB). Looking more closely at the lesser known CP; it is a rigorous programme, yet it offers students more flexibility. It allows them to pursue their passion whether that be Art, Design, Entrepreneurship, Finance or Fashion. Here at Prem we are committed to supporting our students in this unique programme and we have recently launched a new Exploria called Start-Up.

Start-Up aims to offer CP students the opportunity to gain practical life and business experience. The goals set by the advisors, Lisa McSweeney and Linda Buck, are to form an environment for students that will stimulate ideas, build confidence in unfamiliar situations, challenge them to take risks and form links with the local community and wider business world.

Through Start-Up we want to inspire our students to take action. One of our first priorities is to help our students arrange job shadowing experience in order to learn first-hand the workings of their chosen industry. Alongside this we want them to utilise the amazing facilities here at Prem by organising and hosting events, making products and offering services. Igniting a ‘can-do’ attitude and backing that up with real-life business experience will help our students stand out in this competitive global world.

To find out more about Start-Up please contact Lisa McSweeney lisam@ptis.ac.th.

If you would be interested in offering job shadow opportunities we would love to hear from you.

Look out for Start-Up events coming soon...

Lisa McSweeney
I have recently re-discovered the importance of being part of a vital and caring community. I am often asked, as I approach the end of my teaching career; what is the secret of your success?

Actually, I have never been asked that question! However, if I was to be asked; I would now simply reply that I am not afraid to say: "I may need some help in completing this task." Two recent examples immediately spring to mind; we were standing outside the Prem Auditorium, teachers and students waiting to start the invigilation process for the Grade 12 exams. I realised that I could not manage the 3 steps outside the auditorium on my own. I whispered this fact to one of the students and immediately, with no fuss, an arm was offered.

One of the delights I have as a teacher, is learning from my students. It is not one of my strengths. In fact, when I arrived in Thailand over 16 years ago, I did not know how to turn a computer on. I had always had a secretary at hand to look after that side of things. Imagine students discovering that their History teacher needed their help to complete basic computing tasks. I have two Grade 11 students who are only too quick to offer their help to Ajarn Mike in this area of work.

In the last four months, I initially found it difficult to admit that my body, usually so fit and strong, was not providing its usual service. It took a while to realise that asking for help from members of the Prem community was not a sign of weakness.

Grown men don’t cry

Please forgive a little personal anecdote but I think it is relevant. I clearly remember at the age of 12 being told not to be such a ‘cry baby’. So, I didn’t cry until the early morning hours of December 16th on a Devon hill-side. A dam had burst and I was experiencing a roller-coaster of emotions following the birth of my first son. There, I somehow discovered that grown men do cry...And not just after missing a penalty at the World Cup.

Kindness is the Key

I once asked a colleague, actually it was during last year's Accreditation process, what would make the Prem Community really grow? She simply replied with one word: Kindness.

A strong community is also a vulnerable community

As John Donne reminds us, human beings were never meant to experience life alone. Whether it’s a family or community, one based in a school, the Boarding House, a village or a city. We are not supposed to be alone or lonely. This is not always easy as we try to teach our toddlers to stand on their own two feet and be independent members of their family and community.

The Liverpool Anthem, after the tragedy of the Hillsborough Disaster, perhaps begins to offer a balance and was a great comfort to the Liverpool footballing community:

Walk on, through the wind
Walk on, through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart
And you’ll never walk alone
You’ll never walk alone
Josh Groban, ‘You’ll never Walk Alone’

Sometimes it’s a ‘storm’, challenge, or even a tragedy that brings out the best in people and a community.

Looking after the Community and reaching out

Successful communities do not just happen by accident. They need nurturing, sustaining and sometimes they require sheer grit and determination. They do not exist simply to serve their own interests. The more a community reaches out to serve the needs of others, the more vibrant and purposeful it becomes.

Friendships are vital part of a community

Friendships are the very bed-rock of community life. Three weeks ago, I was lying in my hospital bed, feeling rather sorry for myself, when, to my surprise, two very good friends I have known for nearly forty years appeared by my bedside. They had flown for over twelve hours at considerable personal expense and disrupted their plans just to be with me. Our laughter and their genuine expression of love was such a boost. It was great to experience the love and friendship of my ‘family community’ via this visit from my two sons.

