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### Article

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## ‘Cooking up a good practitioner’: What are the necessary ingredients of International Adventure Therapy training and development?

### Abstract

The training and development of international adventure therapy practitioners has had somewhat limited critical examination from cross cultural perspectives. While individuals and organizations have collaborated internationally for decades, to the authors’ knowledge, there has not yet been a concerted effort to examine core training for wide international scope, nor co-develop core cross-cultural training parameters. Given this backdrop and gap, directly before the 8IATC in Sydney (Australia) in 2018, a group of 24 AT practitioners from 11 nations gathered for three days in a ‘Cave’ to explore international perspectives on the necessary ingredients of training and development of adventure therapy practitioners. This paper explores the overarching outcomes of this ‘Cave Think Tank’, along with feedback from participants of a workshop at the 9IATC in Kristiansand, Norway in 2022 and reflections afterwards, to consider the question in the title of this paper. The five key themes arising in the ‘Cave Think Tank’ and explored in the workshop include: 1) Values (shared and held by adventure therapy practitioners), 2) Ways of being (as an adventure therapy practitioner), 3) Foundational knowledges (theories and bodies of knowledge that inform adventure therapy practice), 4) Skills (required for safe ‘good enough’ adventure therapy practice), and 5) Interventions (commonly used strategies or micro-interventions that are appropriate in adventure therapy practice). These core ingredients, which were agreed as important across diverse cultural contexts, demonstrates the value and benefits of cross-cultural collaboration, and will no doubt continue to be enhanced by dialogue and collaboration.

### Keywords

Adventure therapy; nature-based interventions; international curriculum; cross-cultural education; culture

# 1 Introduction

In line with the diversity of international practice, adventure therapy is defined and influenced by intersections of culture, context, history, and increasingly marginalized groups' voices and indigenous ways of integrating health and wellbeing. It is reflective of the diverse needs faced by individuals and communities. Likewise, progressive international training for adventure therapy practitioners reflects this diversity.

Though adventure therapy training has been explored within social work in the United States (Tucker et al., 2013) and in Australia (Slattery et al., 2022), to the authors' knowledge, training for international adventure therapy practitioners has had limited critical examination from cross cultural perspectives. While individuals and organizations have collaborated internationally for decades, to the authors' knowledge, there has not been intentional collaboration to examine core training from wide international perspectives.

In recognition of this, directly before the 8IATC in Sydney (Australia) in 2018, a group of 24 AT practitioners from 11 nations gathered for three days in a 'Cave' to explore international perspectives on the necessary ingredients of critical training and development of adventure therapists. This paper explores the overarching outcomes of this 'Cave Think Tank', along with contributions from participants of a workshop facilitated at the 9IATC in Kristiansand, Norway in 2022 on 'International Adventure Therapy Training'. Since the 9IATC, the author team have continued reflecting on the question: 'What are the necessary ingredients of International Adventure Therapy training and development?'

Neither this paper nor the workshop represents formal research. Nor are either intended to present a comprehensive framework for curriculum development. These efforts, however, share an intentional, methodical, emergent process of exploratory investigation and mutual learning. The value, therefore, comes from conceptualizing this work as foundational knowledge and inspiration for reflective training and practice in adventure therapy and adds critical discourses within this topical international adventure therapy research, practice and training discourse.

While differences across cultures necessarily exist, a range of key theories, practices and philosophical stances became apparent during the 'Cave Think Tank'. These appear to be increasingly shared by the broader Adventure Therapy community that is eager to grapple with these intersections and dilemmas to benefit the development and diversification of the field. These shared domains resulted in the identification of five key themes from the 'Cave think tank' and were explored in the workshop: 1) Values (shared and held by adventure therapy practitioners), 2) Ways of being (as an adventure therapy practitioner), 3) Foundational knowledges (theories and bodies of knowledge that inform adventure therapy practice), 4) Skills (required for safe 'good enough' adventure therapy practice), and 5) Interventions (commonly used strategies or micro-interventions that are appropriate in adventure therapy practice).

The key common themes, theories, practices, and philosophies provide a foundational starting point for the development of transformative international adventure therapy training curriculum. It is envisaged that these ingredients will continue to be enhanced by cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration into the future.

