

Cobscook Currents

Fall 2017



News from the

Cobscook Community
Learning Center



CCLC: Rooted with a Core Question

“How can we leverage the best that education can offer to meet, honor, and serve the spirits, hopes, and dreams of young people here in Washington County?” That was the question that launched 24 community members into a six-month participatory research process in 1999, leading to the design and establishment of the Cobscook Community Learning Center (CCLC). Responding to that core question has guided developments at CCLC through 18 years of dynamic change playing out within our communities, our region, our nations, and on Earth. Our mission is to create responsive educational opportunities that strengthen personal, community, and global well-being. That is the work that roots CCLC within our community landscape.

CCLC has emerged in the midst of a diverse “forest” of other non-profits, businesses, initiatives, and civic groups, each working within respective spheres of focus and impact: conservation, human rights, health, arts, economic development, meeting basic needs, recreation and education to name a few. Throughout our years of program development and delivery, CCLC team members have been supported and encouraged to be active participants in other groups and initiatives dedicated to the health and vitality of the region. Our roots weave and ply with those of the larger community. Our respective efforts benefit from the collective whole.

CCLC is called to do its best work within this larger community context of growth and movement, gains and losses. The articles that follow illustrate specific developments and contributions taking place at or through CCLC. This issue of Cobscook Currents invites you to join us in:

- Celebrating the start of the 8th year of our Cobscook Experiential Program for High School Students (Cobscook), now a full 4-year program;
- Recognizing the emerging significance of TREE: Transforming Rural Experience in Education as we prepare for a January 2018 launch in our first 3 pilot partner schools;
- Preparing to expand the use of CCLC as a beautiful Retreat Center to include year-round enjoyment of our campus and facilities by groups of all ages from near and far.

These three branches of the CCLC “tree” define our contribution to the larger social and ecological landscape here along the shores of Cobscook Bay in Washington County, Maine. Thanks to all of you who are part of our roots and contribute the essential gifts of time, talent, energy, and funding to CCLC’s ongoing work. None of this would be possible without your support.

With warm regards as we turn now from our autumn harvests to welcome winter,



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TREE Resource Coach

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Celebrating Our Roots

Hazel Stark

On a recent saunter through one of our wonderfully lush Downeast forests, my thoughts were interrupted by a fallen tree. Cushioned by a bed of sphagnum moss and sprigs of purpling winter-green leaves upon its fall, this tree's roots now stood over ten feet high, towering over the trunk of this former giant. This bold reminder of roots offered an important reflection. No tree is truly independent or supported by one deep carrot-like taproot. Instead, trees have a shallow expanding network of intertwining roots that partner with fungi to exchange nutrients with each other and communicate about nearby diseases or other threats to the forest community: interspecies collaboration at its very best.

When I first learned of the CCLC in 2015 while searching for a place to do an internship as part of my Masters studies, its more than 15-year-old "roots" were what stood out to me first. Like a tree, the CCLC does not have one deep taproot; its growth has been supported by an expansive, diverse network of community members, funders, and partners. It is this network that has helped the CCLC stay healthy as it continues to provide responsive educational opportunities to strengthen the well-being of all. Just as a tree's roots allow the tree to thrive through collaboration with others so that the tree may bear fruit, the CCLC continues to bear the fruit of impact due to its intertwining, expanding network of roots.

Laura Thomas School Resource Coach for TREE

Please join us in welcoming Laura Thomas to the CCLC Team! Laura serves as the School Resource Coach for TREE and is assigned to work within our first full partner school, Milbridge Elementary School.

While both of her parents grew up in Maine, Laura grew up all over the US and in Europe, as her father served in the United States Air Force. Her son Malachi was born in 2003, and in 2004, Laura started college as a first generation, nontraditional college student through a TRIO program called Onward.



Laura Thomas and her son, Malachi

Five years later, Laura graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in Elementary Education and a minor in Spanish from the University of Maine in Orono. For the last seven years, Laura has worked as an ESL teacher for MSAD 37, which serves the four communities surrounding Harrington, and served on the Board of Mano en Mano, which provides education and housing opportunities while removing barriers to health and social services for the diverse populations of Downeast Maine. She has been their Board President for the last three years.

