

## **A Journey Through Hawkesbury**

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Once upon a time on the Hawkesbury Plain,  
A Journey began on the Richmond Train.

A tale of change and of revelation,  
Of new friends made and a new orientation.

To looking at the world,  
Its peoples, lands and waters,  
As a connected whole of relationships between its many quarters.

Feedback loops, patterns and archetypes, and searches for the levers,  
Ways to make sense of a tapestry woven by six billion human weavers.

It has taken two long years of focus, time and energy,  
To fully understand the critical learning system and its theory.

“Same world, different windows” the teaching seems to be saying,  
Now I see the different views of reality awakening.

“Metanoia, ‘Dare to Change’” was the Youth Conference cry,  
demanding all we believed in now be pushed aside.

In the name of social justice we must create a new reality,  
Now 15 years later the message comes flooding back to me.

To change how one thinks is what it is all about,  
But only now I have the skills – something I’ll now never be without.

For to examine one’s own attitudes and values is not easy,  
The emotional roller-coaster ride is enough to make one queasy.

So what are the lessons, the insights and the inspirations,  
Of two years building skills and wisdom, and following varied aspirations?

Matters of Inquiry and of Learning,  
Of Development and Communication,  
Each one itself represents a system in operation.

Of agriculture, resource management and sustainability,  
Of environmental education, facilitation and creativity,

These have been the dimensions through which I have explored,  
These four different lenses for viewing the world outside the door.

On Learning it was our forebears, Dewey, Lewin and David Kolb,  
Who have much to answer for the system of learning we were sold.

To see the different aspects in one's own working life,  
To build a 'rich picture', to sort and integrate, and then decide

To break each stage right down it seems to sharpen up the meaning  
Not to mention the power of 'why, why, why?' in multi-level learning.

No longer will I simply take an expert's view unchallenged,  
What value here, assumption there just is that expert making?  
Does it 'fit' for me, and for others too, or is that expert flaky?

And for myself it seems my place of biggest revelation,  
has been in that area the experts name 'taking action.'

Where changing what I do must mean another visitation,  
of that same old learning cycle so my actions they are taken,  
with care, and thought and research and some real deliberation.

Now Fran Peavey she was great in here, as were Williams, Langford and  
Packham,  
In fact so much so we'd better hope that Hawkesbury doesn't sack 'em.

And as for Cathy, well she was really tough and gave me a hearty wake  
up,  
"You're not learning how to learn!" she cried and demanded I be  
reductionist.

Just for a term until I 'got' the pieces that were 'missing,'  
And so I did and yes it worked and I wasn't even hissing.

On Inquiry, well my topic there it was evaluation,  
In my case it was our training programme on environmental education,

I soon became absorbed in Wadsworth, Guba, Lincoln and Michael Crotty,  
Only to find the jargon I encountered was enough to make me dotty.

Theoretical perspectives I did explore to find how subtly they vary,  
That constructivist and constructionist were different made me wary.

What do these complex, subtle things add to human understanding?  
It is a question with no answer yet and for which I am still pondering

And so I ripped our work apart and concluded it was flawed,  
I gave our evaluation an 'average' grade but I still had not explored,  
Just why it was we did the things that led to the sloppy methods,  
I gave as the reason 'lack of time' but failed to go much further,  
Only now a whole year later do I really think I've heard her,

Yes that same old Cathy asking "what's behind this, and why don't you  
ask?"

Of course why did I not do so, what stopped me in this task?  
For in learning at multi-levels, self-awareness is an aim,  
For only once we know ourselves can we really play the game.

And now I see a connection between learning and the Self,  
A profound and never-ending cycle that's taken me by stealth.

Our psyche can never be 'removed' from what it is we do,  
and the more we understand this fact, the more we are our truth.

I come now to the subject of Communication,  
For which a term of French lessons provided fruitful exploration.

Cross-cultural communication was my topic, an elusive one at best,  
Yet in our complex world today it must become a global quest.

Three layered, connecting perspectives emerged that had me all a quiver,  
Language, Community and Culture, captured in a quote that made me  
shiver:

“Language is the Storehouse of the Culture” - I saw it happen as we  
struggled with French verbs,  
The culture alive in language – a community of words.

And then came Development, the full and final Core,  
where connecting bits together was brought finally to the Fore.

On reading systems theory Senge, O'Connor and McDermott,  
I finally unraveled the mystery and realised how to do it.

For any situation involving humans and resources,  
can be seen through systems thinking,  
including learning through any courses.

I explored Critical Reflection to find out what made learning stick,  
In a group with images and metaphor, feelings and emotions to the quick,  
What I tested seemed to work alright and its value was highlighted,  
When I saw it set each person free I was genuinely delighted.

My power, my skills and my knowledge to facilitate,  
Have been further rounded out and brought right up to date.

“To do better things” as Richard Bawden loves to say,  
Sustaining our resources must be the only way.

And so to this task I am aware I must now make a start,  
I have come a long way in two years since on that train I first embarked.