## 2 Background: The Cave

The ‘Cave Think Tank’ agenda was based on an underlying thirst for exploring, articulating, debating, defining, and refining shared beliefs, values and ‘ways of being’ as an adventure therapy practitioner, with the intent to inform education and training of adventure therapy practitioners through exploration of the question, “What are the necessary ingredients of International Adventure Therapy training and development?” The Cave Think Tank was held in Australia in 2018, and took place over three days, with 24 participants from eleven nations: Australia (5), Belgium (1), Canada (1), Hungary (2), India (1), New Zealand (2), Norway (1), Spain (3), Taiwan (4), UK (2), and the USA (2). All participants were involved in the co-construction and facilitation of this gathering. This socio-political-geographical and cultural landscape was positioned prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were diverse in their culture, experience, professional background, and ways of using adventure therapy practices. They all contributed from their perspective of adventure therapy, acknowledging they did not necessarily represent the breadth of perspectives from their home nation. Nations represented were limited to those who had volunteered and were able to attend.

As an international lens was present in all discussions, it was consistently acknowledged that diversity in cultures requires curricula that are appropriate to the cultural and socio-ecological context and should be developed from this position. Therefore, whilst the purpose of the Cave Think Tank was to inform education and training curricula, the emphasis was intentionally on identifying shared philosophies and practices and not on developing curricula per se. The proceedings of the Cave Think Tank (Borroel et al., 2022) were an attempt to portray the common foundational adventure therapy philosophies and practices identified.

### 2.1 The Cave Think Tank Process

Time was initially spent creating a safe space for all Cave participants to fully engage in the co-created processes with a view to identifying themes and commonalities in beliefs, practices, and dilemmas. An initial question “What do I (and we) need to have a satisfying and safe time?” was presented and a structured process used to establish a safe and conducive collaborative space. This helped form a group culture supportive of a judgment-aware zone, clear expectations, personal responsibility and self-care, consideration of language differences, safe boundaries, and invitation for everyone to contribute.

Strategies included sharing from an individual and home nation perspective, brainstorming, small group work, debating, discussing, and refining what might be essential knowledge and skills important for ‘good enough’ adventure therapy. This provided common ground and helped hone what was considered the ‘essence’ of adventure therapy, and what, therefore, could be essential content within international adventure therapy training programs.

Comprehensive notes and accompanying photographs were taken throughout the workshop, and a process of iterative analysis formed the structure of the sessions (Srivastava et al, 2009). Each day the material that emerged was explored in detail through

sharing practice stories and consequently developing a shared understanding of what is included in adventure therapy practice, and essential skills and knowledge held by adventure therapy practitioners. A key intention was to identify common elements for international adventure therapy education and training across cultures, as well as to deepen our understanding of what others think and do and how they approach adventure therapy through their unique cultural and geographical lens.

The process of refining the content from the small group work, whole group analysis and discussion resulted in five key themes. These were explored and refined in the final session using a world café style of group facilitation: 1) values, 2) ways of being, 3) foundational knowledge, 4) skills, and 5) interventions. The underpinnings of these five themes were considered to be essential training content, potentially serving as a guide to develop adequate international AT training programs and practitioners. The findings were then presented at the 8th International Adventure Therapy conference, and a detailed report prepared and published (Borroel et al. 2020).

The five themes were then presented at the 9th International Adventure Therapy Conference where participants were invited to explore the findings in small groups to compare with their own perceptions and experiences, add to or contest/debate the findings. This publication presents the findings in detail and reports on the results of the 9IATC workshop.

### 3 Pedagogical Approach - A Continuing Conversation

Approaching the 9IATC socio-political climate reiterated the ongoing critical discussions and ongoing reflection of the Cave Think Tank proceeding recommendations. Undoubtedly, the 'Cave Think Tank' conversations about international adventure therapy training remain alive and as relevant as ever. The need for training curricula that invites participants to engage in global discourse is ever increasing. Both as a bookend to the Cave Think Tank and an invitation to continue the dialogue about training, the "Cooking up a Good Practitioner" workshop was convened. The five key themes of training identified and discussed within the 9IATC 'Cooking up a Good Practitioner' workshop was the final product of an immersive experience that attempted to mirror some of the essential aspects of Lederach's (2005) peacebuilding process, which highlights the importance of building relationships, positive risk-taking, creating space and creativity, and promoting curiosity and varying worldviews. All Cave Think Tank members agreed that sharing these reflections and findings with the International Adventure Therapy field was an important way to continue critical discussions and critiques emerging within international Adventure Therapy training programs. Likewise, these interactions were seen as a way of co-creating knowledge through complex collaboration, a key approach to innovation (Ruoslahti, 2020).

