

# Cobscook Currents

Spring 2019



## Impacts of Collective Contribution

Welcome to the spring/summer edition of Cobscook Currents, CCLC's bi-annual newsletter. This edition of Cobscook Currents carries our deepest thanks to all who have done their part to bring us to this milestone transition year.

American troubadour Pete Seeger reflected on what he loved most about music, "What matters is not how good the song is, but what the song is good for!" What often carries people across the most challenging of times, and inspires the most important change, is the plying together of many voices into one inspired collective expression of what we most value.

Cobscook Community Learning Center is a beautiful example of what a community of people from near and far can do. Together, we have been creating responsive educational opportunities that strengthen personal, community, and global well-being since CCLC's founding in 1999. On the pages that follow, we offer stories that highlight what our song is good for--the impacts of our collective contributions on personal, regional, and national scales for each of CCLC's three divisions: Cobscook Experiential Program for High School Students; TREE: Transforming Rural Experience in Education; and Retreats and Community Programs.

In this issue, follow the footsteps of Augustus Look, who completed his high school years with Cobscook and looks back on his experiences now that he is a college student.

Join Milbridge Elementary School Principal, Maria White, and Mental Health Provider, Kandi Robertson, as they reflect on the transformative experience of bringing TREE to life.

Experience the local and regional impact of CCLC's Retreats & Community Programs through the story of local artist and mother, Sherry Ashby, and UM Wildlife Biology Professors, Lindsey Seward and Erik Blomberg.

And finally, most importantly, recognize those who contributed financially to help carry CCLC across 2018 and to this threshold year. The impacts of the future, as with the past, will be a reflection of our collective contributions. If you are part of CCLC's circle of support, we cannot thank you enough. If you are new to CCLC or have not yet joined us as a funding partner, please join us now. Our future lies in our hands. Let's keep these storylines going and growing.

On behalf of CCLC's board and staff,



**Alan Furth**  
Co-Founder



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## Founder Story • Jim Miner

Jim always believed that “traditional education isn’t for everyone” and that Washington County needed a place that would promote experiential learning. When he heard of the initial conversations about creating a place to provide responsive educational opportunities that ultimately led to the founding of CCLC, he knew he could offer his skills in building design, construction, and maintenance. Since 2000, Jim has done just that and even served as CCLC’s first Board President.



When asked what excites him about CCLC entering its next 20 years, Jim said, “The thing that excites me most is the fact that the campus is complete and will be here for a good long time to support and advance programs for the people of Washington County and others worldwide.”

## Founder Story • Rachel Bell



Rachel Bell is a founding member of the CCLC who is also part of the 8th generation of Bells to live on Tide Mill Farm in Edmunds. She remembers the roots of CCLC emerging from a living room conversation about alternative education: “We asked ourselves broad questions about the nature of learning and community, what type of dynamic education one could engage with over the course of a lifetime. The CCLC became our collective answer.”

When asked about CCLC’s impact, Rachel said, “It’s truly amazing to see how the CCLC has grown over the years. I feel it is a living model of how a community can ask and strive to answer its own questions. Not only does the CCLC enrich and empower our local community, but its efforts could be replicated in any community anywhere.”

# Cobscook

## Experiential Program For High School Students

### Personal Impact • Augustus Look



Augustus Look struggled in school before he came to the Cobscook Experiential Program. He described his former self as not suited for typical classroom work and he dreaded going to school. After his first few years at Cobscook, however, he realized he looked forward to returning to school daily. Augustus earned his high school diploma through the Cobscook Experiential Program in June 2018 and he is already finishing his second semester as a student at the University of Maine at Machias.

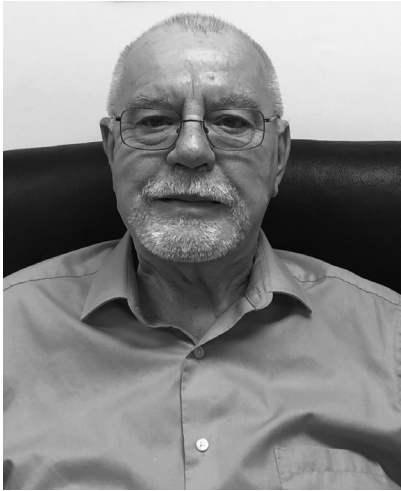
Reflecting on his high school years at Cobscook, Augustus recalled one of his first school trips to hike a mountain. He remembered struggling on the hike, but being encouraged along the way by his teacher, Michael Giudilli. Upon arriving at the summit, Augustus' classmates celebrated his accomplishment and congratulated him. He was elated by that demonstration of caring and was committed to returning the favor and "building others up" moving forward.

