Mining Our Heritage: Oral History and Place-Based Learning in the Adirondacks

Christine Campeau, Skidmore College

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Patricia West McKay

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Dale Willman

Abstract
Cultural history museums and historic sites recognize the power of storytelling to engage and educate their visitors. Public schools ingrained in a standards-based curriculum often overlook the value of family stories and local history. The emerging discipline of place-based education offers a pedagogical approach that uses the local community as the focal point, providing a unique curriculum that extends beyond the traditional school walls. Oral history is a fundamental methodology for connecting students to regional history and culture, and is an ideal introduction to the broader theoretical perspective of place-based education. This research explores the concept of using oral history to initiate a place-based program of study by using excerpts from interviews archived at the Adirondack Museum. These narratives offer a glimpse into the richly compelling history of the mining industry in the Adirondacks and form the basis for a place-based unit of study.

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