



The Wild Center
Northern New York Maple Project
Final Evaluation Report

Submitted by:
Kirsten S. Büchner
Insight Evaluation Services
Fairfax, VA

October 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

DISCUSSION 5

RECOMMENDATIONS 8

INTRODUCTION 10

METHODS 10

FINDINGS 12

1. Participants’ motivations to get involved with the Maple Project..... 12

2. Participants’ experience with the Maple Project 17

3. Specific conections participants made through the Maple Project 24

4. Additional benefits of the Maple Project perceived by participants 35

APPENDIX..... 41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, The Wild Center (TWC) engaged Insight Evaluation Services (IES) to assess the impact of specific outreach activities of the Northern New York Maple Project between September 2013 and September 2015. Data for this two-year evaluation study were collected via in-depth telephone interviews conducted with a total of 25 participants, as follows:

Year One—five Tupper Tappers (Tupper Lake area residents who engaged in backyard tapping to provide sap for syrup production at the museum through the Community Maple Project);

Year Two—11 Tupper Tappers, four local school teachers who signed up for the Community Maple School Program, three Maple Interns who were hired by TWC to carry out Maple Project outreach activities, and two restaurant owners who promoted Maple Project syrup through their businesses.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that The Wild Center successfully positioned itself as a community anchor through its Community Maple Project and Community Maple School Program outreach activities by:

- 1) Playing a large role in organizing and facilitating backyard tapping among area residents and school children;
- 2) Attracting locals to have greater interest in and engagement with TWC to learn more about the museum's sugaring efforts, as well as to learn more about other programs and initiatives taking place at TWC;
- 3) Bringing together people who live in the Tupper Lake area to work towards a common goal that in turn, had benefits for those involved that went beyond the production of maple syrup.

Please refer to Table 1 on the next page for an at-a-glance summary of the findings.

A detailed presentation of these findings continues in the body of the report beginning on page 10.

Table 1. Summary of findings by participant

Participants	Motivations	Experience	Specific Connections	Other Benefits
Tupper Tappers (n=16)* *Year One = 5 Year Two = 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support TWC Explore potential of backyard resource Resume/pass on childhood traditions Possible income stream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying levels of involvement based on sap collecting options provided by TWC and other external factors Visiting the sugar shack Marking time with maple season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others: New/renewed connections to area residents, fellow Tappers, family, TWC Forest/Nature: Enhanced appreciation for Adirondack lifestyle, nature's role in maple production Past: Reminder of past experience with sugaring and/or new insight into role of sugaring in local history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New knowledge/appreciation for sugaring process, incl. time and effort needed, sap/syrup look/taste/use, technical aspects of production; appreciation for effort to educate the next generation
School Teachers (n=4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expose students to backyard resource Expose students to nature/outdoors Appeal of multi-sensory, multi-part program Recognition of TWC's quality programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to link to other subjects/concepts Multiple entry points for students to access content Option to provide additional content support Exposed students to other career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others: Reinforced students' connections to TWC, others in the community Forest/Nature: New ways of seeing trees, awareness that maple trees produce syrup and so must be protected Past: Little to none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community and belonging Pride in maple as a locally sourced product
Maple Interns (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeal of hands-on work outdoors Support natural food movement Desire to learn more about sugaring Paid employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interact with local community, including Tupper Tappers and local school teachers/students, to carry out project responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others: Connections with fellow interns, area residents. Forest/nature: Visceral connections, renewed appreciation for outdoors, nature's role in maple production Past: New insight into role of sugaring in local history, reminder of past experience with sugaring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciation for TWC as central to the project, asset to community Optimism for future of town/region Sense of gratification in helping TWC
Restaurant Owners (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfy customers Support locally sourced product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote TWC/Tappers via maple syrup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others: Connections to patrons, Tappers. Forest/Nature: Renewed appreciation for ability of maple trees to produce syrup Past: Little to none 	

DISCUSSION

As Nina Simon prompts museums to consider, “community engagement” can be a vague notion. Simon posits that it is important to define the “who” and the “how” so that a given program aimed at engaging a community can effectively live out that claim and therefore—IES would argue—begin to have an impact on those it purports to engage.¹ Based on the findings of this two-year evaluation, IES concludes that The Wild Center can point to the Community Maple Project and Community Maple School Program outreach activities of the Northern New York Maple Project as useful examples of what Simon’s vision of community engagement might look like. In this case, TWC designed and developed an opportunity for year-round residents of Tupper Lake to join in a local effort to produce fresh syrup from the maple trees in their own backyards for all those involved to then receive and enjoy. With TWC as the hub of this effort, the residents and other participants who signed up for the purpose of simply supporting the museum and/or satisfying a personal interest/desire/goal came away from their experience benefitting in a number of ways, including feeling a sense of belonging and pride in their community, as well as a sense of hope for its future.

