

Cobscook Currents

Fall 2019



Looking back as we leap forward

Welcome to Cobscook Currents for fall 2019. Summer is giving way to autumn here in Trescott as we finish up work on this edition—my first as Executive Director. It is a time of transition for the seasons, for me, and for CCLC.

Transition offers opportunities to look back in order to inform the future, so this edition of Cobscook Currents examines some of the most important influences on CCLC's formation. CCLC was the product of a community process that involved researching education models from around the world and examining stories of transformative education that have led to sustained social change. Parents, grandparents, and youth, Passamaquoddy, European-American and Canadian, came together to address challenges and build upon the strengths of their community to establish CCLC, based upon principles and practices derived from social ecology, and Indigenous, popular, folk, and experiential education.

In this issue, we explore the influence of the folk school movement on CCLC's roots and growth. You'll discover the history of the movement, learn about folk schools across the United States, and hear about the ways that CCLC's divisions—TREE, Cobscook Experiential Programs, and Community Programs—all embody the core values of folk schools to this day.

Looking forward, I enthusiastically embrace this heritage while enhancing CCLC's capacity as a center for innovation in education. We reach a diversity of populations, from Pre-K students through high schoolers and lifelong learners in the Cobscook region among the three nations of which we are a part: Passamaquoddy, Canada, and the United States. Our programs stretch from eastern Maine to California. Education is the foundation of healthy communities and we plan to build upon our success as a center for education to continue supporting healthy communities locally, regionally, and beyond.

I believe that the mission of CCLC is a vital and noble one and I'm honored to be a part of this organization. I look forward to meeting, learning from, and working with, all of you who have supported CCLC during our first 20 years.

Thanks for your support and enthusiasm as we embark on our next 20 years. May the shorter daylight hours and changing colors of the season offer inspiration, time for reflection, and reinvigoration for all of us.

With gratitude,



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Executive Director



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Our Rootstock

CCLC's founders dug for "models of education from around the world and across time that had led to substantive and sustained social change" as they set out to leverage the best that education can be to serve the hearts and minds of people of all ages living in easternmost Maine. Scandinavian folk schools are one of those vibrant models and CCLC exists today as new growth emerging from this inspired rootstock of social design.

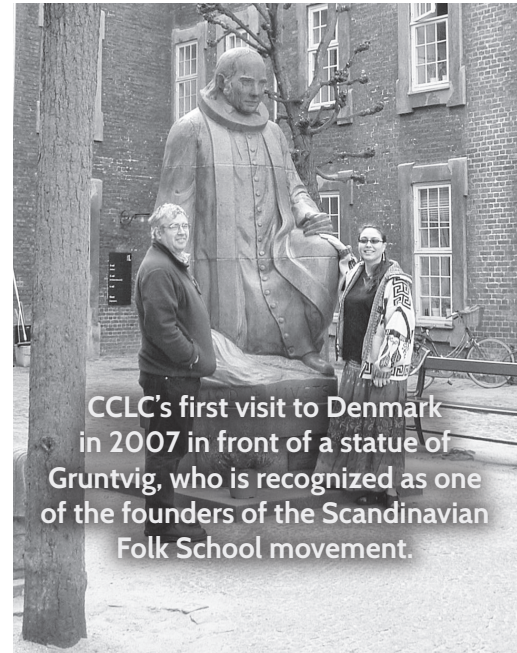
CCLC co-founder, Alan Furth, has served on the Board of the Folk Education Association of America and the North American Chapter of the International Association for World Education (AWE), which is a global network drawing inspiration from folk schools. These partnerships made CCLC's first community programs, the Cobscook Gatherings, possible. In 2007, members of CCLC's board and staff traveled to Denmark to participate in AWE's International Council Meeting and we have had an active presence and leadership role in that network ever since.

Enjoy this glimpse into how folk school traditions are alive and well at CCLC today, and learn more about the Folk School Alliance by visiting folkschoolalliance.org/about.

History of the Folk School Movement

The folk school movement began in Denmark in the early 19th century, a period of rapidly accelerating social change accompanying the industrial revolution. Danish philosopher Nikolaj Grundtvig propounded folk schools as a way to support democracy through personal and community development. He called them "schools for life," grounded in principles near and dear to us at the CCLC: education should be available lifelong, open to all, place-based, rooted in relationship and community, and embracing the whole person—physical, emotional, social, cognitive, spiritual.

Folk schools are experiencing a resurgence in the US. See brief profiles of American folk schools throughout this edition of Cobscook Currents.