Laura's motivation as a teacher stems from her desire to remove barriers for her students, allowing them to overcome any obstacles in their paths toward success. It is important to her that families feel welcome at school and connected to the success of their students. Her former colleagues and administrators agree, "She is an outstanding educator, a passionate mentor, and an effective change-maker. Her commitment to students and families is unmatched."

— TREE —

Transforming Rural Experience in Education

Brittany Ray
Director



Students at Milbridge Elementary

For most educators, the start of the school year is a time associated with reflection, hope, and renewed commitments. For me, it has also been a time when I think about the fact that school is not a level playing field for children. This awareness has dominated my work for many years. It did not make me dislike my job, become less committed, or drop into a negative funk. Rather, my realization that education was not serving as an equalizer resulted in frustration that I seemed to be doing things the same way, getting the same results, and relying on outside experts to solve the challenges of my school and community. This was certainly one of the reasons I was most drawn to TREE.

When I first encountered TREE, I heard people who cared passionately about education and equity talking about changing the odds for

children and making connections between advances in neuroscience, child development, and the importance of relationships. For the first time I was encountering a way of looking at challenging student behavior and limited academic success that no longer blamed students, but looked to the root causes of behavior and then worked to change the adult response to such behaviors.

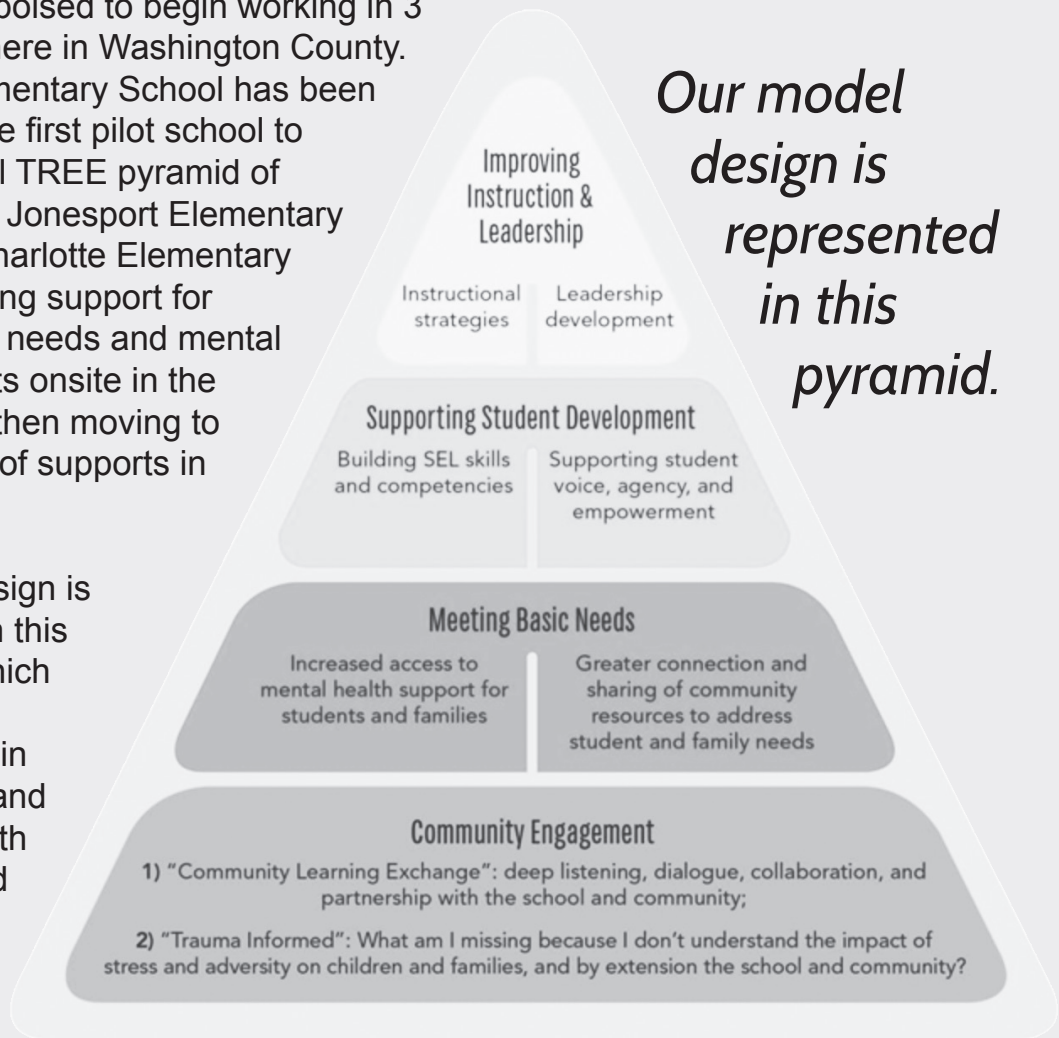
I had spent so many years trying to solve problems by hacking at the leaves and not digging down into the roots. Now 15 months after becoming the Director of TREE, I am confident that TREE's collaborative and systemic approach to supporting students, parents, teachers, and communities is the hopeful approach we have long needed in our schools.