Prior to the workshop, participants were provided a link to the Cave Think Tank Proceedings which could be referred to during the workshop. The workshop took place in an outdoor environment and ran for 2 hours. The majority of the Cave Think Tank team members facilitated parts of the workshops. The introduction to the workshop included information about The Cave Think Tank proceedings, the processes of the Cave Think

Tank immersion and information about the structure of the workshop. The five key themes of training were subsequently introduced, as depicted in table 1: Key Themes for Adventure Therapy Practitioner Development.

**Table 1:** Key Themes for Adventure Therapy Practitioner Development

Theme	Definition	Sub-theme
<b>Values</b> (shared and held by adventure therapy practitioners)	Principles and beliefs that guide behavior in adventure therapy practices	Intentional use of nature Environmentalism Conservation Equity and social justice Cultural safety Relationship first
<b>Ways of being</b> (as an adventure therapy practitioner)	Therapeutic use of self in adventure therapy context	<i>Therapist/practitioner:</i> Self-awareness Empowerment approach Relational, client centered <i>Nature:</i> Comfortable in nature Nature as co-therapist <i>Training:</i> Learning from/in nature Having a growth mindset Being reflective Working with intent
<b>Foundational knowledge</b> (informing adventure therapy practices).	Theories and bodies of knowledge that inform adventure therapy practices	History of adventure therapy Client specific knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social determinants of health</li> <li>• Client presentation and needs</li> </ul> Theories and models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiential learning</li> <li>• Attachment and trauma</li> <li>• Humanistic</li> <li>• Zone of proximal development</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b> (required for safe “good enough” adventure therapy practice)	Application of knowledge in execution of practices and tasks in adventure therapy contexts	Group Work/facilitation Risk assessment and management (mental health and outdoor) Incorporating an outdoor activity base Environmentalism



Theme	Definition	Sub-theme
<b>Interventions</b> (applied in adventure therapy practice)	Specific evidence informed therapeutic approaches, techniques and strategies that enhance health and wellbeing in adventure therapy contexts	Building a sense of identity Conscious use of metaphor Therapy-based interventions Outdoor or nature-based interventions.

Participants were then invited to move into one of five small groups that presented a chosen theme from the table above. Presenters facilitated discussion of each of the principles and approaches that were identified for each theme. Participants were then asked to reflect and seek any clarifications before proceeding. Each participant was given three colorful sticky dots and encouraged to identify which elements of the theme were considerably important, particularly within their own socio-political-cultural context. Participants were also encouraged to identify components of international adventure therapy training they believed were not as well represented in the key theme conversation by writing a note on a separate heart shaped sticky note. Within the small groups, reflective discussions were facilitated, and each small group returned to the whole group for this feedback to be shared. Afterwards, presenters began closing the workshop by offering time for participants to partner with one other person as a penultimate opportunity for reflection. In these pairs, participants were invited to discuss which aspects of the workshop most resonated with them on personal or professional levels. From there, presenters closed the workshop in a large group circle with a few participants articulating impacts felt from the workshop and appreciations for the space, time, collegial connections, and conversations shared.

During the gIATC workshop, presenters intended to honor the confluence of distinct cultures and a diverse range of participants' training and experience in adventure programming. Presenters approached this workshop influenced by the same principles of collaboration and curiosity which guided work in the Cave Think Tank. Presenters created a workshop environment conducive for presenting key themes produced in the Cave that also invited the diverse range of participants to engage in critical conversations about the work produced. Presenters were highly motivated to offer a workshop based on experiential learning models of action, reflection, and integration which invited participants to activities, conversations, ownership of the shared experience, and reflection exercises (Kolb et al., 2009; Kolb et al., 2014). Presenters aimed to engage the participants in a focused and reflective process to increase knowledge and reflection of the five key themes being presented. Creation of a safe and inclusive space was also important to give participants the opportunity to reflect on their own practice/training in relation to what was presented.