Enlisting local area residents to be Tupper Tappers was central to the concept behind the Maple Project. While about half of the residents had some prior experience with sugaring (i.e., when they were children and/or the maple industry was more prevalent in the New York region), making syrup is a daunting process to take up on one’s own whether or not one has the know-how. As such, the museum hired seasonal employees, Maple Interns, to help residents as much or as little as they needed or desired to carry out each step of the process; TWC took responsibility for boiling the sap and turning it into syrup. While Tappers were thrilled to get back a bottle of syrup at the end of each year, they overwhelmingly agreed that their involvement in the project had an impact on them in a number of ways.

Specifically, Tappers said they learned more about sugaring and gained appreciation for the “very intensive work” that is required during the 3-4 weeks that follow the moment the sap starts to run. Tappers were also excited to learn about the many ways that sap/syrup can look and taste and noted how maple can be used to make/enhance various foods and beverages. Several Tappers became so interested in the maple production process that they attended conferences and lectures on the more technical aspects of sugaring and issues regarding the industry. Tappers also had a very strong affective response to their experience in the Maple Project, in particular with the personal connections they made to others, the forest or nature, and sugaring traditions of the past that the project activities afforded. For example, Tappers said they got to know or reacquaint themselves with fellow Tappers and other town residents when they were out and about in town, saw Maple Project buckets hanging on neighbors’ trees or stopped at the sugar shack to drop off their sap and/or see how the boiling was going. Indeed, the sugar shack became somewhat of a “little community center” in that it encouraged people to stay and talk with the Maple Interns who were inside working, as well as with others who happened to be there at the same time, thereby lending an important social component to

¹ N. Simon. (2015, April 22) Museum 2.0: “How do you define community?” Retrieved from http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2015/04/how-do-you-define-community.html#disqus_thread

the project. Tappers also mentioned that going out to tap with their spouses and/or children and later enjoying the syrup together reinforced relationships with family. This was especially true for those who participated with younger children; not only was it an opportunity to appreciate the process through their eyes but it also began a tradition of tapping and marking the coming of spring that they could take into adulthood.

In fact, participation in the Maple Project also prompted fond memories of Tappers' own past experiences with sugaring. In addition, Tappers said they gained insight into the historical role that maple production once played in Tupper Lake. IES would conclude that these particular connections helped Tappers to appreciate their Adirondack home that much more, and likely contributed to the feeling of pride for a product that "Mother Nature provided to us." Thus, participation in the Maple Project reinforced Tappers' appreciation for the outdoor lifestyle that they have consciously chosen for themselves by living in the Adirondacks. Certainly the activities involved with tapping resonated with those Tappers who engage in other homesteading hobbies or work in the environmental field. Some also noted that the Maple Project helped them appreciate the way nature supports the sugaring process and therefore reinforced the importance of protecting the forest.

Interviews with teachers indicated that this connection to the forest and nature was also evident among the students who participated in The Wild Center's maple programming at their school. Teachers said that by experiencing the sugaring process first hand from beginning to end, students learned that "the yummy stuff they put on their pancakes" actually comes from trees, and as such trees must be cared for. Students also learned to look more closely at trees (i.e., to determine if they are maples) and appreciate that their Adirondack home has "neat things that happen" that are unique to their area. Indeed, the Maple Project fostered students' connections to their community when they started to notice the TWC sap collecting buckets around their neighborhoods; students also felt motivated to return to the museum with their parents so they could show them what they had been learning about the sugaring operation there. For teachers, the maple programming afforded the opportunity to link to other subjects and concepts—even career options—in a very tangible way, and teachers appreciated the multiple ways that students could access content. In terms of content, teachers did note it was primarily science-based, and as such the historical role of sugaring in the area was not really explored in any depth, if at all; however, a couple of teachers mentioned that students would have the opportunity to connect with the past when they visited the Adirondack Museum later on.

