Ten thousand years ago glaciers bulldozed through northeastern Minnesota leaving only a thin layer of rocky soil. Comparing our climate and soils to other regions of Minnesota and the country, some might question the rationale of farming in Finland, MN. Historically, however, Finland’s roots are agricultural and the community supported its own threshing hall and farmer’s cooperative. Its history of 160 residents, four schools and forty farms, is captured in The Geographical Review written in 1934 by Darrell H. Davis. He noted, “326 acres were in hay…and 165 acres in cultivated crops, the most important field crops being oats, 70 acres; potatoes, 65 acres; and barley, 10 acres.”

Today, Finland has 195 residents, no public schools and has lost most of its farms. The few remaining fields are used for grazing horses and growing hay. Round River Farm is the one area farm that grows vegetables for almost 100 families by subscription. Wolf Ridge ELC is the only school in Finland.

Why would Wolf Ridge consider a farm? There is growing conversation about local and organic food in families, schools, and communities. Michelle Obama started an organic garden at the White House. In 2008, the Minnesota Department of Health established SHIP (Statewide Health Initiative Project) in part to “reduce the percentage of Minnesotans who are obese or overweight through better nutrition.” The USDA’s new Farm to School program hopes to “connect schools with local or regional producers in order to serve local or regionally produced foods in school cafeterias.” The Wolf Ridge “Seeds of Change” class explores food history, miles, food points of origin and genetics. These ongoing conversations led us to examine the idea of starting a school farm at Wolf Ridge, and to explore the opportunities such a project could provide to the Wolf Ridge experience.

Four years ago, a group of Student Naturalists and myself set out to put together a “farm assessment.” We started by developing a goal statement: Establish an agricultural production system that will supply healthy organic and affordable food and educational ‘food’ curriculum for Wolf Ridge.

In this assessment, we highlighted how a farm would deepen the Wolf Ridge experience by:

• Modeling values, behaviors and technologies which lead to a sustainable lifestyle.

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Michelle Obama in the White House garden.
When I was a canoe guide, it was a tradition to mark trip routes on the maps with a red pen. New “red lines” on a map are a source of pride for a canoe guide. My canoe guide peers noted newly traveled country in this way and the tradition continues today. Wolf Ridge is putting a few new “red lines” on our map. With a grant from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, Wolf Ridge has begun a major marketing effort.

Wolf Ridge places top priority on the delivery of high quality field-based educational programs. When questioned about the value of Wolf Ridge, we know that we only need to get the person participating in our programs to have them understand the valuable and quality learning experience we provide. Our new “red line” is to make the view of who we are, from the outside looking in, contain the same tremendous quality as the educational experience we provide daily on our campus.

After an extensive selection process, we chose Haberman Modern Storytellers to be our partner in this endeavor. They are a marketing firm based in Minneapolis who “tells the stories of pioneers who make a difference in the world.” The work of Wolf Ridge fits the mission of pioneers who make our programs what they are, from the outside looking in, project the same tremendous quality as the educational experience we provide daily on our campus.

From this “discovery process” Haberman is helping Wolf Ridge better describe who we are, and in a very professional manner. Those who have participated in Wolf Ridge programs know this but we will soon be stating it in a more clear and distinct manner, we don’t just educate. Our learning experiences inspire. We are not simply creating educated citizens; we are developing future environmental leaders and learners.

By promoting Wolf Ridge with a more powerful presentation of our educational endeavors, we will set a stronger path for our future. We want to assure that those who know us for our quality school program also know us for our other programs such as our summer camps. Through thoughtful efforts of inspiring marketing we will continue to promote summer and school year programs. We love new territory such as this. A new “red line” is being drawn on the map. It is not yet complete. We don’t know exactly where this initiative will lead but it’s thrilling to see where Wolf Ridge is going. Join us on the journey. Check out our web site and Facebook page. Please post there or ask questions. Watch for change on the horizons.
Wolf Ridge Naturalists on the Shore

Wolf Ridge now has a presence along Lake Superior. For the last 3 years, Wolf Ridge naturalists conducted programs interpreting the wonders of the North Shore. This is a recent addition to the outreach work that Wolf Ridge undertakes in schools. Beginning in the summer of 2010, Wolf Ridge sent a single naturalist down to Gooseberry Falls State Park. The “Naturalist in the Park” position at Gooseberry Falls provides interpretive programs under a partnership between Wolf Ridge and the Minnesota DNR. A naturalist creates and presents programs and answers lots of questions about the natural history of the park and area and questions about the site. It was a successful year, and in 2011 it expanded to Wolf Ridge having two Naturalists in the Park.