## 4 Emerging Dialogues

Discussions in the Cave were rich, and despite the diversity in the Cave group, there was consensus by the end of the time together regarding some of the philosophical assumptions held by adventure therapy practitioners, underpinning values and beliefs, essential skills and knowledge and some common intervention strategies. These are published in Borroel et al. (2020) and incorporated into the GIATC workshop. GIATC conference participants were invited to discuss the merits of the specific items listed under each theme and to “vote” on what they felt was most essential in adventure therapy training or education. The most prevalent elements that emerged from the Cave Think Tank and feedback received from conference participants about each theme are presented below.

### 4.1 Values: (shared and held by adventure therapy practitioners)

Use of nature as co-therapist or as healer was considered an important element of adventure therapy practice and so a key value discussed was care for nature. Environmental protection and an awareness of the devastating impact of human behavior on the natural environment emerged as important. This was highlighted during conversations which emphasized the awareness and consequences of climate change on the natural environment and people. Role modeling environmental stewardship and enhancing awareness of this in adventure therapy practice was considered important. This was linked to the broader value of knowing and working within the “right” way for the local culture. Cultural safety emerged as important in terms of learning from and respectfully integrating Indigenous wisdoms, appreciating and working appropriately with cultural practices and being able to contextualize practice appropriately. Self-awareness, particularly awareness of how potential personal, cultural, and historical biases influences self was considered essential for an adventure therapy practitioner. The importance of congruence between self and practice was emphasized, along with the capacity to work with people holistically. Participants at the workshop most strongly endorsed the importance of connection with nature, relationship and empathy, and cultural safety as crucial values.

Ultimately it was discussed that values transform into practices and behavior and, as such, role modeling and facilitating sessions related to values is integral to adventure therapy work. In recognition that despite the cultural and geographical diversity represented in the Cave Think Tank participants, humanity was considered in essence “One People”, and we cohabit “One Planet”. The identified values were consistent with this and include taking care of the Earth through environmentalism and conservation; and taking care of people through sharing, connecting, developing empathy and facilitating equity, inclusion and justice.

### 4.2 Ways of Being (as an adventure therapy practitioner):

This theme incorporated three sub-themes: therapist/practitioner, nature, and training.

**Therapist/practitioner:** Participants considered self-awareness and authenticity as important. Knowing oneself as a person and as a practitioner enhances the capacity to be a conscious and effective role model and to use oneself through mindfully interacting with



warmth, humor when appropriate, and compassion. Collaboration with clients, colleagues, communities, and nature is essential. There was agreement that practitioners need to be comfortable in the specific natural environments in which they practice. Specific psychological knowledge and fundamental micro-counselling skills such as active and empathetic listening, responding, questioning, attending, supporting, influencing, and focusing are essential to safely guide intentional conversations, hold space, and honor the client's process (Katz et al, 2021). Skills in forming, repairing, and maintaining relationships and ensuring attention to individual needs were named as particularly important, along with an empowerment approach whilst maintaining an empathetic and humble stance. Intentional use of self is integral to adventure therapy practice and includes acting as supporter, encourager, holder, and sustainer. Workshop participants most endorsed the practitioner's capacity to work empathetically, use an empowerment approach, and intentional and conscious use of self.

Interestingly, supervision had limited endorsement in the workshop, yet this is a fundamental ethical requirement in facilitating therapeutic work in many different countries. Whilst supervision is understood in diverse ways across settings, it is generally a process whereby a practitioner is supported and empowered in their work by another, oftentimes more experienced, practitioner. Characteristically, supervision creates space for practitioner self-reflection, self-care, attunement to client needs, and attunement to wider ecological systems. As such, supervision aims to improve the quality of a practitioner's work and is an integral part of their professional development which ultimately promotes quality care to clients (Hawkins & MacMahon, 2020). A gap raised in the workshop was the value of peer-to-peer relationships either in terms of working with other professionals to reap the value of mentorship and feedback, or peer-to-peer supervision activity. Focus on these points illustrate the importance in the group placed on professional development of adventure therapy practitioners. Therefore, it appears significant to further explore how adventure therapy practitioners value and view their ethical responsibility for supervision and continued professional development as specialized practitioners.

