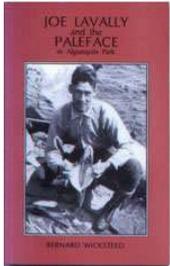


“I have to read the signs like you reads a book”: Examining Experiential Information through Non-fiction Accounts of Guided Trips into the Interior of Algonquin Provincial Park Ontario



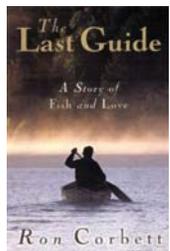
Data Sources



This study reports on a subset of data collected for a larger doctoral study looking at the phenomenon of experiential information.

Considering specifically old-time wilderness guides, I examine two first person, historical non-fiction accounts of guided trips into Algonquin Park centered around the geographic region of Whitney, Ontario (Wicksteed 1948, Corbett 2001).

These accounts are written by visitors and contain frequent commentary about the information skills they witnessed during their extended excursions.



Ron Corbett, Journalist, Author of "The Last Guide: A Story of Fish and Love"

Frank Kuaick, The "Last Guide"

Highway 60
Circa 1940

Whitney, Ontario
Circa 1940

Unnamed 'Bushmen', Algonquin Park
Circa 1925

The deer hunt, Whitney
Circa 1950

McRae Lumber Mill, Whitney
Early 20th Century



Theory and Analysis

Themes were analyzed from the theoretical perspective of Reijo Savolainen's Way of life and Mastery of Life (Savolainen 2005) and Everyday Life Information Seeking contexts—ELIS (Savolainen 2008, Savolainen 2009) using grounded theory and the constant comparative method. Elfreda Chatman's studies into Information Poverty (Chatman 1996) and Life in the Round (Chatman 1999) also informed this study theoretically.

Highlights

Wicksteed, p100—Mastery of Life

I scraped [animal scat] from the top of a rock and took it along.

Without hesitation Joe said, "Mink."

"Now how in the world can you say that with such certainty?" I asked.

"Well, sir," he answered, "you found that down there where I was cleaning the fish, didn't you? You found it on a little rock with a flat top, didn't you? **You don't think I missed a thing like that, do you?** No sir, trapping animals and knowing all about them is my living. **I have to read the signs like that as you reads a book. They're my bread and butter.**"

Wicksteed, p103—Way of Life

"**My grandfather taught me** how to cook and build a house, how to pick out the best timber and build a birch bark canoe. He taught me about the animals and how they live and what they eat. **I learned useful things on his farm, more useful than they teach you in schools.**"

Corbett, p51—ELIS, Secrecy

"When I pulled into Frank's driveway I saw in the back of the Dakota a sixteen-foot fiberglass canoe, patched from bow to stern, including one long strip in the middle...."

"Is this the canoe we're taking?" I asked.

"Right on."

I felt a heartbeat go missing.

"Frank, are you sure that canoe is going to work?"

"Been workin' fine for pret' near forty years. Do ya believe someone threw it out?"

I believed. The canoe, I would learn later, had once been owned by Camp Arowhon. When it showed up, split in two, at the dump at Lake of Two Rivers, **someone phoned Frank—who practically has people on retainer at every municipal dump in the highlands—** and he rescued the boat, brought it home and patched it up.

Frank has acquired dozens of canoes in this way: including **nineteen that are cached on lakes throughout Algonquin Park. The man hates to throw anything away.**

Emerging Results

Information activities involved in guiding include **planning routes and itineraries, preparing food and supplies, securing permits and transportation.** Guides must have in depth knowledge of **diverse terrains, animal habitats and behavior, and survival skills** including how to build shelters and catch food. They are also expected to be good **storytellers**, by sharing local folklore and tales of interesting personal experiences.

This is important because...

1. It extends our understanding of **informal information systems** in a remote, rural, blue-collar work environment.
2. It explores information behaviors in a less accessible **population not previously studied** by LIS researchers.
3. It conceptualizes information as **intangible, undocumented** experience.