

NOLS DEI Cultural Humility Training

ChatGPT perspective

“Cultural Humility Training can be a valuable tool for promoting understanding and respect for different cultures and backgrounds. It can help individuals recognize and challenge their own biases and assumptions, and develop the skills to effectively communicate and work with people from diverse backgrounds. It can also help organizations create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members . . .

*Additionally, it is important to have a well-designed, culturally responsive, and inclusive curriculum and program, **led by well-trained facilitators and professionals with lived experiences**. This can ensure that the training is effective and that the right messages are being conveyed.”*

NOLS faculty as CHT facilitators in the wilderness

Let’s assume NOLS has competent facilitators to teach Cultural Humility Training to NOLS faculty in its classrooms. How many of these newly minted CHT NOLS faculty would then be qualified as “well-trained facilitators and professionals with lived experiences” to take students into the wilderness and lead DEI and CHT discussions by themselves on their own?

If a portion of faculty are too young without lived experience yet are required by their NOLS syllabus to lead DEI and CHT discussions, what are the consequences? Those faculty are being set up to fail; discussions can easily become acrimonious and the debate widen to include the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ukraine, abortion rights, January 6th insurrection, climate change, etc. This is not hypothetical; this is happening on courses now. The group splits into factions, and the course faculty cannot achieve the NOLS’ Mission.

NOLS student experience

Instead of a positive life-changing NOLS experience in the wilderness, students experience psychological distress on courses when inexperienced NOLS faculty let DEI and CHT discussions get out of hand. Would anyone want to be the boy who has dual Israel/US citizenship and be told that Israel is oppressing Palestinians? Would anyone want their course evaluation grade to be lowered as a result of being on the wrong side of a DEI discussion with an instructor? This is not hypothetical; this is happening now.

The NOLS Board needs to address whether or not CHT training, when taken into the wilderness on expeditions, helps the faculty achieve NOLS’s Mission and students have a positive life-changing experience. If we were ChatGPT, we would simply answer “No”.