**Nature:** Participants recognized the importance of nature in adventure therapy practice extending beyond care for the natural environment and shared a belief that adventure therapy practices are enhanced through capitalizing on the health and wellbeing benefits of being in nature. Often termed “nature as co-therapist”, this concept acknowledges nature as an extension of us, as such an environment where signals of safety naturally occur and consequently calm the central nervous system and enhance capacity for emotional regulation (Segal et. al., 2020). Enabling processes whereby lessons can be learned from nature, an individual can be held and comforted by nature and form beneficial relationships to the natural environment. This requires that the individual trusts that they are safe in nature, requiring practitioners to understand that capacity for this trust and comfort in nature is different for everyone. A balance between “doing” (being engaged in activity) and “not doing” is an important enabler of some of these ways of being. Workshop participants considered nature as an integral component of adventure therapy and that practitioners need to both utilize the healing power of nature through nature as co-therapist and have trust in nature.

**Training:** Having a reflexive transformational learning approach was evident as key in terms of developing adventure therapy practitioner skills. The capacity for lifelong learning, about self and others, and the humility to learn from and with clients and nature featured strongly. Intentional learning of communication/micro-counselling skills was considered essential, to ensure relationships are attuned and to enhance therapeutic safety. Learning to work with intent, and to maintain focus on the intent of the work was also named as an essential skill. Strategies to enhance this learning included role play, mentorship and observation, effective use of supervision, and an experience of adventure therapy by the learner. Interestingly in terms of “training”, workshop participants considered having an underpinning growth mindset as most essential. Development of skills in relationship building and maintaining, and integrating rigorous reflective practice (Kinsella, 2010) to ensure continuous learning were most commonly believed to be essential.

### 4.3 Foundational (theories and bodies of knowledge that inform adventure therapy practice):

Participants considered adventure therapy to be a methodology, a big umbrella, that allows room for various approaches and techniques. The sub-themes for this section were the history of adventure therapy, client specific knowledge, and theories and models commonly used.

**History of AT:** An understanding of the history of adventure therapy as a field was thought to be helpful, particularly as it encompasses practitioners from a variety of disciplines and is contextualized to nations and cultures. The importance of understanding the cultural context in any adventure therapy training, design and delivery is crucial.

**Client-specific knowledge** includes the importance of appreciating cultural diversity (all elements of culture, not restricted to ethnicity) in the interest of culturally safe practice, gaining and understanding where the client sits amongst their system and community, and applying an intersectional lens to self as practitioner and with the client. Importantly, knowledge of some of the ways clients might present and struggles they might have is helpful so that individual needs can be ascertained and appropriate goals identified. Adventure therapy is commonly (although not exclusively) conducted with youth, and so understanding local youth culture and incorporating youth voice is important. Trauma in all its guises is prevalent in communities who access adventure therapy and so an understanding of the effects of trauma on neurobiology and consequently emotion and behavior is essential. Knowing the client well enables intentionality in practice that is tailored to clients goals, enhances the relationship, and develops opportunities for empowerment through providing opportunities for clients to choose their adventure.

**Theories and models** identified were diverse and dependent on both the place the participants came from and their professional background. In terms of overall approaches to adventure therapy, experiential learning/ education/ therapy (Kolb et al., 2009; Kolb et al., 2014) was consistently considered to be a guiding foundation, along with understanding zone of proximal development (Holzman, 2018) humanistic (Kahn & Rachman, 2000), strength-based approaches (Murphy & Sparks, 2018), and approaches that intentionally utilize nature with knowledge drawn from ecopsychology, deep ecology and ecotherapy. Understanding attachment theory (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 2013) was

considered useful to both understand the influence of individual and collective trauma on capacity for relationship formation and to inform intervention approaches. Experiential learning was overwhelmingly voted as an essential foundational theory, as was an understanding of ecopsychology principles. However, the concept of “experiential therapy” was not heavily endorsed. This perhaps points to some critical legacies of where experiential perspectives are placed and valued from, and perhaps points to a training basis that is biased towards outdoor adventure, rather than a psychotherapeutic foundational lens. This potentially leaves gaps of understanding that need bridging in adventure therapy training.

