

# MASTER OF EDUCATION THESIS DEFENSE

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**Wednesday, August 31, 2011, 9:00 a.m.**

Location: Memorial Hall, Room 417

***The Contribution of Interpretation  
to Visitor Experience in Prince  
Edward Island National Park***

**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the extent to which interpretive programs and media contribute towards five elements of visitors' experience: enjoyment, learning and connection to place as well as attitudes and behaviour towards conservation. Correlations between these elements were sought and the effect of time for reflection was also explored. The study was conducted in the Greenwich section of Prince Edward Island National Park, located along the north shore of the province. Four different experiences were examined: attending a guided park activity, walking a self-interpretive trail without a guide, visiting the Greenwich Interpretation Centre to view exhibits and multi-media show, and visiting Greenwich Beach. The study was mostly quantitative using surveys with a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. The sample population were visitors to the site. An on-site survey was conducted between July and September, 2008 with 107 respondents. Between November 2008 and January 2009, 38 of these on-site participants completed the followup online survey. Findings suggest that there was statistically significant knowledge gain in four identified knowledge dimensions. Non-residents and first-time visitors showed a greater knowledge gain than Island residents and repeat visitors. The majority of participants felt the visit had contributed to their enjoyment and that the interpretive experiences contributed to both their learning and enjoyment. Strong correlations were found between enjoyment, learning and personal attachment as well as between attitudes and behaviour. It was also indicated that immersion in the natural environment, actual or simulated in the interpretation centre, may enhance learning.