I know that wherever life takes me, I’ll never really leave the Prem Community.

Mike Matthews passed away shortly after submitting this article. Ajarn Mike was a History and TOK teacher at Prem and will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by students, parents and colleagues.

Photo: Google Images
Meet Traidhos Outdoor Education Camp Coordinator Gijs de Jong

While his university peers were sitting in classrooms listening to lectures, this adventurer was out mountaineering in the dead of winter in Scotland to learn about avalanche hazards or on a canoeing trip with his professor to develop canoeing skills. Meet one of our outdoor educators, Gijs de Jong. Gijs spent his undergraduate career studying Outdoor Education at a university in the United Kingdom and now spends his time facilitating experiential education experiences for students in Thailand. Born in Aruba and educated around the world, Gijs has experienced first hand the value of learning in the outdoors. He is passionate about encouraging youth to spend time outdoors and facilitating those experiences in different cultural contexts.

Tell us about yourself!

Well, although I was born in Aruba, I didn’t grow up there. I moved around a lot and by the age of 14 I had already lived in four different countries. I then joined Think Global School, a traveling high school which spends about three months in each country. University was spent in the Lake District where I completed my undergraduate in Outdoor Education. Shortly after, I began to work for a Canadian NGO where we took students that were either on their gap year or were wanting to go abroad, and I got to lead 40-day expeditions in the Peruvian Andes. We did many activities, including hiking, learning about essential oils, and sandboarding. I then moved back home after 16 years and found myself doing a bunch of different jobs on the Island. One of the most exciting ones was working as a sea kayak guide! Now I find myself in Thailand, furthering my career as an outdoor educator!

What are your passions outside of work?

I love anything outdoors really. At the top of my list is trail running, canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking (in that order).

When did you first discover your love for the outdoors?

I don’t think it was until after high school. It was a slow process. As a kid I was always climbing trees and did some hiking here and there. During my first year of university I hated how it rained so often (who knew it rained a lot in the UK). Gradually though, I began to take advantage of the space I was living in. A hiking trail started literally 3 minutes away from my home and as soon as I could drive I explored the local area.

The outdoors became a place for me to stay sane. It has become my getaway to calm down, think, or to get energized!

You spent your high school years traveling the world as a student at Think Global School. What is one of your most memorable experiences from that period of your life?
It’s hard to say. When I think back on those 4 years I just kind of see it as one big blur. It happened so fast, I’m not really sure I can remember everything! Even today I’m processing some of the experiences every time I come across an old Facebook memory or Skype with friends.

I think one of my favorite experiences was in ninth grade. We were in China, learning about The Great Wall. The memorable part about it was that we spent the night right next to it! We camped under the stars and the next day we walked on ruined parts of the wall learning more about the ancient history and culture of the structure. I think that was a perfect moment because it shows what Outdoor Education can be. It’s something I look back at when I think about what I want to achieve in life.

How does your degree in Outdoor Education influence your work?

Well to know how my degree influences my work I’ll give you a bit of background. While at University I did a whole range of activities: winter mountaineering in Scotland to understand avalanche hazards and to practice navigational skills; canoeing expeditions to develop my skills, which were put to the test by teaching students my own age to develop their technique. I also focused on working with school groups and planning and running creative outdoor sessions based on what they were learning in the classroom. My work today revolves around planning and running creative outdoor sessions, so fortunately I have already had practice for this under appropriate supervision. I often turn to my past University assignments and notes when I find myself a little stuck.

What do you enjoy most about the work you’re doing?

I love the cultural challenges that my work brings. I have found that culture has such a huge impact on how Outdoor Education can be taught and learned.

Working in the Outdoor Education sector in Thailand (and Peru in the past) means groups can come from many different cultural backgrounds.

Certain activities seem challenging or inappropriate for certain cultures. For example in Chinese culture, it is offensive to crawl in between a person’s legs, so games such as “freeze tag” have to be restructured.

Which mountaineers, ultra runners, kayakers, educators, or adventurers inspire you the most?

My pre trail hype involves watching Brandon Semenuk on YouTube. He mountain bikes down trail all in one shot. Or I scroll Instagram looking at pictures of Timothy Olson on the trails. The smell, sights and sounds of the outdoors is what keeps me going during a run. Post run usually involves watching Alex Honnold climb something (rope optional).