Teaching the next generation of Tupper Lake residents about maple production was an important aspect of the Maple Project. Certainly for the Maple Interns who were responsible for carrying out the activities of the project, their interactions with school students—and the children of young families with whom they came into contact—seemed to be a particularly enjoyable component of their job. Clearly passionate about their jobs, the Interns appreciated the children's excitement about tapping and recognized the impact the Maple Project was having on them and their community as a whole. Although the Maple Interns had signed on to the Maple Project in part for the opportunity to work outdoors, getting to know the residents of Tupper Lake as they made the rounds in the museum's sap collecting truck or chatted with

them in the sugar shack appeared to be a welcome bonus, and they clearly came to feel connected to the community through these encounters. Because Interns did spend a significant portion of their time outside, they also came to feel more connected to the forest and nature; their appreciation for the role that nature plays in the sugaring process was evident, and Interns mentioned the excitement they felt when the sap first started to run. As they continued their work with the Maple Project, Interns additionally gained insight into the area's history with maple and the methods people used to make syrup in those same forests in the past. Through public education programs, Interns conveyed their new knowledge, as well as the reasons people would have sugared on their own. Moreover, Interns hoped the project could help participants appreciate current reasons for sugaring, including that eating natural food has a number of health benefits (another reason that Interns themselves became involved in the project).

In fact, the increasing demand for locally produced food was one of the main reasons that local restaurant owners said they were interested in putting Maple Project syrup on the menu. As they became aware of the need to satisfy customers' requests for real maple syrup, restaurant owners felt the syrup produced at The Wild Center would be a way to support the Tappers who provided the sap, as well as would serve to promote the museum among summer visitors to the area. In offering the syrup, restaurant owners said it became a way to connect with out of town tourists, as well as with locals who came in and recognized themselves in photos and promotional materials provided by TWC about the Tappers and Maple Project. Another connection that restaurant owners said they made was to the forest and nature, echoing the feelings of appreciation that other participants had for the ability of trees to produce "something delicious." While they personally expressed a preference for real syrup based on their previous experience with this food, owners' felt little connection to the area's history of sugaring, a finding which is not surprising given their relatively limited participation in the project.

Overall, participants came away feeling very positive about their experience with the Maple Project. Not only did they gain new awareness of the maple production process, but they agreed it was important to pass on this knowledge to the next generation of Tupper Lake residents. Participants credited The Wild Center for their efforts to revitalize a sugaring tradition in Tupper Lake by calling on the community to join with the museum in creating a tangible product that all could enjoy. In doing so, the project gave participants a sense of common purpose and fostered hope it could help "restore" their small town, i.e. by creating new jobs and encouraging young people to come and work and ultimately raise their own families there. Thus, participants expressed, indirectly if not outright, a strong desire for the Maple Project to continue, certainly for the immediate benefits they get, but also for the long-term possibilities that this collaboration presents. To that end, some participants offered their suggestions for ways that The Wild Center could keep the project going. Their ideas (repeated from the report), along with those proposed by IES, follow on the next page.

Recommendations

- Suggestions from participants for ways the Maple Project might continue to be implemented included the following: hiring full-time staff to manage the project throughout the year and thereby alleviate the pressure of getting trees identified, tap lines set up, wood chopped, and syrup bottled, marketed and distributed within the “intensive” few weeks that the sap runs; keeping TWC open during April when it is usually closed so that tourists and others can visit the sugar shack and see the maple production equipment running; beginning tapping of the maple trees on the large adjoining property that the museum has recently acquired; encouraging more families to participate.
- As one person commented in response to Ms. Simon’s April 22 blog post, “A challenge for museums and other cultural institutions is moving people from the short term community of consumers to longer term communities involving greater commitments of time and treasure; where personal and community identity are intertwined.”² In support of this perspective, and as stated in more practical terms by one of the Maple Interns, “A lot of work ends up resting on our shoulders and I think the community should take on some of those responsibilities...they need to band together to keep the program running.” While the issue at hand is how to continue to implement the Community Maple Project in a way that does not put an undue burden on The Wild Center’s limited resources, perhaps the greater objective is to determine how the community can take more ownership of this effort and ultimately “intertwine personal and community identity.” In a similar way that TWC hosted the “Wintergreen Discussion” a few years ago to identify ways to address climate change issues affecting winter tourism in the Tupper Lake area, the museum could invite Tappers and other participants to come together to help identify ways to ensure the longevity of the project—and ideally make commitments to make that support happen.
- As far as the Community Maple School Program, one suggestion is for The Wild Center (in collaboration with the more experienced teachers at the local elementary school) to identify how their maple programming lines up with curriculum standards and/or provide ideas for other activities that tie into or complement program content. Such resources could be helpful to teachers new to the field and/or the school, as well for teachers in other school districts where sugaring also takes place, and thereby maximize the impact of the museum’s maple programming. Another suggestion is to expand the Community Maple School Program through middle school; while tweens as a general demographic are at an age when they may start to pull away from or become less interested in doing science or visiting museums, they still enjoy opportunities to engage in multi-sensory hands-on activities which the Maple Project certainly provides and could augment so that programming is age appropriate. Finally, The Wild Center should consider giving all teachers a limited number of free passes to give to those students they know may not otherwise have the means to visit with their family; this eliminates

² Ibid.

their having to go to the library (if the teacher remembers to make families aware of this option) to borrow passes in order to go to the museum.