"Cobscook is really good at bringing people together to accomplish a goal or to help each other," Augustus said. "It's shaped my outlook on how I treat other people. The two biggest impacts I experienced at Cobscook were problem-solving skills and critical thinking. I will always remember CCLC fondly for how it treats its students and community members."

### Regional Impact • Ron Jenkins, Calais School Department

After 19 years as superintendent of schools for Maine Indian Education, Ron Jenkins became superintendent of the Calais School Department. In this role, he has been a strong partner of the Cobscook Experiential Program. This partnership comes largely out of Ron's belief in the need for the program: "I have always recognized a need for additional education programs for those students who want more flexible learning environments."

A recent visit to CCLC made Ron an even stronger believer in what Cobscook is accomplishing. He described seeing a group of obviously bright teenagers who are on track to meet their goals "in an educational atmosphere where they can have every expectation to succeed."



When asked about Cobscook’s regional impact, Ron said, “The Cobscook Experiential Programs have had a huge impact on all the students that have been involved. For most, it has been an opportunity to succeed in school where they have not felt connected, challenged, or successful before. They have been able to set goals that, for them, might not have been achievable in a more conventional environment. But make no mistake, this program is an academic program. The programs of CCLC make it possible to learn in an environment that is more suitable to their learning styles.” Ron hopes that programs like Cobscook can be replicated to serve more students across Washington County moving forward.

## Broad Impact of Experiential Education • Kara McCrimmon

“Learning by doing” is core to experiential education. Cobscook Experiential Program’s hands-on experiences allow for reflection and skill growth, yielding academic knowledge and much more. Here’s a glimpse: Cobscook’s fall expedition focused on regional history in the 1600’s. Students explored Salem, MA to understand what led to the Salem Witch Trials; learned from the Wampanoag people about their history and experiences today; explored the economic factors driving Europeans to colonize North America; and visited Plimoth Plantation, a hands-on living history site.

Back in the classroom, we integrated language arts with this recent exploration of 1600’s history by staging a dramatic reading of Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Learning that this play was going to be performed in St. John, NB, Cobscook students decided to raise funds for an overnight trip. They organized and ran a community pizza night, which generated enough money to travel to St. John, go out to dinner, see the play, and visit the New Brunswick museum. For some of these students, this journey included their first time dressing up to go out to dinner and a play.

Experiential education is often characterized as occurring in the wilderness. Our recent dive into regional history, however, exemplified how experiential education can be applied to a range of subjects through hands-on explorations of culture and history, too. Through the trip to Massachusetts, reading of *The Crucible*, and visit to St. John, students learned not only about the history of this region, but also the valuable life skills of fundraising, organizing events, and collaboratively working toward a common goal.

The 2019-20 school year will be CCLC’s 10th year of this program and applications are encouraged from any student who wants experiential education to be core to their high school experience. For more information, visit [theccclc.org](http://theccclc.org) or call 207-733-2233.

# TREE Transforming Rural Experience in Education

## Local Impact • Milbridge Elementary School



Milbridge Elementary Principal Maria White knows rural education well. Her grandmothers and her mom and dad taught, and her dad also served as a principal, and superintendent in the region. Maria has been working at Milbridge Elementary since 2007 and says, “The impact TREE has had here was really driven home when two particular students, who used to really dread school, became excited to come to school every day because now we have something offered each week that they really love.” TREE

provides the school with extra personnel to support programs that have been important for students and teachers, including funding Maine Outdoor School programs, Somedays, and Microadventures, which all honor and support student voice in authentic hands-on ways. Maria said that a critically important cornerstone of the TREE model “is that they are providing the mental health supports to help meet even more needs here.”

Mental health supports are offered 2.5 days per week and include supports for school staff. Kandi Robertson, a registered play therapist and TREE’s mental health provider at Milbridge Elementary, identifies what’s working: “TREE really fits with my philosophy for thinking about supporting kids in their whole environment and all of their needs—not just academic needs. Together, we support the needs children have to thrive within all environments.” When reflecting on TREE’s impact, she said, “I think it goes back to TREE working to support every need. If we can’t help meet that need directly, we can connect a student or teacher to someone who can.”

## Regional Impact • Cat Biddle, University of Maine

Cat Biddle describes her career as historically being “in the space between schools and their communities.” She has worked at museums and historical societies and taught theater, after school programs in Boston, and English in a rural high school in Western India. Before beginning her position as Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Maine, she visited CCLC to learn about TREE and knew she wanted to be involved. “TREE was the kind of community-driven work to support young people that I would love to see in every community,” she said. Cat then became involved in TREE’s Research Practice Partnership Team.