However, when it comes to education, I am continuously inspired by some of my previous teachers. Some fictional, some real. Mr. Martino, Mr. K, and Tintin are probably my top three educators/adventurers that I look up to.

What advice do you have for someone thinking about pursuing a career in outdoor education?

If you’re already thinking about it–do it! A degree in Outdoor Education has a major focus on how we can use the environment and outdoor activities to develop groups and individuals. Make sure you don’t focus too much on your work and allow time to develop your own interests. Since the work is closely related to being an outdoor adventurer, you can sometimes find yourself getting into a loop. Instead of lying in bed and watching Netflix, use your days off to develop your outdoor skills.


Photos: Jacob Smith
Don’t Discriminate Against those who Menstruate!

There is a large movement to end ‘Tampon Tax’ worldwide. Haaniah Akhtar explores the taboos around menstruation and the effect this is having on female education.

I was in art class one day when a student came rushing towards me. She spoke in a whisper so soft that I could barely hear her: “Do you have a pad?”. Panicked and clearly distressed, she began to cry as I said no. I did not have a sanitary towel or tampon and neither did the first aid kit. I felt a great deal of empathy witnessing her desperate attempts to subtly cover her skirt—a situation familiar to all women. If only we had an Always Discreet tampon, I thought. If only we could always be discreet. It took a while to track it down but just one pad was enough to save this child from utter humiliation.

The incident got me wondering how common these situations are in schools. With some research, I found out that back home in England, it is common for girls from low-income families to struggle to afford sanitary protection and it’s normal for teachers to personally buy supplies for their students. This is not surprising when you consider the high cost of sanitary products. On average, a woman will spend £2,756 on sanitary products across her lifetime in England. This includes a controversial five per cent tax on menstrual products, which critics argue encourages period poverty. The issue is a global phenomenon. According to UNESCO, ten per cent of girls worldwide miss school because of their periods, instead staying at home to avoid the embarrassment of bleeding in front of classmates.

Since December 2016, the movement to end period poverty has been gaining traction. News reports have highlighted the taxing of sanitary products as ‘luxury’ items, leading to global pressure to abolish these laws. Barack Obama said the period tax only exists because “men were making the laws when those taxes were passed.” We shouldn’t be surprised then that men who don’t experience, or ever really hear about periods don’t understand the issue. This movement actually began long ago. For years, women across the world have fought to stop menstruation from affecting their education. Kenya became the first country in the world to scrap its sales tax for sanitary products back in 2004. Later that same year, Scotland became the first country to make tampons freely available in schools in lower-income neighbourhoods. This year, British supermarket Tesco cut the price of its sanitary products by five per cent to stop their customers from having to pay the “tampon tax”. In July, India ended its twelve per cent tax on sanitary products in the face of mass protests. But the problem doesn’t just lie within tax laws. The problem originates from deeply engrained stigmas surrounding periods and their misrepresentation in the media.

Worldwide, menstruation is often associated with shame. Women are told not to discuss it in public and to keep their tampons and sanitary pads hidden. The stigma is universal and impacts women’s rights in various spheres of life. For example, taboos and culturally entrenched superstitions surrounding menstrual hygiene has meant that girls on their period in Ghana have been banned from crossing rivers to get to school. In Nepalese villages, woman face the risk of death because tradition forces them out of their homes and in to quarantine huts to sleep while menstruating. Women on their periods are denied access to sacred temples in many countries. In sport, female athletes are prevented from accessing Muay Thai stadiums, while the subject of menstruation affecting athletic performance remains largely taboo.

This plague of stigma and shame makes girls afraid to talk openly about a normal process, the very process that lets us reproduce. Girls are conditioned to speak in hushed tones when simply asking to borrow a pad from their teacher. We live in a world where these products are named ‘discrete’ and ‘whisper’ and where blue liquid is preferable to actual blood in advertisements. It’s no wonder there is a lack of open discourse.

The problems surrounding menstruation are clearly far reaching, affecting religion, sport, school and work. In Thailand’s secondary schools, a report found that students who attended while on their period had 48.2% lower concentration levels and 43.3% lower participation rates in sport. Girls who miss school completely face a greater disadvantage. They fall behind in their studies and face social isolation. Period poverty is clearly causing inequality from an early age. Girls who are deprived of sanitary products are deprived of an equal education.

