

## **Hinterland: Revere, Realize, Reveal, Restore**

Encounter the wilderness of Alaska with high adventure excursions and outings to explore its majestic beauty. Participate in a nine-month wilderness leadership immersion program. Develop an outdoor program to mentor and inspire the nature connection for elementary-aged children.

### **Proposed Project**

The rationale for my project is to **restore** myself by spending time to “fill my cup” with the things that energize my soul. I want to accomplish this through contact with landscapes that command wonder and **revere**nce. I would like this inspiration to fortify my endeavor to then spend nine months to **realize** and learn the language of nature. I want to use this field-experience to facilitate a program that would **reveal** the nature connection for elementary-aged children. After experiencing nature in these three very different approaches, I will have a measurable restored affirming disposition that will renew inspiration in my teaching.

I was born and partially raised in the upper peninsula of Michigan and have a familiarity with the outdoors. I was afforded a childhood with liberties that by today’s standards would be considered foolhardy and careless. For example, camping at age 12 with no adults. As an adult, my passion has been raising a family with my husband and pursuing a teaching profession, more precisely the Montessori method of teaching, which promotes independence, self-lead learning and a strong connection with nature and the environment.

In creating my classroom environment, I incorporate learning opportunities to showcase the usefulness of nature and its connection to self-reliance. For example, we talk about the basics of wild crafting when we are outside. When possible, we collect specimens in our environment to make connections to the concepts we learn in the classification of the animal kingdom. My knowledge has been limited to self-study and I welcome the comprehensive instruction offered in phase 2 of my plan.

This creativity and enthusiasm has been seriously depleted by the venture to open my own Montessori Elementary, which I owned for six years. By educational standards it was wildly successful and I have a faithful core of families, but by financial standards, the school struggled to be profitable. Unfortunately, the many responsibilities of curriculum-specialist, teacher, accountant, administrator, and PR person put a strain on my body, mind, and spirit. I was attempting to keep a house, raise three children, work another part-time job for supplemental income, run a business, and keep my sanity! This year, I was fortunate through parent support to find a Montessori school that was expanding and would incorporate my elementary program into their school. I am enthusiastic to continue my program but am looking for a way to renew my passions. I want to get back to my roots: the hinterland!

## **Phase 1: Alaska Trip**

The first phase of my journey, Revere, will commence in Fairbanks, Alaska, where my husband and I will embark on an Arctic Circle overnight adventure. We will get up close to the amazing Arctic tundra, lunch next to the Yukon River, and visit the rural community of Joy, Alaska.

Next, we will travel on the Alaska Railroad to Denali and take the wheel of a 4-WD Jeep Wrangler to follow a guide on an off-road journey in the Denali National Park. Interactive two-way radios will allow the guide to explain the history and point out the sights.

Our next stop will be Telkeetna, Alaska. We will take a 130-mile round trip river excursion through the Denali State Park and into the wild river park of "Devil's Gorge." We will visit an authentic trapper's cabin and visit a site of the earliest native settlers, the Dena'ina Indians. Naturalists accompany the trip to talk about the flora and fauna of the area.

The last destination on the trip will be Anchorage, Alaska. The adventure will be hiking on the Spencer Glacier, located in the Chugach National Forest. We will use Tandem Sea Kayaks to cross the lake to get to the ice. We will practice using Crampon spikes and, with experienced guides, will travel out on the glacier ice itself.

This trip sounds amazing; it's one that I have imagined taking but never dreamed would be possible. The mission statement of Ascending Path Tours, the Spencer Glacier guide, is the following:

"We are dedicated to educating our guests and recognize that through climbing and hiking folks can discover personal balance, centeredness, success, enthusiasm and harmony. We understand that irrational emotions dissolve and an inherent sense of responsibility and confidence is naturally cultivated through spending time in the wilderness. "

[ascendingpath.com](http://ascendingpath.com)

That is what I want to manifest for myself.

I also plan to use the local resources such as museums, tours, or exhibits to learn about the native people of the area. We specifically study the Native Americans of North America that next school year and I anticipate gathering first-hand knowledge to share with my students.

## **Phase 2: Wilderness Leadership Immersion Program**

After returning to base camp...Indiana, I will begin the second phase of my journey, Realize, where I will spend one weekend per month for 9 months immersed in wilderness survival skills, naturalist studies, mentoring, applications of permaculture, overnight camping experiences, and hands-on projects by attending the Wilderness Leadership Immersion Program. The main location is just south of Bloomington, Indiana, but we will also be exploring a variety of wilderness in the region. Weekends last from 7 pm Friday through 2 pm Sunday.

The specific skills that I hope to learn are outlined in the course offering:

Would you like to...

- have the ability to envision, design, and implement regenerative landscapes that repair not only the earth but the human relationship with it,
- understand nature on a personal and deep level,
- have the ability to connect with people and build rapport,
- know how to inspire others (students, kids, friends, etc.),
- develop skills of observing patterns, developing the senses, and awareness of your surroundings,
- have sufficiency in natural fire building, shelters, finding water and food, and other survival skills,
- be knowledgeable of plants (in the wild and in the garden) including identification, uses, medicines, and propagation,
- learn hands-on homesteading skills including beekeeping and beehive making, salves and tinctures, building a rocket stove for boiling maple sap, and more
- gain a better understanding of your own personal strengths and gifts and how to use them,
- have a working sense of the cycles and opportunities of the seasons,
- develop your ability to observe group dynamics and facilitate intentional experiences,
- cultivate a vision for healthy culture and communities that are in balance with people, nature, and self-expression.

This knowledge is what I want to implement in an outdoor classroom setting for my school and I need to experience and internalize this information before I can implement phase three!

## **Phase 3: Nature Program for School**

During this third phase, Reveal, I would like to create a program that incorporates nature and mentoring; culminating in a "Rite of Passage for Middle Childhood." It would mark the progress of the children in my class and honor their transition from early to late childhood. This falls within the elementary ages of our school. It would focus on the family, cultivating interdependent relationships, and the nature-connection to foster a strong self-image of resiliency. It would serve to consciously empower students in a meaningful internal transition that mirrors the physical transition that is taking place at this age.

Mark Morey is a guest speaker at the Wilderness Leadership Program and is the founder of the Institute for Natural Learning where he has facilitated wilderness survival and spiritual passages for teens since 1997. His is the model I would like to explore for the program I wish to implement.

### **Phase Four: Restoration**

It is my hope that through the completion of all three phases that I will restore and renew my energy, creativity, and enthusiasm. I would like to become a worthy resource for the school and aid in creating an environment where we help each child become the best version of themselves and I cannot do that without taking this time for myself. Thank you so much for making this dream a possibility!

### **Budget**

Airfare	1,000.00
Hotel \$250/7 nights	1,750.00
Clothing allowance for excursions	500.00
Alaska Railroad fares	350.00
Arctic Circle Overnight	539.00
Denali Jeep Backcountry	159.00
Devil Canyon Tour	165.00
Spencer Glacier Hike with Sea Kayak Approach	375.00
Food and incidentals in Alaska	1,500.00
Wilderness Leadership Immersion tuition (2015 rate)	2,520.00
Gas and hotel/food	750.00
Tax liability	750.00

---

Total \$10,358.00

### **Timeline**

September 1-8, 2016	Alaska Trip
September 2016- May 2017	Wilderness Program
April-May 2017	Creation of program for school