Appreciating struggles clients might present through systems theory, a social model of health including social determinants of health, and social constructionism as a way of viewing learning was also considered important for most and strongly endorsed by workshop participants. Specific therapies identified were diverse, and participants acknowledged that one does not fit all, in terms of either the client or the practitioner. Training in specific therapies was considered essential for those qualified to use them, and the use of specific therapies intentionally selected to fit the client’s needs was considered important. Brief intervention/talk-based therapies mentioned included narrative therapy, solution focused therapy, motivational interviewing, psychodynamic psychotherapy, and gestalt therapy. Knowledge of sensory systems (particularly to facilitate sensory modulation and regulation) featured, including mindfulness, along with a bio-psycho-social-ecological overview of health. The importance of integrated services was emphasized, to enable best possible outcomes from the adventure therapy experiences/processes. Ways of facilitating training included stand-alone courses, education integrated into therapy and outdoor facilitation courses, and enhancing connection and sharing between practitioners.

As a field, honoring intentional application of approaches and techniques selected, the breadth of adventure therapy practices, the client experience and choices, and the diversity of both clients and practitioners enables effective and safe practice in a diverse world of practitioners and clients.

#### **4.4 Skills (required for safe ‘good enough’ adventure therapy practice):**

Whilst adventure therapy is conducted on a one-to-one basis, it is more commonly employed with groups, utilizing the group as an element of the therapeutic potential. Group work was therefore a key focus of discussion amongst participants in terms of essential skills. This included competencies in working with groups with a therapeutic intent and in an outdoor setting. Facilitation skills were therefore identified as crucial and was one of the most voted skills by workshop participants.

The importance of having skills in risk assessment and management both in mental health and in outdoor environments using adventurous activities was featured, and strongly endorsed by workshop participants. The ability to assess risk in diverse environments, and to establish and execute emergency procedures when necessary was consid-

ered essential. This requires what participants termed *conscious competence*, or practitioners developing awareness of what they know and what they don't know. Self-awareness of skills and competence includes being accountable and responsible for decisions, and capacity to work within the boundaries of both discipline specific practice and personal skill level. Participants identified that practitioners responsible for facilitating outdoor activities required skill in both the outdoor activity skills and the outdoor activity leadership skills. Additionally, participants identified skills in environmentalism (both teaching and practicing) as important, and this was reinforced by workshop participants. Different countries have different qualification frameworks and systems; awareness of these is essential for safe and legal practice. Practicing across regional, national, and international borders is not uncommon and requires intentional understanding of skill requirements in the host region or country. Importantly practicing within practitioners' scope of skill, knowledge and defined practice was emphasized by participants.

#### **4.5 Interventions (commonly used strategies or micro-interventions that are appropriate in adventure therapy practice):**

Participants identified that adventure therapy is not often a stand-alone intervention, and that integration with clients' wider life and circumstances is important for therapeutic potential to be reached. Interventions discussed were diverse and numerous, with a shared understanding that it is the adaptation of specific interventions to work with adventurous activities and nature-based settings that is important. Sub-themes were building a sense of identity, conscious use of metaphor, therapy-based interventions and outdoor or nature-based interventions.

Of note was discussion regarding the reasons for intervention, with the capacity for adventure therapy to have an ameliorating effect on trauma due to the potential for whole body work as well as talk-based strategies. Participants also discussed Indigenous wisdom and the value of enabling culturally bound practices wherever appropriate. Interestingly this was not strongly endorsed by workshop participants, which may be a reflection on the Eurocentric cultural dominance at the 9IATC, interestingly identified and critiqued in numerous forums during the conference. This requires a committed and ongoing evolution within the field's practice and training. Overall, adventure therapy interventions were considered to be the use of the natural environment with nature as teacher, healer and co-therapist, and incorporating an activity base.

**Building sense of identity:** enhancing clients' sense of self, mastery and identity featured in discussions, with participants acknowledging the importance of creating safety, providing choice, being flexible, and tailoring each experience to the "in the moment" needs of the group and individuals. Collaboration between adventure therapy practitioner and client by way of co-constructing or co-designing experiences and adventuring together was identified as powerful and important. Participants also identified that a sense of identity is also enhanced through facilitating connection/attachment with others in the group and with the environment, and interventions that are strengths-based and promote the use and development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills were advocated.