TREE's response and model design is rooted in an understanding and respect for the community, which only comes through a commitment to thoughtful listening. As we reported in our Spring newsletter, TREE interviewed and listened to 22 administrators and conducted focus groups with 131 teachers and 186 students in Washington County to inform program de-

sign. TREE also took care to listen to parents and an array of non-profits working throughout Washington County. We knew the importance of gaining a true sense of both the strengths and challenges for Washington County schools and communities. TREE filled itself with this knowledge and then, in collaboration with educators and researchers from Colby College and the University of Maine, we entered an intensive design process.

With thoughtful listening as a foundation, TREE is now poised to begin working in 3 pilot schools here in Washington County. Milbridge Elementary School has been selected as the first pilot school to receive the full TREE pyramid of supports, with Jonesport Elementary School and Charlotte Elementary School receiving support for meeting basic needs and mental health supports onsite in the first year and then moving to the full model of supports in year two.

Our model design is represented in this pyramid, in which all levels are clearly rooted in collaboration and partnership with the school and community.



Our model design is represented in this pyramid.

TREE is not coming in to impose a model or dictate changes.

Rather, TREE will support schools in meeting basic needs by facilitating a greater connection and sharing of resources, providing mental health supports onsite for students, and using a full time coaching model to build Social and Emotional Learning for all and to increase opportunities for student voice and empowerment. Additionally, TREE will support instructional strategies in the classroom and leadership development.

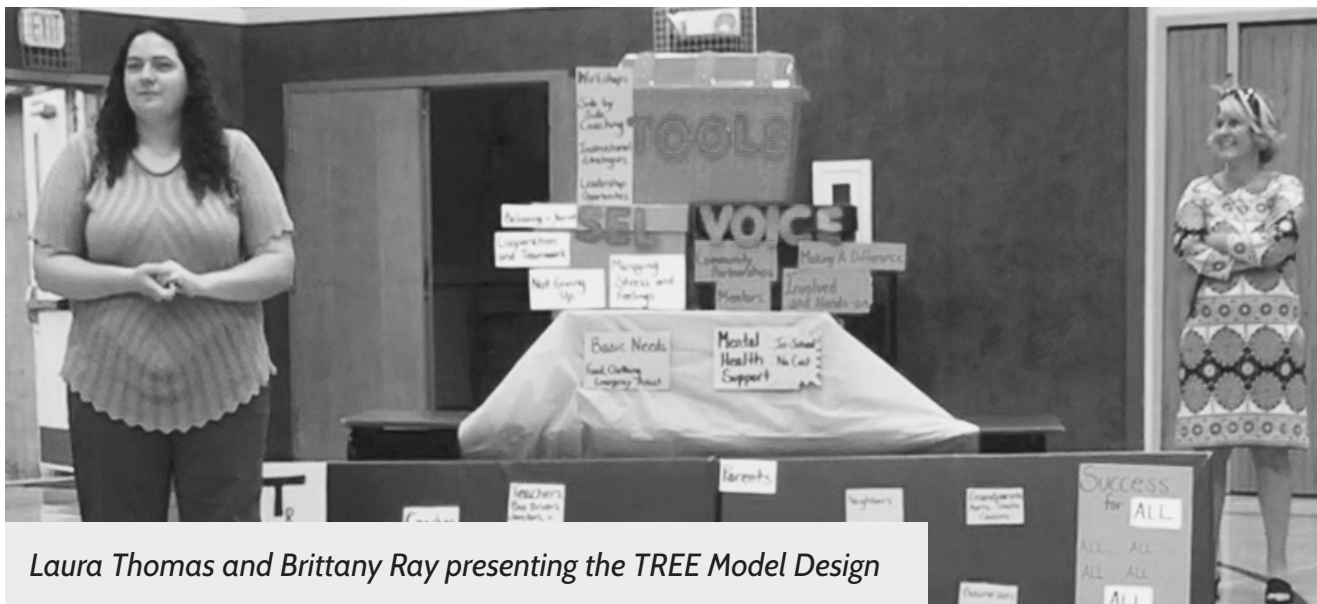
TREE Transforming Rural Experience in Education