CCLC's first visit to Denmark in 2007 in front of a statue of Grundtvig, who is recognized as one of the founders of the Scandinavian Folk School movement.

Cobscook

Experiential Program For High School Students

“Students are teachers and teachers are students” is a phrase heard regularly in the Cobscook Experiential Program. Teachers Michael Giudilli and Kara McCrimmon are not “the sole arbiters of knowledge,” they tell the high school program’s students; rather, the best thing they can bring to the learning community is modeling how to learn. Cobscook is designed as an intentional learning community, where that word “community” is key. They emphasize the fact that they are all—students and teachers alike—learning together. One of the reasons Cobscook is designed that way is to give students voice and ownership in the learning experience to support one another in building skills as lifelong learners.

Beyond the academic skills and knowledge that students gain through the high school program, what is especially unique is that students become engaged in reflection on their learning. They meet one on one with their teachers to reflect on what each learning experience means to them and how they have personally grown through a given learning experience. As one tenth grader said at the end of the 2018-19 school year, “This year I think I grew as a leader. I had better anticipation around what I need at different times and knowing what to do in different situations.” A different student put it this way, “This year I feel I developed more patience. I’m better able to acknowledge the group and see what other people bring to it.” The connection between the folk school values of cooperative learning environments and personal development is palpable in Cobscook Experiential Programs.

Another prime example of this folk school values alignment is in the roots of the high school program. Cobscook developed as a grassroots response to community needs when community members said they wanted another school option for teenagers in the area. We responded to that request in collaboration with Calais School District and many others to create the high school program, first as a one year option, then later as the four year option we offer today. And not only is the program a response to community request, it is a daily response to student interests and passions. Every year of the program looks a little different



Cobscook students display their nature prints
with instructor Coleen O'Connell

depending on who is in the program. Teachers Kara and Michael work to build learning experiences aligned with student interests or create space for the students to create learning experiences aligned with their interests.

Folk schools have always emphasized the importance of valuing a connection with the

community and Cobscook's experiential approach to learning highlights that connection well. Students regularly interface with area scientists, artists, conservation professionals, and other community organizations as resource people in their learning. This strategy offers the added benefit of helping students develop a network of caring adults beyond the two teachers they work with daily in school. Recently, students have been working with archaeologists to become the first high school group to be trained to monitor middens (see umaine.edu/middenminders), which are at risk due to sea level rise and climate instability. This project ties not only into climate science content, but also Wabanaki history in the area.

At the beginning of each school year, students develop their own group mission and vision statements for the year. This year, they have developed a draft and assigned a smaller committee to create the final version. Here is what they have agreed on so far as their 2019 Class Mission: "Our mission at CCLC is to create a positive, supportive, respectful, and interactive learning environment where people can build up themselves and their community. We wish to provide the best learning experience, recognizing cultural differences, and working with people's creativity, drive, and passions."

As one student said at the beginning of this school year, "I choose to be at CCLC because it is a place where I can learn and prepare for adulthood and be myself. There are many great opportunities that I have here that many do not."



Cobscook students cleaned up 200 individual pieces of trash from Bog Brook Cove in Trescott during the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Clean-up Week.

Folk School Profile: Circle Pines Center, Michigan

Founding Year: 1882

Mission: To promote peace, social justice, environmental stewardship and cooperation. The center aims to demonstrate cooperative alternatives for economic and social issues and to teach cooperation as a way of life.

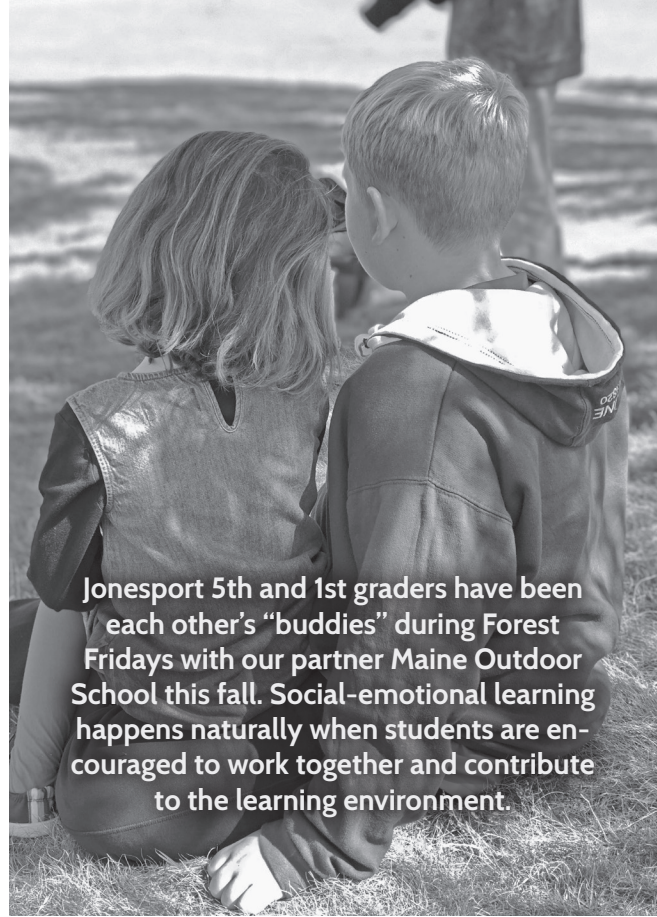
What they do today: They offer summer camps for children, a mushroom camp, apple cider weekend, Spanish language and culture camp, a big music festival, and retreat spaces.