When asked about how TREE has informed her work, Cat said, “TREE has changed so much about how I do research and how I myself teach. Through TREE, I’ve come to see the relationship between community stress and the healing potential of the school as a powerful intervention for rural communities, but I’ve also come to see the ways in which I can support healing in my own classroom through promoting psychological safety.”



Cat enthusiastically shared her thoughts about how TREE is having an impact beyond CCLC’s Trescott campus: “TREE is making waves in the trauma-informed school space with its asset-based approach and particularly its development of student-empowered social-emotional learning. The hope that is created when teachers see students as people with agency and the ability to make meaningful choices about their lives and learning is incredible.”

## National Impact • La Honda-Pescadero School District, California



Amy Wooliever is the superintendent of a small, rural district in the Bay Area of California. While that region of the country may not be what many people would imagine as being rural, the La Honda-Pescadero school district is comprised of farmlands, flower fields, and a sparse human population. The high school in the district averages around 100 students thanks in large part to Amy’s outreach efforts towards demonstrating the value of small schools—the tagline was “Small School, Big Dreams”—which helped her nearly double student enrollment.

When Amy met CCLC’s TREE team and started learning about Washington County and TREE’s goals toward re-envisioning rural education through trauma-sensitive approaches, she recognized an immediate kinship between the two communities. Learning from TREE’s Resource Coach, Laura Thomas, about their model of placing resource coaches in schools was particularly inspiring to Amy. She is currently working on adapting TREE’s trauma-informed model in her schools.

Amy summed up the broad-reaching impact of TREE by sharing, “The east-west coast thought partnership is really valuable—to have someone to think through some of the challenges that rural education entails. Rural students have different needs that we need to be able to address. TREE has been informing my work by example as they’ve been in the forefront of having innovative ways of addressing those needs. I can see that work spreading—we’re already partnering with another school district on these efforts.”

## Retreats and Community Programs

### Local Impact • Sherry Ashby, Pottery Student



One of Sherry's recent creations

Sherry grew up in Lubec with the idea of making pottery on her childhood bucket list. Without access to a pottery studio or instruction, however, the pottery she crafted with the beach clay she collected always dried and fell apart. To make her childhood dream come true and to enhance her son's homeschool experience, she applied for and received a scholarship from CCLC that allowed Sherry and her family their first opportunity to take a pottery course.

When asked about the local impact of CCLC, she said, "So many of us in this region are lifelong learners and CCLC provides the opportunity to expand and enrich that tendency by providing a richness and diversity of educational options to choose from."

### Regional Impact • University of Maine

Lindsay Seward and Erik Blomberg are co-instructors of a University of Maine Wildlife Field Survey course, which is based at CCLC's campus for two weeks each May. The facilities and setting of the CCLC, they said, are unique in Maine and "we have found that its rural location, proximity to diverse ecosystems, and relatively "wild" surroundings are particularly valuable to our student's professional and personal development." The campus also supports the approximately 40 adults who need a place to sleep, eat, stay up late to do data analysis, and get to know each other through campfire sing-alongs.



Another benefit to the setting of this course is bringing these students to Downeast Maine. "Even our students who grew up in Maine have mostly not been in this area," Lindsay said. Experiencing the many assets of the region has led several students to careers here.



## Statewide Impact • Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission

*“You can’t know where life will take you, but you can commit to a direction.”*

*-Wendell Berry*

Paul Thibeault is the Managing Director of the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission (MITSC). Members are chosen by the Governor and Legislature of Maine and the Chiefs of three of Maine’s Tribes (Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Penobscot).

CCLC’s multicultural identity, and its welcoming and well-equipped retreat center, informed MITSC’s decision to locate its new office adjacent to CCLC. MITSC’s primary goal in the coming years is to help resolve long-standing issues between the State and the Tribes. Paul

shared what the Commission experienced this April during its first meeting at CCLC: “CCLC’s staff, campus and facilities support and inspire our efforts to improve tribal-state relations. It’s more than just a meeting space, there’s a positive and creative energy here.”

## Personal, Regional, National, Global: CCLC’s Retreat Center is ready to serve your needs.

**DOORS ARE OPEN** to our newly completed and expanded campus! Three bright new rooms now seat an additional 130 people for professional workshops, immersion learning opportunities, messy group projects, family reunions and more. Added to our 50-bed lodge, commercial kitchen, cozy dining room, timber frame amphitheater and outdoor pizza oven, miles of trails, and a range of program offerings—we are ready to host! Tenting is available for the hardier types with hiking and waterfront access at both our Commissary Point and Straight Bay campuses. CCLC is located close to Campobello Island, NB and on the shores of beautiful Fundy Bay. Please drop in and consider CCLC for your next retreat, event or class. **WELCOME!**



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Here's how:

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



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Spring 2019

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