It is indisputable that tampons and sanitary pads serve a medical purpose and so they should be included in all school first aid kits. We must ensure they are always accessible. Eliminating “tampon tax”, making sanitary items accessible in schools and removing stigma: these are tangible goals to work towards. Periods are a biological process, a necessity for human reproduction and certainly not a luxury. Young girls should be taught that periods are something they can talk about openly and not something to ever be ashamed of. Period.

Hannah Akhtar is currently an Outdoor Educator at Traidhos Camps.

Photo: Google Images
Is there a place for Traditional Community Knowledge in the development of International Conservation Policy?

Traditional knowledge is one of humanity’s most important possessions and has helped shape human evolution for thousands of years. It has been passed down from ancestral generations to the present. Although the influence of traditional knowledge has been vital to the evolution of science, it has only recently been given serious consideration. Traditional ecological knowledge is the experience acquired by humans over hundreds or even thousands of years of evolution and first-hand interaction with nature. This article examines a few case studies of tribal people from India and how their community knowledge can be used for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources.

Traditional communities and endemic flora

Traditional knowledge is vital for the preservation of indigenous culture and for preserving the biodiversity of a specific region. Traditional ecological knowledge deals with a wide variety of subjects, including animal behaviour and plant properties. Among plant properties lies medicinal knowledge, which is presently used for healthcare by indigenous communities and for drug development by major pharmaceuticals. Many studies highlight the importance of conserving ethnobotanical knowledge, as it can provide us with a platform for creating new compounds relating to phytochemistry, pharmacology and pharmacognosy.

Kani or Kanikaran are ethnic groups from the South Western Ghats of India. Their knowledge is passed on orally and so there is little written about the medicinal properties of indigenous plants and Kani healing practices. Healers commonly train by assisting their parents or relatives for years, eventually gaining the authority to provide treatments themselves. A case study of the Kani tribe shows that in addition to providing first aid remedies, their exceptional knowledge of medicinal plants allows them to cure a number of diseases. The Kani tribe has knowledge of 52 endemic species of plants that can be used to treat different ailments like a sore throat, common cold, fever, headache, poison/envenomation and more.

The Kani tribe belonging to the Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) has access to an extremely diverse range of flora and fauna. It was found that the tribes residing deep inside the forest still depend solely on their environment to treat a range of diseases. Formerly nomadic, the Kani are now primarily agrarian communities, cultivating tapioca, banana, millets and cash crops for daily use.

The Kani tribe of Kouthalai region uses 54 species of plants belonging to 26 different families for their healthcare and first aid. 19 herbs, 12 shrubs, 7 small trees, 6 big trees and 10 climbers are among the plants used. These plants treat a wide variety of diseases, including skin disorders, colds, fever, cough, headache, rashes, diarrhoea, fertility issues, tooth disease, stomach ache, wounds, rheumatism, hair loss and poison (snake, scorpion and insect) bites.
The study concludes by sighting the importance of traditional medicinal knowledge to the health of tribal people. Preserving this knowledge could also prove invaluable for research in the areas of ethnobotany, taxonomy and pharmacology.

Most ethnic groups in South India are linguistically Dravidian. One of these groups, the Irulas, also known as ‘Kattu Vasi’ or Forest dwellers, depend solely on the forest for survival. Their staple food is bush meat and fish, and the group is known for their expertise in the tracking, handling and hunting of snakes and rodents. They played a significant role in the reptile skin trade that existed in India before the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act. The Irulas identify plants by their primary characteristics: morphology and ecology. Morphological characteristics being the colour, size and shape of the plants, ecology being the way it interacts with its environment. Contact with the plants over many generations has given the Irulas an intimate knowledge of their local flora, from seed up to adult form. Their knowledge even allows them to distinguish between similar plants found in two different habitats. An example is the distinction they make between Chavukku (Casuarina equisetifolia L.) and Kattu Chavukku (Tamarix indica Willd)—plants that are alike but found in two completely different habitats.

