The Foreign and The Familiar

International programs benefit wilderness risk management
Overview

- Understand the unique variables present in international settings
- Utilize the strengths of international risk management towards more effective wilderness risk management
- Recognize how greater awareness of cultural and social demands can drive more intentional program management and outcomes
Nepal Earthquake - 2015

- April 25 at around noon, 7.5, multiple aftershocks up to 6.8
- One day up a trail in the Nar Phu Valley
- 12 hours from nearest airport - Pokhara, uncertain road conditions
- Steep canyon, no satellite phone

Learning:
- 5 days to evac from Kathmandu
  - If safe, stay safe
  - Go slowly
  - Trust instructors
Unique Variables
Unique variables lead to valuable insight

Unique variables

A. Considerably different subjective and objective hazards
B. Socio-political and intercultural risks
C. Communication challenges
D. Increased disparity between perceived and actual risks
E. Cultural perceptions of risk and risk tolerance
F. Variable medical infrastructure – many medical responses are “wilderness” responses
G. Unknown and sometimes unknowable hazards

Valuable insight

A. Strong relationships and human connection
B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness
● Course Start
● Transitions
● Transference

Leverage Points

● Effective proactive risk management
Course Start

- 72-hour curriculum
- Positive Learning Env
- Group container
Transitions

- High risk and high learning
- Proper framing
- Use ceremony and ritual
Course-end & transference

- Manage emotional risks
- Use ceremony and mark rite of passage
- Schedule it in
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Relationships and human connections

- Leaders have most influence over subjective hazards
- Trust building in personal relationships
- Inter-personal skills as a technical skill
- Avalanche decision making triangle
Unique variables lead to valuable insight

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Valuable insight

A. Strong relationships and human connection required
B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness
Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

- Requires a focus on identity
- Pushes group norms and group culture-building
- Participant agreements have concrete repercussions
- Opens necessity for student-centered design as opposed to a cookie-cutter
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Valuable insight

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Managing perceived and actual risks

- Top rope rock climbing vs. backpacking
- Paris vs. Tibet
- Violent crime
- Oh, and then there’s the plague!
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Valuable insight

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D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness
Complexity improves planning and awareness

- Novelty is good for the brain
- Need higher leader ratio, with more varied experience
- Checklist of pre-departure tasks and importance of follow-through
- Student participation - creating risk managers
- Consistent need for expedition behavior
Discuss

Leverage Points:

A. Pre-course/Course Start
B. Transitions
C. Course End/Transference

4 Areas of insight:

A. Strong relationships and human connection
B. Cultural awareness and sensitivity
C. Understand and manage perceived risks AND actual risks
D. Program complexity and dynamic environments create improved preparation, planning, and awareness
Action Steps

a. Create a clear plan and curriculum for building rapport and healthy relationships within your groups, regardless of your program objectives - create structure for course orientation

b. Identify areas where low perceived risk may be creating complacency in your risk management

c. Evaluate the program complexity barriers to addressing risk management in your program and commit to two approaches that overcome these hurdles by converting these complications into better preparation.
Questions?

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