In 2012, Wolf Ridge was invited to staff another opportunity to interpret on the shore. This time two Wolf Ridge naturalists were contracted to Bluefin Bay Resort in Tofte, MN. Interpretive programming for hikes that took participants to Carlton Peak, Britton Peak, Oberg Mountain, the Temperance River, Sugarloaf Cove, and various spots of interest were created. Bluefin Bay vacationers were also invited to Wolf Ridge for a rock climbing experience on our indoor walls. All of these programs were free-of-charge for guests staying at Bluefin Bay.

Wolf Ridge partnerships strengthen ecotourism on the North Shore. At Gooseberry Falls State Park, The Naturalist in the Parks positions enhance the public’s awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the natural, cultural, and recreational resources and their management. At Bluefin Bay, guests have the opportunity to learn about the natural history of the North Shore. Both Bluefin Bay and Gooseberry Falls received the benefits of having Wolf Ridge trained naturalists skilled in interpretation of Minnesota’s North Shore. Wolf Ridge further supports its mission through these programs.

Answers From a North Shore Naturalist

The group had seen the Nature Cart along the side of the trail to the waterfalls and stopped by because of their interest in Minnesota’s owls. This Nature Cart is about the size of a child’s lemonade stand, but with owl skulls, talons, and wings on it instead of sugary drinks. I had given them my five minute speech on what makes owls, well...owls, and after teaching them my two favorite owl calls, the Great-horned and the Barred, they began to continue on their way down the trail toward the waterfalls. These are most often attributed to off-shore rocks near the water’s surface. Lake Superior is fresh water and whalebacks are found in salt water.

Ruth Oppedahl (04) recently began working as the E.D. at the Natural Resources Foundation of WI. Margie Menzie (86) has added observing student teachers for UMD to her many jobs. Mike McCall (09) is “working” at a camp in Mankato, MN. Erika Jones (97) is the Ed Program Specialist for the Pro. Ski Instructors of America and the American Assoc. of Snowboard Instructors, based in Denver, CO. Eric Larsen (97) is back in CO from his attempt at riding a fat-tired bike to the South Pole. Angela Betland (99) is the new EE specialist at Majestic View Nature Center in Arvada, CO. Jen Blevins (02) is heading to Haiti for 2 years to do mission work with ReachGlobal. Britany Wierda (04) is the science dept Chair at a Catholic HS in Indianapolis, teaching biology and AP env. science. Katie Colvin (04) is teaching 5th gr in Hermantown, MN and finished her masters in teaching in December. Shayna Sellars (06) is an EE Peace Corp volunteer in Puebla, Mexico. Desiree Laitinen (06) is the new Science Specialist at Chelsea Heights Elem. in St. Paul. Jessie (Henning) Simon (07) and her husband had a baby boy, Charlie, on 11/2/12. Ali (Schaeffe) Vos (09) is now the special education aid and migrant tutor at Rens. To Alex Elm. in Homer, AK. Husband Joel Vos (10) is a park ranger for the USFWS. Emily Brian (10) is working in Duluth as a middle school social studies teacher. Angie Zibor (11) is teaching at Pathfinder Ranch in CA. Sarah Kjorlien (11) is working as the band teacher for the Casa Grande School District in AZ. Paige Scarborough (12) can be found in Alexandria, MN working as a Urban Forester for GreenCorps. Amber Rohloff (12) is teaching biology at E Grand Forks HS. MN. Colette Meller (13) is working for High Mtn Institute in Leadville, CO.
"Look, there’s Scruffy!" Students hurried to the windows and I went with them to catch my first view of a fox that had been frequenting Wolf Ridge’s campus this fall. I wondered briefly if I would see an ill and mangy beast. I clearly saw that Scruffy wasn’t “scruffy” at all. His coat was thick and healthy with a mix of grays and tawny reds. I had heard of Red Foxes (Vulpes vulpes) that were not red and thought this was called a color phase. I was curious to learn more.

My search led me down many interesting paths. First I learned that the term color phase is often misunderstood and misused. Color phase refers to both a seasonal change in the coloration of an animal and a lifetime color variation in an individual of a species. The second definition applied to Scruffy. Science also gives us a clearer term to use — color morphs. All kinds of animals have a variety of color morphs: insects, birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles.

I wondered, “Why do foxes and other animals have color morphs?” This answer was more elusive. We do know that it’s genetically linked. Next I learned about Gloger’s Rule. This rule generally states that animals in hot, humid environments exhibit heavier pigmentation than those found in colder, drier climates. Consider bears, for example. White Polar Bears live in the artice and Black Bears wander temperate regions. There are plenty of exceptions to this rule.