The table below shows some plant species and their treatments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Parts used / diseases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mukuthi Poo</td>
<td>Juice of leaves, along with leaves of Cocculus hirsutus. Cures Diarrhoea.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chokkalai</td>
<td>Decoction of leaves and seeds mixed with the decoction of roots of Aristolochia tagala, Strychnos nuxvomica, Coscinium fenestratum are taken orally. Cures snake/scorpion bites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seethevi thalai</td>
<td>Leaf powder used as tooth cleaning powder. Powder of leaves, unripened fruit and root is mixed with the leaves of Acacia nilotica, Piper betle and seeds of Areca catechu. Cures toothache and gives strength to the teeth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The taxonomic abilities of the Irulas can be compared to the most skilled Linnaean taxonomists.

Due to a fast and ever changing modern lifestyle, the existence of traditional Irulas is under pressure. Data indicates the Irula population in the Kodaikkarai Reserve Forest (KRF) stands at just 300. The recent trend of ever increasing economic interest in the natural resources of the forest, from local government and multinational companies, is driving the indigenous people and their culture towards extinction. The government has responded by providing agricultural land and housing for the Irulas, both as compensation and to protect and conserve their people.

An estimated 90% of tribal ethnic communities in India live inside or around forested areas, which provides them with access to a diverse range of flora and fauna. Tribes living in forests develop a spatial link between themselves and the biological world, making them vital for the conservation...
of forests and wildlife. The case studies mentioned above emphasise the importance of traditional knowledge in the livelihood of humans and for the conservation of floral biodiversity. This knowledge is also vital to the formation of international conservation policies. Traditional ways of life work with nature and ensure that their ancestral property, the forests, are preserved. Certain communities like Soligas have configured and classified their land into Evergreen, Deciduous, Grasslands and Scrubs, based on the nature of the vegetation. Indigenous groups also have an excellent knowledge of the fauna—their behaviour, habitat and ecology. This knowledge, if conserved and utilised properly, can preserve bio-diversity at a local and international level. From the case studies previously mentioned, it is evident that the traditional medicinal knowledge of the tribes like Kani and Irulas have been of great use to themselves and to our industrialised society.

There has to be a rapid action plan to conserve tribal knowledge and lifestyle. Many factors are driving them to the brink of extinction: Governments and multinationals taking medicinal plants without their consent, over exploiting resources and driving the tribes out of their natural habitat. Also, there is a lack of interest from younger generations, who are leaving behind their culture and traditions to move in to towns and cities in search of jobs. For these reasons we must preserve traditional knowledge through international conservation policy.

To conclude, ethnic groups have rich traditions and knowledge involving the environment, ecosystem, flora and fauna, which have been passed down through many generations. Conservation of these groups will conserve their knowledge, which can be used to preserve forests for researchers, forest departments and tourists. Local and tribal peoples, with their expertise in indigenous ecology and resource management techniques, can help conserve forests and natural resources. Yes, traditional knowledge must be taken seriously in any discussion about international conservation policy.

Sandeep Varma is Head of Activities at Traidhos Farm. He worked with Irulas for two years while researching reptile breeding in Chennai.

Photos: Wikimedia Commons, Google Images
During the Songkran break I went to New York and New Jersey as part of my field trip project. During the first week I was a typical sightseeing tourist in the Big Apple. For the second I saw numerous world-class musicians perform and visited three of the world’s top music schools.

I began my musical journey with a performance by the virtuoso pianist András Schiff at the Carnegie Hall in New York City. He played Mendelsohn’s Fantasia in F# Minor, Beethoven’s Sonata No.24, Bach’s English Suite No.6 and Brahms’ Klavierstucke Op.76 and Seven Fantasy Op.116. Benjamin Grosvenor, a child prodigy pianist who began performing at the age of ten, closed out the show with Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.3.

My experience continued at the Lincoln Centre with the world famous conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen. He led Beethoven’s Eroica symphony and performed the world premiere of Anna Throvaldsdottir’s Metacosmosis. Next, I saw a concert by the world famous New York Philharmonic Orchestra and attended an excellent production of Turandot by the Metropolitan Opera. The set and costumes were beautiful and the ensemble had exquisite balance, it really had everything you wish for in an opera. A lively evening was spent with Jazz legend Chick Chorea playing the music of his idol, Thelonious Monk. There were a few other events, most notably a front row seat at the Broadway phenomenon, The Phantom of the Opera.

