



*"The More You Carry In Your Head,
The Less You Carry On Your Back"*

Student and Client Testimonials

Earth Skills Semester Program

"Whether people like it or not we are still animals with the same needs and instincts as the earliest homo sapiens. I think some primal aspect of ourselves is made very uneasy by how ignorant we are of the means of fulfilling our basic needs. People who live off microwave burritos are totally cut-off from where their food actually comes from, how it's produced, gathered and prepared. I can now wander into the woods with nothing but the clothes on my back and build myself a shelter that will keep me warm in freezing temperatures, build traps to catch animals and collect edible plants. I can tan the hides of those animals to make clothing, and use their bones to make knives and fish hooks and various other tools. I'm aware of what my most basic needs are, and I know how to satisfy them. I realize that the likelihood that my survival will ever depend on these skills is slim to none, but that doesn't change the fact that engaging in them puts me in touch with a fundamental element of my humanity that has thus far received little attention."

- Brian Lacey, Saskatchewan, Canada
ESSP Fall 2004

"After finishing the ESSP people are always asking me what I liked most about it. What a hard question when the answer is simply the entire experience. It was the ability to retreat into the woods and immerse oneself in primitive living and bush skills for an entire three months. It was the daily chores of collecting firewood, identifying plants, and being aware of the movement of animals and changes in the forest. It was waking in the middle of the night to stoke the fire, gaze at the stars, and listen to the wind move the branches of the surrounding hemlocks. From my early morning sit to the sunset over the lake each day brought new experiences and a growing knowledge of the forest resources around me. So I tell them, my favorite part was collecting firewood. For then I knew that night I would sleep warm."

- Ernie Davis, New Hampshire
ESSP Fall 2004

"Thank you so much for a wonderful 12 weeks and for being a great teacher and friend. Your determination to figure out how something works and your passion for passing on that knowledge to others had more of an effect on me than anything else. You're an inspiration and the ESSP was an experience that will continue giving me benefits long into the future."

- Peter Frost, Washington
ESSP Winter 2004

"I came into the Earth Skills Semester Program looking to become more comfortable in the woods, with my main focus being survival situations. We've accomplished that and much more. The instructor's knowledge, skills, patience, and flexibility are truly inspiring. The available resources are nearly limitless. I would recommend this course to anyone who wants to learn to live in closer connection with the natural world and have a great, fun time in the process."

- Jim Kossick, Illinois
ESSP Winter 2004

"Before I took the ESSP, I had a huge list of gear that I needed to have in the outdoors. Most of the ideas for this list came from books and well-meaning outdoor instructors who probably read the same books. Now I have an entirely different list, a much smaller list, based on my experiences, my new skills and new awareness that I gained from the ESSP. I have so much more faith in my ability to improvise and use the materials around me.

The ESSP demystified wilderness skills for me. The skills became not only accessible but also achievable. I didn't need to know the secret hand-shake, I just needed to have the opportunity to practice the skill under the guidance of a teacher. This is one of the many things that the ESSP provided for me. Every day was a new challenge, a new experience.

And with these new skills and experiences came new perspectives. For example, by carving a canoe paddle myself instead of buying one mass-produced by another, I not only gained a deeper appreciation for the paddle but I also gained a larger understanding of what it would take for someone to provide for himself all of the things needed to live."

- Lisa Tancredi, New Mexico
ESSP Fall 2003

"I highly recommend the ESSP to anyone interested in living more fully. The instructors and the material covered not only broadened my awareness of the natural world, but also taught me to begin to perceive life, with all its subtleties, in a much deeper way. All the skills taught during the ESSP, from primitive fire-making to brain-tanning to mukluk sewing, were presented in a useful and enjoyable manner. I am so grateful for all the lessons I learned in the ESSP and know I will reference them time and time again throughout my life."

- Aiyana Booth-Athenian, Maine
ESSP Winter 2003

"The Earth Skills Semester Program exceeded my expectations and altered my perspective. The instructors have set up a solid course for the maximum in wilderness living skills learning without burnout. Tim Smith is a wealth of knowledge and another level in humor. The atmosphere of the class is easygoing and fun. From plant identification and application to shelter construction to mental awareness exercises, we were exposed to a wide array of teachings. Most importantly I took away a spirit of learning and an increased awareness of myself and my surroundings."

