

Wild Epiphany: Turning Youth Care Inside Out

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Using phenomenology as a framework for analysis, and drawing on Abraham Maslow's concept of peak experience, this thesis reveals the unique power of a moment in the wilderness. Within this paper are emotionally charged recollections of epiphany as experienced by individuals who, as youth, were mandated to attend a wilderness based residential attendance program. These recollected experiences are compared and contrasted to observations, of similar moments, made by counselors who have facilitated extended excursions into the wilderness. This qualitative study has been conducted in collaboration with graduates of Caribou Action Training Society's Camp Trapping and past and present wilderness counselors. The commentaries of the participants resonate with implications for therapeutic intervention. Characterizations of wilderness, conceptualizations of dependency and masculinity, and suggestions of improved mental well-being figure prominently in the recollections of the participants.