The first school I visited was Greenwich House Music School. The school is over one hundred years old and boasts Jascha Heifetz and two students of Claudio Arrau as teachers. Unfortunately my visit came during their Easter holiday, so there were no lessons to observe. Instead, I had a very informative conversation with the school’s Director. It was interesting to learn of the school’s deep roots in the local community. The school has helped strengthen the heartbeat of the historic West Village neighbourhood by spreading its vibrant culture and pre-eminent teaching through free workshops. In turn, these outreach programmes have ensured that the school is viewed with pride by locals.

My second visit took me to West Windsor Community School. Here I was able to observe youth orchestra rehearsals. These were communal rehearsals that included students from four neighbouring schools. The benefits of grouping the local area’s top talent became clear as they played. Their repertoire was quite advanced, for example my favourite piece of their’s was a performance of Rachmaninoff’s Symphony No.2.

My final observation was at The New School for Music Study, which also boasts over a century of musical tradition. I visited various different class types: individual, group, beginner and advanced. Every teacher seemed eager to share their pedagogical practices with me. Their passion for musical teaching and performance was very evident: they wanted to share their teaching secrets so students everywhere could improve as musicians. It was clear that their love of music always came first. The school’s atmosphere was warm, intimate and ideal for learning. The rapport between students and teachers was excellent, I never detected any stress or hesitance in the students. The joy of music could be felt everywhere!

The trip was really all I had hoped for and more. I gained many valuable insights during an inspirational Songkran break. I have returned with knowledge that guarantees an improved classroom experience for my students.

In a general sense, the most striking discovery of my trip was how closely bonded we all are as part of the global music community. Music is a language that translates beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries: our shared passion created an instant bond with my American counterparts. I know now that we all have more in common around the world than we assume. Now, back home in Thailand I still feel connected to a global community. Every time I listen to, play or teach music, I know the joy I feel is being shared by countless others across the globe. We are all one family.

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Photos: Santi Saengtong, Prem
Humans are social creatures and our need to form relationships and belong to a group is more fundamental to our survival than even food or shelter. Indeed, social psychologist and neuroscientist, Matthew Lieberman sees the brain’s primary purpose as ‘social thinking’. When we are not engaged in an active task, the brain reverts to a default network that directs us to think about other people - their thoughts, feelings and goals. Research reveals that our brain spends 10,000 hours making sense of other people and ourselves by the time we are ten years old – the time it takes to ‘master’ a skill.

But what is the connection between the brain and our community?

Anthropologist Robin Dunbar posits that the strongest predictor of a species' brain size is the size of its social group. Put plainly, human brain development is attributable to our basic need to work together in a group, with a common purpose, shared values and agreement on goals.

So what does this have to do with education?

Community and connection have powerful qualities that shape learning. These findings have important implications in education as students are faced with ideologies based on minimising social distractions. But this elimination of community is not conducive to learning and leaves cognitive resources under utilised. When students interact, they deepen their understanding of each other, which has a flow-on effect for learning through collective meaning making, mentorship, encouragement and an understanding of differing perspectives and idiosyncratic qualities. As such, all aspects of education, including the design of classrooms, should acknowledge community and emphasise the role socialisation plays in facilitating learning and improving student engagement.

Why care?

Parents, students and teachers alike should care about learning communities because the social process is critical to positive and effective teaching and learning practice. Educational researchers have differing opinions about how people learn best, yet they overwhelmingly agree that learning is enhanced when a student’s environment and experience goes beyond the traditional classroom’s one-way information transaction.

It is useful to refer to Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed here, which posited that education had become an act of depositing knowledge. A "banking" concept of education does not involve communication, rather, it is the dictation of information by the teacher to the students, which is then memorised and repeated. In order to move past this method of teaching and learning, we must remove the teacher-student contradiction so that teachers and students can become co-constructors of knowledge.

How do we do this?

Small changes can have a large impact. Removing the so-called ‘front’ of the classroom and moving furniture so that students can easily connect and collaborate with each other will promote pro-social learning. Furthermore, flexibility for both students and teachers to move around the space will create greater engagement and encourage the use of higher order thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis rather than rote memorisation.

Put simply, a community catalyses deep learning. Care and consideration should also be taken when planning classrooms and learning spaces. When students feel respected and valued as teachers in their own right, it encourages a greater understanding, transfer of knowledge and engagement in the learning process.

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Photos: Prem
The heart and future of the community