**Conscious use of metaphor** was considered integral to adventure therapy practice and endorsed by workshop participants. Discussions included different ways and levels on which metaphor is used, depending on the experience and discipline of the practitioner. Metaphor can be presented to the client/group, co-constructed with the client/group or emerge naturally. It is used or emerges as a part of the adventure therapy process through facilitation, or from the natural environment through symbolism or kinesthetic metaphoric experiences. Discussion regarding use of metaphor resulted in an understanding that it is used in very different ways, depending on the qualification and skill of the facilitator.

**Outdoor experiences** were seen as integral to adventure therapy practices by both cave participants and workshop participants, utilizing foundational theories of experiential learning, sensory modulation, and group work to facilitate connectedness - culturally, interpersonally and with nature. Goals related to empowerment, healing and developing interpersonal and intrapersonal skills were commonly identified. The experiences themselves varied depending on geography, culture, access to equipment and the skill set of facilitators. Some were contrived, such as high ropes courses and initiative games, and some natural, such as hiking and camping with natural consequences for decisions made. The intent of developing personal meaning from the experience for individuals was evident and the importance of transfer of learning to the clients' everyday world emphasized.

The therapeutic effect was considered to be, in part, the facilitated experience itself, in part the relational processes integral to the group in the experience, and in part the input from the practitioner. Protocols for the way services operate differ between providers and guides and who does what. For example, some participants described outdoor facilitators leading the outdoor activities, and therapists meeting with clients occasionally to work with them on making meaning from the experience.

A concluding point that bridges across all these dimensions is the oversight of how applied experience is specifically gained in training, and how placement requirements in relevant settings are determined, managed, and supervised. This point was tentatively alluded to in the workshop in terms of in situ experience, yet this aspect needs greater attention in how this unites the five key themes actively and upholds experiential learning processes and practices. Workshop participants selected outdoor activities, reflection, therapeutic relationship, nature, and connection (between people and with nature) as the most important intervention strategies.

## 5 Discussion

The decades of discussion within the field of adventure therapy regarding how it is defined, who should do it, how they should do it, and who they should do it with, have ultimately led to an acceptance that adventure therapy is practiced in diverse ways (Harper 2018; Carpenter & Pryor, 2004; Jeffery & Hensey, 2022). The work of the Cave Think Tank focused more on what is essential in adventure therapy (rather than what it is). This work and subsequent "checking in" on findings with participants at the gIATC was helpful in



honing what is commonly considered essential in adventure therapy education and training from an international perspective.

The results of having such cultural diversity involved in the discussions both at the Cave and at the gIATC workshop is encouraging in terms of the commonalities in thinking and practice across cultures. The findings are in line with contemporary literature, with the most endorsed elements of essential education for adventure therapy practitioners being humanistic and strengths-based approaches, experiential learning, activity-based interventions, and the intentional use of or connection with nature (Bowen & Neil, 2013).

As with any other element of health, education, and social/community work, the boundedness to cultural and geographical contexts takes precedence. The shared basis to adventure therapy is a foundation only, and to be effectively implemented, it is important that practitioners adjust their work to fit the context and use strategies and interventions that are culturally appropriate to safely effect the desired change (Chang et al., 2017).

Of note at the Cave Think Tank was the discussion regarding Indigenous wisdoms and practices that are a good fit with adventure therapy, but that are a low profile in adventure therapy literature. This was reinforced at the conference workshop, where use of Indigenous knowledge was not openly endorsed as essential in adventure therapy education. This is likely a reflection on the dominance of Eurocentric cultures present at both the Cave and the gIATC workshop. This European influence is noted in literature exploring the appropriateness of the way adventurous activities are used in adventure therapy, with an anthropocentric perspective (Beringer 2004), a recreation basis (Boyes 2010), a separation of nature from person and with an emphasis on mental health over holistic person and environment health (Phillips et al, 2022). Also at play is the understanding of Indigeneity from a recently colonized country's perspective (where the subsequent impact on the Indigenous population is devastating at this point in history) and nations with colonization events much further back in history. Despite little discussion at the gIATC workshop on Indigenous knowledge, many foundational elements identified in this work fit with Indigenous ways of being. These include a world view with emphasis on relationships and inter-connectedness between people and groups, being a part of and in a reciprocal relationship with nature, and associated responsibilities to care for one another and for nature.