I learned about operational sex ratio. This is the ratio of males ready to mate to females ready to mate. It has been suggested that in humans, varying hair and eye color evolved to attract mates. The presence of potential mates or predators. I wondered, “Why do foxes and other animals have color morphs?” This answer was more elusive. We do know that it’s genetically linked. Next I learned about Gloger’s Rule. This rule generally states that animals in hot, humid environments exhibit heavier pigmentation than those found in colder, drier climates. Consider bears, for example. White Polar Bears live in the artice and Black Bears wander temperate regions. There are plenty of exceptions to this rule.

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Celebrating Forty Years of Environmental Education!

Last September Wolf Ridge celebrated forty years of environmental service by hosting a weekend long event. A fundraising extravaganza opened the weekend at the Glensheen Mansion in Duluth. Saturday was filled with hiking, reminiscing and opportunities to participate in select Wolf Ridge classes. A field trip to the original site of the ELC in Isabella took place as well as a groundbreaking service project for Wolf Ridge’s new organic farm. The event culminated on Sunday with an event honoring Jack Pichotta, Wolf Ridge’s founder and his family. People traveled from all over the country and as far as the UK to attend the event.

Friday Night Fundraiser

The 40th Anniversary Fundraising event was truly a “coming together.” It was a chance to reconnect with old friends and an opportunity to show support for the organization we all love. Behind the scenes was a coming together – Wolf Ridge board members, staff and volunteers. The goal was simple - ensure that everyone gathered around to identify its origins, what I heard expanded my view of this place.

Stories of a Place

by Andrea Wakely, Wolf Ridge Naturalist

of a political rally and a Sunday morning revival church service.”

When it came time for Jack to speak, two things captivated me. One, he began recognizing other people first. He is humble. He then shared a story about Kelly Smith (82) who called the fire department when the dining hall burned down and who had earlier in the day asked him if he had prepared his speech yet. “After Kelly reminded me that I needed to have a speech, I walked and I walked over by the dining hall and I saw a sign out there. Who wrote it?” It said ‘Jack, this is all your fault.’ The room roared with laughter.

The second item that stands out about Jack is that he is a great storyteller. He shares his memories and experiences about the ELC through stories that capture tender moments between people. They are stories about relationships, community, and belonging.

I realized that it would be a disservice to summarize all our experiences into a single word or phrase. We are a community, a community made up of our own personal stories. We are a community, a community that we share with audio recorder in hand, “What stories will people share about their experiences at Wolf Ridge and what can we learn from those stories?”

What I heard expanded my view of this place. Story after story, served as testimony of the impact Wolf Ridge has on people’s lives. A community that we believe in and a place that shapes and influences lives emerged. The stories that stood out to me were captured during a trip to Isabella, the original site of the ELC.

“A million crazy things happened here,” said Doug Hage, a former school teacher who’s been bringing students since 1979. He remembers the time when a bear went through the kitchen window, when students tied a rope around their bellies to do the ropes course, and when no one winced when adults finished off a long day at the Knotted Pine Tavern.

While on a tour of the original ELC sites, Chuck Campbell’s (84) interview was interrupted by shrieks of excitement. There in the middle of the trail was a pile of scat. As everyone gathered around to identify its origins, Chuck laughed and said, “Only this group would stop and explore something like this.”

On Sunday over 200 people gathered in the Science Center to close the weekend’s activities by honoring Jack Pichotta, founder. Tom Berg, Wolf Ridge board chairman, took the microphone and best described the atmosphere by saying, “I feel like I’m at some combination of a political rally and a Sunday morning revival church service.”

Tom Osborn, a retired teacher and current board member, shared an early memory of Jack and the big plans he envisioned for the ELC. He showed parents and teachers drawings and models and shared his ideas with them. After one particular meeting organized by Jack, Osborn remembers hearing a parent say, “He’s kind of a dreamer, isn’t he?”

Andrea Wakely is a Wilds in Environmental Education and wants to focus her stories. The greatest thing I learned from listening to these stories is that the ELC continues to influence the lives of people because of the inspiration we find in each other and our shared experience.

As Jack gazed out at his Wolf Ridge family he reminded us that we are all dreamers and that we share a common vision. “The reality is, it’s really all your fault. We are people looking for a better future for ourselves and for our families.”

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Andrea Wakely is an Apprentice Naturalist at Wolf Ridge from Northfield, MN and attended Wolf Ridge as a 5th grader. She is currently working towards her Masters in Environmental Education and wants to focus her studies on the stories and experiences students recall from their trip to an ELC like Wolf Ridge. She hopes that by exploring the recollection of experiences from students directly, we can better assess the ELC program and foster learning beyond the Wolf Ridge experience.