TREE Transforming Rural Experience in Education

TREE Director Brittany Ray has been spending a lot of time lately leading professional development sessions about trauma-informed education at schools. This outreach gives her the opportunity to meet and connect with a variety of people and hear their reactions to TREE's work. While there are many examples of how TREE's work today is rooted in folk school values, one particular shared value has stood out to Brittany recently: the importance of grassroots, responsive, cooperative learning environments that support lifelong learners.

The "figure it out together" cooperative approach has been an important part of TREE's work. In Milbridge, for example, TREE has emphasized working with the existing assets of the community through hiring Laura Thomas, a local educator who had been working in the school district for many years prior to joining TREE as a school Resource Coach, and partnering with other local organizations like Maine Outdoor School and the Women's Health Resource Library.

Trauma-informed education can only happen, Brittany said, "when adults come to the table with a belief that they don't know all the answers, that they don't have all the tools, and that there's always room to learn more and new approaches to try." There is no prescriptive formula for rolling out a trauma-informed learning environment in schools; it has to come from a baseline shared knowledge about what being trauma-informed means and the belief that we are all lifelong learners. Brittany said, "I like the fact that I regularly hear from participants of my professional development sessions that they do not think we're trying to 'fix them,' but instead that we are figuring it out together." Local people and resources cooperatively seeking solutions to local needs from the ground up has been core to the folk school movement since the 1800's and remains core to TREE's approach.



Jonesport 5th and 1st graders have been each other's "buddies" during Forest Fridays with our partner Maine Outdoor School this fall. Social-emotional learning happens naturally when students are encouraged to work together and contribute to the learning environment.

Folk School Profile: Pine Mountain Settlement School, Kentucky

Founding Year: 1913

Mission: To enrich people and enhance lives through Appalachian place-based education for all ages.

What they do today: They have a farm, which helps them feed their community, offer environmental education programs for children to learn about stewarding natural resources, and they offer programs rooted in mountain tradition, such as pottery, weaving, storytelling, and naturalist studies.

TREE travels to rural coastal CA to provide professional development for partner schools

Ashley Cirone, TREE resource coach, is sitting cross-legged amid a circle of third-graders at Pescadero Elementary. The children listen with rapt attention as Ashley relates a Hawaiian fable about a girl named Leola. Leola was born with a light inside her, Ashley tells them, lighting a tea candle in a beautiful bowl in the center of the sand tray in front of her. The children eagerly repeat the story's refrain, "And her light shone bright." Then the story takes a turn, as Leola's light begins to grow obscured with feelings of frustration, sadness, anger. With a collective gasp, the children watch as a pile of stones accumulates over the candle in the bowl.

Members of the TREE team are in California as part of a mutually enriching collaboration with the La Honda Pescadero Unified School District (LHPUSD), a rural area less than an hour south of San Francisco, and Bayshore Elementary School, serving a small urban community nestled in Bay Area sprawl. Last June, teachers and administrators from LHPUSD and Bayshore came to CCLC for a week of TREE professional development funded through a grant from the state of California. Training continued in the three small CA schools during the first week of October, with several demonstrations of moving stories, a method combining story, sand tray, and play therapy, developed by TREE mental health therapist Dr. Sue Carroll Duffy to facilitate social and emotional learning.

"What happened to Leola? What do you think might have made Leola feel so hurt and angry?" Ashley asks the class. In shy, barely audible voices that slowly gain strength, the students offer ideas that clearly come from their own experience: "When people tease you." "If you did something bad on accident and people start to avoid you and you get lonely." "When you're stressed."