There is a call in some literature for westernized cultures to consider Indigenous knowledge as a way of ameliorating social, health and environmental issues. As MacIntosh (2021) stated, "Western cultures could learn much from the deep ideological connection between landscape and health by adopting the principles and knowledge of Indigenous peoples". Whilst learning and applying wisdom from Indigenous populations may be helpful as we appreciate and more intentionally facilitate the connectedness of everything in nature (Jeffery, 2022), there is a risk of misappropriation of Indigenous rituals and cultural ways (Skidmore, 2017). As colonized nations continue to negotiate a way forward to address the complex needs of their Indigenous peoples, whose experiences are often that of disadvantage, cultural disconnection, disconnection from land and lifestyle, and struggle, it is paramount that the work progresses in partnership. As stated by Skidmore (2017),



Rather than damaging with mimicry and facsimile, adventure therapy and the outdoor camping realm could foster an environment which allows indigenous communities to strengthen and cultivate their own cultures, and to communicate that in a dynamic manner both within their own communities, and to the non-indigenous community (para. 41).

Education of adventure therapy practitioners internationally would be well served by careful planning to ensure a cultural fit that is safe and effective for all and one that honors client rights and client voice. The field has potential to both learn from and be attractive for Indigenous populations and would benefit from more assertive acknowledgment of the current Eurocentric emphasis in much of the literature and practice. Indigenous voices will only join the adventure therapy community once cultural safety is established and a genuinely inclusive environment that not only accepts but enables diversity of practice through collaboration is established.

## 6 Conclusion

Continuing from the Cave Think Tank held prior to the 8IATC in Sydney (Australia) in 2018, about one third of the group of 24 AT practitioners from 11 nations have continued to explore international perspectives on the necessary ingredients of training and development of adventure therapists, including through facilitation of an open workshop at the 9IATC in Kristiansand, Norway in 2022. Participants of the Norway workshop expressed that the workshop provided affirmation for their work and practice and training programs- it resonated, familiar and recognizable touch points.

The five key training themes that arose in the 'Cave think tank' in 2018 and were explored in the workshop in 2022 appear to have held up strongly over the four-year period. While workshop participants identified new and important points, and overlaid previous findings with new insights and perspectives, the five key Cave Think Tank categories for sorting international adventure therapy training curriculum and pedagogy remain useful: 1) Values (shared and held by adventure therapy practitioners), 2) Ways of being (as an adventure therapy practitioner), 3) Foundational knowledges (theories and bodies of knowledge that inform adventure therapy practice), 4) Skills (required for safe 'good enough' adventure therapy practice), and 5) Interventions (commonly used strategies or micro-interventions that are appropriate in adventure therapy practice).

While this author group does not feel they have the mandate, data or rigor to claim an answer to the question: 'What are the necessary ingredients of International Adventure Therapy training and development?', the group has modeled a cross-cultural, collaborative process that exemplifies our shared best hopes for international adventure therapy practice. Authors view this project as preliminary and tentative and generative of new knowledge. Furthermore, limitations of the collaboration are many, including that those conversations took place in only English.

Nevertheless, the Cave Think Tank workshop and ongoing collaboration between a group of AT practitioners, researchers, and trainers from a range of nations has strengthened understandings about current international adventure therapy training and development around the globe. While international adventure therapy has had somewhat limited critical examination from cross cultural perspectives, this project is a concerted effort in

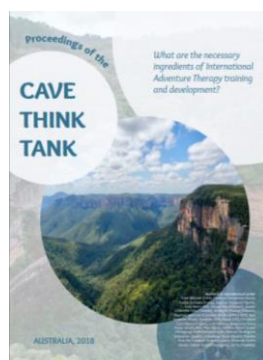
open goodwill, to examine core training for wide international scope and cross-cultural training parameters. Future research can build on these collaborative conversations in a more rigorous methodological manner.

For now, these core ingredients have remained useful, and the process itself demonstrates the value and benefits of cross-cultural collaboration.

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