Andrea Wakely
Upcoming Programs

Day Camp: (1st-7th gr) June 24-28: $165
Summer Sampler: (2nd-5th gr) Aug 14-17: $325
Discoverers: (4th-5th gr) July 14-20, July 28-Aug 3, Aug 4-10, Aug 11-17: $500
Voyageurs: (6th-7th gr) July 7-13, July 14-20, July 21-27, July 28-Aug 3, Aug 4-10, Aug 11-17: $550
Adventurers: (8th-9th gr) July 7-13, July 14-20, July 21-27, July 28-Aug 3, Aug 4-10: $550
Sail the Apostle Islands: (8th-9th gr) Aug 11-17: $790
Canoe the BWCAW Adventurers: (8th-9th gr) July 14-27: $1250
Backpack Isle Royale: (8th-9th gr) July 28-Aug 10: $1250
Canoe the Quetico Jr. Naturalists: (10th-12th gr) July 21-Aug 3: $1300
Kayak the Apostle Islands Jr. Naturalists: (10th-12th gr) Aug 4-17: $1300
Outdoor Explorers: Angling to Archery: (6th-9th gr) July 28-Aug 3: $550
Camp Fish: (7th-8th gr) July 7-13: $500
Canoe the BWCAW: (7th-8th gr) July 7-13: $500
Kayak the Apostle Islands: (9th-10th gr) July 28-Aug 3: $650
Ecology Credit Camp: (10th-12th gr) July 14-Aug 10: $2675
Counselor-in-Training (CIT): (11th-12th gr) Aug 4-17: $1000

Sail the Apostle Islands:

NEW this SUMMER

Counselor-in-Training (CIT)
This two-week program begins with training in teambuilding, communication and leadership activities which occur at Wolf Ridge and on a 4-day backpacking trip. During the second week, CITs become Assistant Counselors under the mentorship of an experienced staff member. Campers with an interest in working as a camp counselor someday will want to consider this option.

Camp Fish
Knowing where the trout, walleyes and northern pike swim and eat comes through an understanding of aquatic sciences. Campers test their new knowledge as anglers on a 3-day, 2-night fishing trip to a handful of lakes in the Superior National Forest.

Angling to Archery
Campers will learn how to effectively and safely operate a bow and arrow at the Wolf Ridge archery range and perfect a myriad of fishing skills while stalking the brook trout of Sawmill Creek and the walleyes of Wolf Lake. Ethics and hunter safety will be a central part of the discussion.

Road Scholar® Grand Adventure for Grandparents & Grandchildren
June 23-28, July 7-12, July 28-Aug 2: $485
Build lasting memories to share with your grandchildren ages 8-12. Become a French-Canadian voyageur and visit our Ojibwe camp. Learn the ecology of forests and streams, and take a day trip to Lake Superior. Some of the other activities include hiking to spectacular overlooks, paddling a canoe under stunning cliffs, and experiencing our Adventure Ropes course and indoor climbing wall. Call Road Scholar at 877-426-8056 to register or go to www.roadscholar.org.

Mark Your Calendars

Open House
June 15, 2013: FREE

Split Rock Half-day Kayak Tours
In July & August: $59/person

Bird Banding
June 5, 12, 26, July 8, 17, 24, & 31
7:00am-noon: FREE

Shop on-line at the Wolf Ridge store:
www.wolf-ridge.org

For more information about Wolf Ridge programs:
1-800-523-2733 (WI, MN, ND)
or 218-353-7414
www.wolf-ridge.org

Payment:
Registrations must be accompanied by a $150 non-refundable deposit. Program fee minus deposit is due at program start.

Payment enclosed:
Donor Member $ Deposit $ Program Fee $ Calendar $ Total $

Check (Payable to Wolf Ridge ELC)
Visa MasterCard Discover

Card #: ___________________________ Exp. Date ____________

Authorized Signature ___________________________
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Wolf Ridge thanks these generous donors:

New Life Members
Nancy Schultz
Peter Spink

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Wolf Ridge is an accredited residential environmental school for persons of all ages. We offer immersion programs which involve direct observation and participation in outdoor experiences. Wolf Ridge programs focus on environmental sciences, human culture and history, personal growth, team-building and outdoor recreation.

Our mission is to develop a citizenry that has the knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment to act together for a quality environment.

We meet our mission by:
- Fostering awareness, curiosity and sensitivity to the natural world.
- Providing lifelong learning experiences in nature.
- Developing social understanding, respect and cooperation.
- Modeling values, behaviors and technologies, which lead to a sustainable lifestyle.
- Promoting the concepts of conservation and stewardship.