- Bret Schact, Nebraska
ESSP Winter 2003

"The ESSP is an experience without compare; in looking for a course that gives a full and cohesive curriculum of primitive and wilderness skills, this is the only one that fulfilled my requirements. And the experience of those twelve weeks lived up to and surpassed all my expectations. I have learned more practical knowledge, and had more fun doing so, than in any of my university semesters. The experience also made me aware of how much we take for granted in life. I have begun to see how all the things that make our lives "easy" have a price, and have realized how empowering it can be to turn what is considered "waste" into beautiful compost, and how free I feel living without things that are made in an unsustainable way. For me, the best part of this program was its focus on living in harmony with nature, not overcoming her."

- Jessica Gorton, New Jersey
ESSP Winter 2002

"Looking back, it is amazing to me not only the number of skills I learned, but how much I grew intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. During my three-months, I learned basic survival skills such as shelter building, friction fire, finding water, and identifying edible plants. I lived in a natural shelter and helped construct other shelters. Living in a natural shelter is a reflection of the entire experience - it is remarkably unique and you are literally surrounded by nature.

I've been a suburban/city person most my life so the program was quite a change. The day I arrived, I sat outside my shelter for a while just amazed at how different it was than anything I'd seen before. Lying on a bed of boughs (evergreen branches), my new home smelled like earth, trees, and coolness. Spring peepers' chorus and other nighttime noises surrounded me like a warm homecoming. Even for city people like me, the life style, living arrangements, and survival skills promote developing a connection with the Earth. I have never felt as close with Nature, or as comfortable and happy being outdoors.

The benefits of learning survival skills have followed me out of the woods and into every aspect of my life. In many ways, survival skills are a tool to expand your mind. For example, living on wild edibles is outside the realm of many people's imagination and therefore seems impossible. Seeing its feasibility breaks the hold of the idea that it is "impossible".

Being a biology and education major, conservation is very important to me. I have seen through my studies that a holistic, large picture understanding of the Earth is essential for conservation. Most of the survival skills I learned depend closely on understanding the Earth and were taught with respect of the land and conservation in mind. Because of this, these skills have given me a type of connection and knowledge of our Earth that few biology classes could. I feel that this awareness of the Earth has made me a more effective conservationist; after all, you cannot help what you do not understand.

For those in college, the ESSP can count for internship/applied learning credits. More importantly, it is an amazingly unique chance to open your mind to different possibilities, life styles, philosophies, and spirituality that can make the college experience easier and more meaningful. For all people, the ESSP is a unique opportunity to learn survival skills and attitudes that promote an intimate understanding of nature with wonderfully skilled and humorous teachers. I wish that everyone had the opportunity to take part in this experience."

- Kathy Chen, North Carolina
ESSP Pilot Program, 2000

Canoe Expedition and Guide Training Course

"As a 20 year serving member of Princess Patricia's Light Infantry of the Canadian Armed Forces and the subject matter expert for dismounted infantry operations at the school of infantry, I enrolled in Tim Smith's Canoe Expedition and Guide Training Course with high expectations. Tim not only met, but exceeded them. His knowledge of the north woods and his respect for the old ways made the course a delight to be a part of. I learned so much by talking with and observing Tim during our time together. I would highly recommend any of Tim's courses to anyone who has a desire to learn about the natural history and traditions of the north woods, as well as the skills that are required to get out and enjoy them. Tim's knowledge of the bush, courtesy towards his clients and wonderful sense of humor made this course a great learning experience. I'll be back."

- Jeff Butler C. D., New Brunswick, Canada, July 2004
Warrant Officer
Infantry School SME
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
Airborne

Crafting Workshops

"While over from Scotland completing an internship, I was fortunate to be able to spend a few days with Tim at Jack Mountain Bushcraft & Guide Service, learning the fine art of bowmaking. The excellent facilities, and the practical and extremely knowledgeable teaching I received from Tim, helped me to turn out my first primitive bow, which I couldn't have been happier about!! If you get the chance.....get over there!! "

- Steven Hanton, Edinburgh, Scotland
November, 2004

Wilderness Skills and Survival Courses

"Tim brings a great depth of knowledge and is able to communicate complex concepts simply. Five star course."

- Frank Grindrod, Massachusetts
Summer Survival Weekend Course, 2003

Guided Canoe Trips

"I am an older person and was most comfortable on this trip from beginning to end. I am not an expert outdoorsperson or an expert canoeist, but the helpfulness and professionalism of the guides made the trip fun and not too difficult. Time spent on the water was just right; no days were too long. When the weather was cold and rainy having the wall tent and wood stove along made all the difference. I was impressed when you invited the people from the other party in to warm up, demonstrating that your sense of fellowship and camaraderie extended beyond our party to all who we met on the river. A true learning experience and one I highly recommend."

- Diane Messner, Florida
St. John River Canoe Trip, 2003