In August, TREE enthusiastically welcomed its first School Resource Coach, Laura Thomas (You were introduced to Laura on page 3). Since Laura's start with TREE, the two of us have been busy working on the ground with our 3 pilot schools. Those months of intense design followed by months of detailed program and evaluation decisions are now being met with enthusiastic receptivity, which is energizing. Above all, we are excited to be addressing institutional and systemic challenges that have left rural populations struggling.

Autumn has also been filled with detailed implementation decisions. We have selected an evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum for Laura to deliver with teachers at our pilot schools. SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. We believe SEL will empower students to play an active role in their education and in their communities. TREE is listening to real parents and teachers with real concerns and a deep desire to gain skills to better support children.

In a recent federal report, *The Health and Well-Being of Children in Rural Areas* from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, we read that our country must explore ways to deliver affordable mental and behavioral health care services for parents and children, such as integrating these services into primary care settings and schools. TREE is doing just that.

Through TREE, the CCLC has come full circle to further address that first question at the root of the organization, *"How can we leverage the best that education can offer to meet, honor, and serve the spirits, hopes, and dreams of young people here in Washington County?"*



Laura Thomas and Brittany Ray presenting the TREE Model Design

Cobscook Experiential Program

— For High School Students —

Kara McCrimmon
Lead Teacher



Students clipping fins at DSF



Students gathering forest growth data

Cobscook students visited Downeast Salmon Federation's (DSF) East Machias Aquatic Research Center on the first school day in October to help with Atlantic salmon restoration efforts--one of the many meaningful field trips to meet with scientists and assist with conservation work that makes the Cobscook program so impactful. Six years ago, Cobscook students participated in the first year of fin clipping at DSF, a step to identify hatchery-reared salmon in order to measure the effectiveness of restoration efforts. That year, about 53,000 fish were released into the East Machias River. This year, they will release about a quarter million hatchery salmon into suitable salmon habitat.

The Cobscook program has also seen growth since its inception. In 2010 Cobscook started as a one year option, offered in partnership with Calais High School. This year, students who enroll as 9th graders can look forward to completing their entire high school journey through the Cobscook Experiential Program.

As the program has grown, its work with area partners has deepened, which offers students the opportunity to develop relationships with local mentors through long-term projects.

"Marine science interests me, and it's a field I would like to pursue considering it's been one of the subjects that has interested me the most in school over the past years," says senior Mason Fortier, who has had the opportunity to

"Working with professionals in the marine science field has helped me figure out that this is what I want to do." -Mason Fortier, Senior

Cobscook

Working with Professionals in the Field

work with marine science experts each year at Cobscook. “Working with professionals in the marine science field has helped me figure out that this is what I want to do. And doing things like fin clipping is really fun and it adds to the experience – it gives me more ideas about what I could do after college.”

This is exactly what Cobscook is designed to do – to support students in achieving success with in a small group, family-like school setting. Over the last seven years, Cobscook has proven that community-engaged, experiential learning has countless benefits. It serves not only to educate and empower its participants, but also to connect students with themselves, their peers, their adult mentors, the broader community and the natural world, reinforcing a culture of personal and community wellbeing and environmental stewardship.

“Over the last seven years, Cobscook has proven that community-engaged, experiential learning has countless benefits.”