The children's eyes are wide as Ashley continues the story. Luckily for Leola, her Grandma remembered her light, which had been there all along. "Turn the bowl over," she said to Leola. So she did, and the stones fell away. Again, "her light shone bright." The children sigh with relief. Ashley invites them to go back to their desks, where paper and watercolor paints are waiting. "Think about a time when your own light shone bright," she says. "What was that like? Can you paint it?"

"This is great," says one little boy, enthusiastically turning his paper into a turquoise-blue ocean, where he swims with a pair of dolphins.



Kandi Robertson, TREE mental health therapist, working with a group of California students during our recent visit.

Campus Activities

On one of the last summer days of the year, as leaves were yellowing and beginning to blush red, Coleen O’Connell came to CCLC to teach a nature printing class, one for the public, and one for the students in our high school program. Participants from teenagers through adulthood explored our campus to collect specimens for printing. By creating art from nature in a supportive learning environment, these participants not only developed relationships with each other, but also developed a deeper understanding of the natural world that is our home. Many described the experience as feeling particularly healing.

This recent nature printing class illustrates the continued connection to folk school values present on campus. Lifelong learners return to campus to learn new skills, hone developed ones, and cultivate deeper connections with the assets of this place—be they the diversity of plants that were ideal nature printing muses or the diversity of people with inspiring skills to share. From Monday Night Music to Hunter Safety, we foster such connections.

Daphne Loring, our Assistant Manager of Retreats and Community Programs, also describes the importance of our offerings being cooperative and grassroots. “The folk school principles of collaboration and grassroots are foundational principles to CCLC. In order to



Some of the nature prints made by students of Coleen O’Connell’s recent courses on campus

Upcoming Classes and Events

Hunter Safety Course, 10/17 (can be completed online) and 10/27

Inaugural Downeast Apple & Arts Day, 10/19

Understanding Your Car: Automobile Literacy 101 for Women, 11/2

Pottery Course for All Levels, seven sessions starting 11/5

Monday Night Music, on the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Mondays of every month at 6pm

Thursday Writer’s Group, 10/17 and every other Thursday from 1-3pm

Fundy Audubon Meeting, every 3rd Tuesday from 7-9pm

Please call or visit our website for more information about upcoming classes and events:
(207) 733-2233 or theccclc.org/events



be relevant and empower, we must emerge from community. Collaboration strengthens relationships, leads to creative outcomes, and leverages capacity.” We build upon the opportunity of having our visiting instructors here by coupling public learning opportunities with opportunities that fit with our high school program’s curriculum. For example, after several years of archaeologists using CCLC as their home base during local digs, they are developing a relationship with the high school program to monitor a nearby midden. This month, Cobscook students will commence this project and we’ll co-host a lecture open to the public.

The collaborative grassroots nature of our program offerings is showcased in our October 19th Inaugural Downeast Apple and Arts Day. “Our spring scion exchange and other fruit tree workshops are always popular,” says Daphne, “so we started talking with Healthy Acadia to consider ways to celebrate as a community when those trees start fruiting in the fall. We worked together to bring in people locally and from across the state to create an event designed to celebrate the heritage of apples and art in the region. Healthy Acadia is a critical partner in realizing this programming.”

The Cobscook Gathering, an example of some of our earliest programming, brought people together for immersive skill-building and personal development through courses such as timber framing, revitalizing indigenous languages, the ecology of Cobscook Bay, using popular education to understand economics, and more. These Gatherings took place in Edmunds before we had a campus. Now, nearly two decades later, our campus vision is complete, and we are excited to return to our roots and begin the planning process for a summer 2020 Cobscook Gathering. In keeping with tradition, this will be a grassroots, collaborative celebration of place-based learning and connections. If you want to be part of this planning circle, please contact Daphne at (207) 733-2233 or daphne@thecccl.org. Let’s keep these folk school values alive!

Folk School Profile: Highlander Folk School,
now Highlander Research and Education Center, Tennessee

Founding Year: 1932

Mission: “Highlander serves as a catalyst for grassroots organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the South. We work with people fighting for justice, equality and sustainability, supporting their efforts to take collective action to shape their own destiny. Through popular education, language justice, participatory research, cultural work, and intergenerational organizing, we help create spaces—at Highlander and in local communities — where people gain knowledge, hope and courage, expanding their ideas of what is possible.”

What they do today: Appalachian Transition Fellowship nurtures collaboration between emerging leaders and host communities to advance economic and social change in the region. Children’s Justice Camp, for children ages 6-12, focused on sharing, healing, and learning justice, art, and action. Greensboro Justice Fund Fellowship, a yearlong training for community organizers providing opportunities for community action and team-building support for fellows on community initiatives. Seeds of Fire, brings together Southern and Appalachian youth-led and youth centered groups and individuals organizing for social justice and change to provide guidance, mentorship, political education and skill-based trainings that gives room for young people to take the resources they need and work towards a just future.

