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Educating outdoors in a time of global crisis

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Irwin, D and Straker, J and Hill, A, Educating outdoors in a time of global crisis, Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, D Irwin, J Straker and A Hill (ed), New Zealand, pp. 12-25. ISBN 9780908668120 (2012) [Research Book Chapter]

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Abstract

Outdoor education in a variety of guises has a rich history in Aotearoa New Zealand, dating back more than 100 years. Learning experiences in the outdoors have a strong and often much-loved place in our collective education memories, from environmental field trips in the mountain valleys of Aoraki/Mount Cook to school camps at Port Waikato; from primary school stream study and restoration projects to multiday alpine journeys for tertiary students. However, as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the world we live in is vastly different from the one in which many of us developed those memories. What does that mean for education, and more specifically, what does that mean for educational experiences that take place in outdoor environments?

This book attends to these questions from a forward looking position. It shares a vision of outdoor education which moves beyond the proud histories of twentieth century school camps, field studies and outdoor pursuits to one which addresses the exigent and contemporary issues confronting educators and students alike. The twenty-first century seems to be characterised by great uncertainty and rapid change. Issues such as climate

change, growing inequality between the haves and have-nots, and rising levels of consumption and waste are increasingly entering the fray of our everyday lived realities. So too are bigger (or indeed smaller), better, and faster technologies. Cultural norms are constantly being challenged, contested, and reshaped. How then does outdoor education wrestle with and speak to these and other issues?

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