Students gathering data at West Quoddy



Students meeting with Marjorie Withers, former director of the Community Caring Collaborative

Upcoming Projects

With support from a Vital Signs grant from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Cobscook students will collect data on the East Machias and Orange River watersheds this year, including pH, water temperature, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. The students will also conduct macroinvertebrate surveys to assess stream health and measure the impact of ongoing conservation efforts to restore habitat. The data will be analyzed to make connections between the physical and chemical characteristics of water bodies and their impact on biodiversity.

— Heartwood Lodge —

“We immediately felt welcomed and at home, like we were part of the place. There’s a great warmth and vision here for building community.”
Mary Bogan, participant in NE Guild of Book Workers retreat

Daphne Loring
Retreats Associate



Sewing by the Sea retreat participants

“I can trace all that I see and experience here to these early visions, these roots.”

Heartwood Lodge for a four-day sewing retreat. As the women shared their stories with me, I was viscerally reminded of the importance of retreating to rekindle our own creative energies as well as those of the collective. For the last 18 years, taking space from other aspects of their lives to focus on their sewing passion has helped them to build a loving, generative and supportive community.

A piece of our work here is to cultivate personal, community and global well-being. Heartwood Lodge, and soon our classrooms and conference area, is here for you, our friends near and far, to join us in this pursuit.

Many people who have visited CCLC’s campus have seen the early mind maps generated by community members while laying the groundwork for this dynamic place. As CCLC has evolved, we have seen many more of these mapped dreams emerge and shift from imagination to reality. As a relative newcomer, I can trace all that I see and experience here to these early visions, these roots. The founders recognized the importance and value of not only coming and going from this place, but of coming here to dig in, to dig deep, to connect, and to retreat.

Heartwood Lodge has become a fertile vessel for the creativity, inquiry, learning, healing, and transformation that emerges when we retreat. In just the last few weeks, I have heard from guests about how rejuvenated they were after meeting over tasty food in the Commons, sleeping in the Lodge, connecting over the campfire, and exploring our trails.

Recently, the campus was filled with the creative energy of 25 women who came to

Final Stretch! Help us Wrap the Heartwood Classrooms Campaign

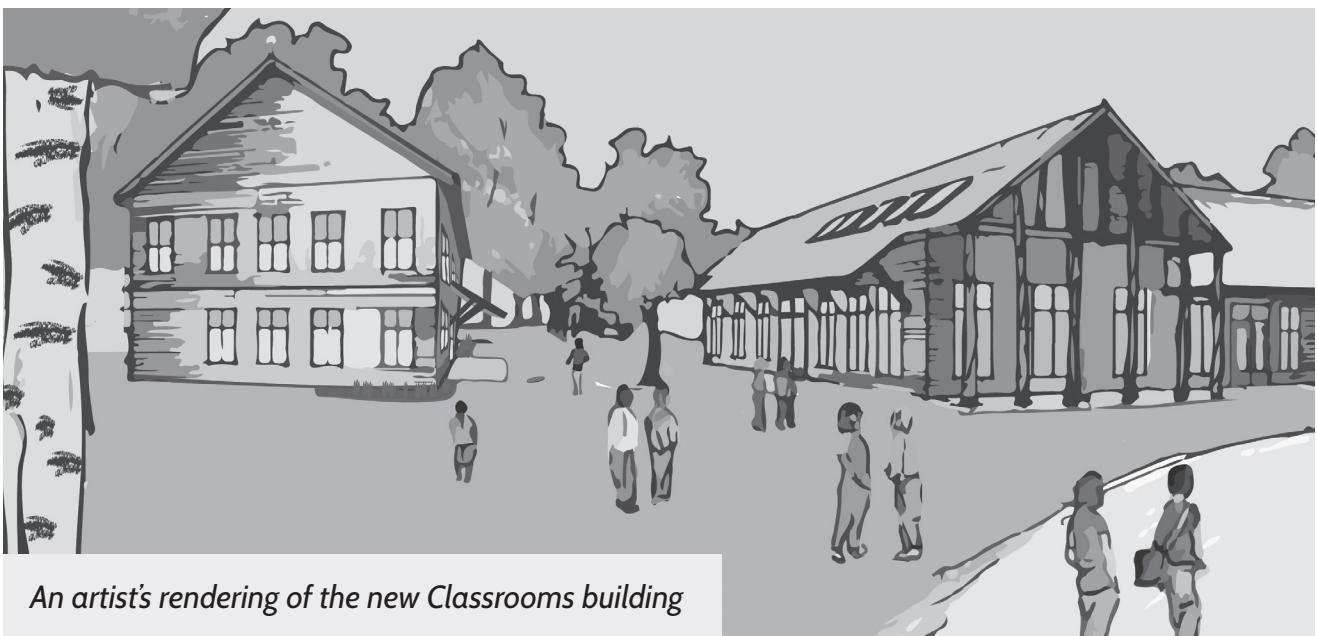
Several generous gifts have brought us near our \$1,002,000 campaign target to complete the Heartwood Classrooms and establish a maintenance fund, including a \$275,000 matching challenge grant from the Harold Alfond Foundation®, and a grant of \$125,000 from the Quimby Family Foundation towards the match challenge.