Interview with our new Executive Director, Sebastian Teunissen



Can you share a little bit about your background?

I was born in the Netherlands and moved to Canada when I was one. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Guelph before pursuing graduate studies at Duke University in North Carolina. I worked in Papua New Guinea for a couple of years, and also managed a company in Japan. At the University of California, Berkeley, I ran programs that provided hands-on experience to MBA students, working on projects around the globe. Most recently I worked at Solidaridad, an NGO that focuses on sustainable smallholder agriculture worldwide.

I've always been a big believer in hands-on learning. That's the way I learn best. So this aspect of the Cobscook Experiential Program really resonated with me and is one of the things that got me quite interested in CCLC.

What else brought you to CCLC?

Because I've traveled so much, I never developed much in the way of roots. As I've gotten older, I came to see the value in settling down. I saw the people here and how rooted they are in this community and how dedicated they are and how proud they are of it. It resonated with me. I saw what CCLC had accomplished and felt that my leadership and business skills could help build upon the organization's 20-year legacy of impact and innovation.

What are your hopes for CCLC in five years?

I step into my role just as CCLC has accomplished significant milestones in four areas: the original campus plan is now complete and ready to host year-round activity; Cobscook Experiential Programs enters its 10th year of accredited program delivery; TREE now has data demonstrating its far-reaching positive impacts and has developed an exciting Maine/California collaboration; and perhaps most significantly, CCLC's co-founder and founding executive director, Alan Furth, a visionary educator, is retiring from his 20 years at the helm.

I hope to leverage my skills and experience to support and build upon these accomplishments so that in five years CCLC has become an even greater contributor to the health and vitality of all three nations—American, Canadian, and Passamaquoddy—that call this region home and whose members have governed CCLC throughout its history. In five years, I hope that:

1. Cobscook Experiential Programs is able to expand enrollment and complement the work of a broader coalition of regional schools and communities;
2. Our campus is bustling with programs throughout the year; and,
3. TREE's work to transform the rural education experience has become widely adopted, not only throughout Washington County, but across Maine and the nation.

Achieving these goals is going to take all of us, including you, members of CCLC's larger community, working together. My first task is to be sure I really understand what we do and how we do it, and then to ensure that we have the proper organization, systems and capabilities in place. We need to embrace the roots from which we sprang while we build for the future. We cannot accomplish it on our own, so we will be seeking opportunities to strengthen existing relationships and establish new partnerships. Please join us as we launch into our next twenty years. I look forward to opportunities to meet and speak with all of you, our community.

The deep roots and new growth reflected in this edition of Cobscook Currents only happen through the support and generosity of our celebrated circle of donors. Donations of any size support our work.

Ways of Giving

Here are a few simple ways to give:

- Make an annual gift, with options for monthly or quarterly installments, by visiting www.thecccl.org. Simply click DONATE or contact Alan Furth to discuss a gift and schedule that is right for you.
- Invite people you know to join you as a CCLC supporter.
- Introduce us to people who may be interested in learning more about our work.
- Include CCLC in your planned giving by including us in your will or as a benefactor on retirement accounts, life insurance policies, bank or brokerage accounts, or Certificates of Deposit. You can also make a gift of property, including real estate or other marketable items.

We're here to help and happy to discuss your goals. Please contact Alan Furth, CCLC Co-Founder, at (207) 733-2233 or alan@thecccl.org. Thanks so much.

Announcing the Steve and Cindy O'Brien Challenge

An opportunity to raise awareness and generate crucial support for work the TREE program is doing in Washington County. From now until December 31st, all new donations to TREE between \$500 and \$10,000 will be generously matched dollar for dollar up to \$35,000.

"Because we believe TREE holds the key to real change, we are doing everything we can to make sure this vital initiative continues for children in Washington County and to see TREE become 'a model for rural America'" ~Steve and Cindy O'Brien

Please consider making a pledge or donation today by going to thecccl.org/donate

This van has been critical to the highly mobile nature of many of our programs since 2016 when we started leasing it for just \$1 from Darling's. When the lease was up this year, Darling's decided to donate the van to us! Warm thanks to Darling's for this generous donation.





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CCLC's first visit to Denmark in 2007 in front of a statue of Grundtvig, who is recognized as one of the founders of the Scandinavian Folk School movement.



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News from the Cobscook Community Learning Center

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