This long-held dream for Washington County is so close to becoming a reality

We need your help to raise **the last \$150,000 match** as a capstone toward transforming CCLC's 50-acre campus in Trescott into **the first fully equipped retreat center in Washington County**.

The upcoming 3,345 square-foot facility increases total CCLC building space to 20,000 square-feet, and features a large partitionable conference room, a spacious classroom, lobby and welcome center, office space, ample storage spaces, and two handicapped accessible bathrooms.

We're incredibly excited to see this long-held dream for Washington County so close to becoming a reality and we need your help to complete the campaign. **Every dollar you give will be matched by the Harold Alfond Foundation®** up to the \$150,000 needed to finish the \$275,000 challenge and allow us to complete the CCLC campus with this this final building – the CCLC Classrooms. We invite you to join us in this final push to raise the remaining \$150,000 match! Every dollar brings us two dollars closer! Learn more by contacting CCLC's executive director, Alan Furth: alan@theccclc.org or **207-733-2233** or by going to cclc.me/capstone.



An artist's rendering of the new Classrooms building



Featured Funder:
Hannah Quimby
Quimby Family Foundation

“This care for community, the planet, and the individual all seem woven into the fabric of what CCLC is.”

One of the vital channels nourishing the CCLC’s roots is its funders. The Quimby Family Foundation, which supports Maine-based nonprofits that are fostering stronger relationships between people and nature for the benefit of human wholeness, has been a generous supporter of the CCLC since 2001. We are delighted to feature their Board Director, Hannah Quimby, in this edition of Cobscook Currents.

I asked Hannah what draws her to the CCLC from both mission and funding perspectives: “I am drawn to the fact that the CCLC is finding multiple ways of reaching people by creating diverse programs that are broad and relevant to people in the community. This care for community, the planet, and the individual all seem woven into the fabric of what CCLC is as an organization and those pieces are fundamental to human wholeness.”

Hazel Stark

Hannah went on to share that helping fund the CCLC makes her feel like a true partner, “not simply someone writing a check,” due to the level of transparency and collaboration the CCLC embodies. Beyond the Quimby Family Foundation’s connection to the mission of the CCLC from a values-alignment and funding perspective, Hannah clearly sees the CCLC as more than just the sum of its parts: “Just as the roots of a tree are the anchor providing nourishment to the rest of the tree, allowing the tree to then influence air quality and human health, the CCLC is an anchor of well-being, nourishing the individual, the community, and ultimately the environment in which it exists.”

Ways of Giving

As a single tree requires support from neighbors and other species, so too does the CCLC! We rely on your support to continue our work. Here are some ways to help:

1. **Donate to our Capital Campaign** to support the construction of Heartwood Classrooms. Learn more on page 10 or at cclc.me/capstone.
2. **Donate once or monthly** to our General Fund, Scholarship Funds, the TREE program, or the Cobscook Experiential Program for High School Students. Learn more at cclc.me/donate.
3. **Planned Giving:** Leave a lasting legacy by including the CCLC in your will or living trust. More at cclc.me/planned-giving.
4. **Donate Stock** from your broker to ours: cclc.me/stock-gifts.

For more information about any of these options, call Pat Mallar at (207) 733-2233.



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