- In support of a comment made by one of the restaurant owners who were interviewed, The Wild Center may need to establish a reminder system for distributing promotional materials on a regular basis so that restaurants and other establishments that are frequented by tourists and other visitors to the area always have them available to distribute (i.e., rather than wait until they run out and have to call for more). In addition, TWC might consider offering their pancake breakfast in selected restaurants or other places where the local community gathers (e.g., the neighborhood school) so that in effect the museum is reaching out to its target audiences where they are rather than necessarily having them come to the museum to participate; other ideas for community outreach programs at restaurants and similar venues might include talks on food/nutrition that also include cooking demonstrations and tastings.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2013, The Wild Center (TWC) received funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to expand the Northern New York Maple Project (NNYMP), a successful pilot project designed to connect the local community to nature through the art, story and science of maple sugaring. Through a number of different outreach activities, the hope was that the Maple Project would begin to revitalize a cultural, historical, economic and natural resource tradition in Tupper Lake and the North Country region of New York State.

In support of this effort, The Wild Center engaged Insight Evaluation Services (IES) to conduct a two-year evaluation of the NNYMP, specifically of the Community Maple Project and Sugarhouse, a primary outreach activity that engaged area residents in backyard tapping and syrup production at TWC. In Year One (2013-14), IES worked with TWC to implement a preliminary investigation of the experience of a few families who were participating in the Maple Project since it had first been piloted in 2012.³ The evaluation in Year One served to inform the evaluation in Year Two (2014-15), which again assessed the experience of families, as well as that of other project participants, including Maple Interns who were hired by TWC to carry out the Maple Project, teachers at the local elementary school where the Community Maple School Program took place, and restaurant owners who agreed to promote the maple syrup through their businesses. Ultimately, the evaluation sought to gather evidence regarding the impact of the Maple Project by determining the following:

- Participants' motivations to get involved with the Maple Project,
- Participants' experience (s) with the Maple Project, and
- Connections participants made to others in the community, the forest/nature, and sugaring traditions of the past as a result of their experience.

In addition, The Wild Center was interested in learning about the benefits participants felt they and their community gained as a result of their experience with the Maple Project.

Methods

IES worked with The Wild Center to develop a semi-structured telephone interview guide that asked a series of open-ended questions designed to address the main evaluation goals. Over the evaluation period, the museum identified 25 participants who were representative of the maximum potential of the Maple Project to be interviewed by IES each year: In Year One, this included five "Tupper Tappers" or area residents who signed up to tap the maple trees on their property; in Year Two, this included 11 Tupper Tappers, four school teachers, three Maple Interns, and two restaurant owners (See the Appendix for copies of the interview guides for each of these participant groups).

³ Please see *Northern New York Maple Project: Year One Assessment* submitted by Insight Evaluation Services in June 2014.

Table 2 provides a general description of the sample; while demographic information was not collected, IES determined the gender breakdown of participants based on contextual information provided by TWC and/or during phone calls.

Table 2. General description of sample.

Characteristics of Participants	Participants (n=25)
Tupper Tappers	
Male	11
Female	5
School Teachers	
Male	1
Female	3
Maple Interns	
Male	1
Female	2
Restaurant Owners	
Male	1
Female	1

Interviews were conducted after each maple season during the evaluation period, that is to say May 2014 in Year One and June 2015 in Year Two. Conversations averaged about 30-45 minutes each; this report presents the findings from all data collected. Specifically, participant responses were analyzed qualitatively by looking for patterns and creating categories that allowed for similar responses to be grouped together and tallied. Response categories are presented in order of frequency mentioned. Examples of participants' responses are used as evidence to support the analysis, as well as to provide the reader with the opportunity to appreciate participants' thoughts in their own words. Quotes may be edited for length and clarity. To preserve their anonymity, participants are identified only by the group in which they were in, i.e., Tupper Tapper, school teacher, Maple Intern or restaurant owner.

FINDINGS

I. Participants' motivations to get involved with the Maple Project.

The Wild Center was interested in understanding participants' motivations in order to gain insight into the ways the Maple Project has met its goals to date, as well as to inform ways to encourage continued community involvement. As described below, Tupper Tappers, school teachers, Maple Interns, and Tupper Lake restaurant owners were each motivated to participate in the Maple Project for a number of different reasons.

TUPPER TAPPERS (n=16)⁴

How they heard about the Maple Project:

Prior to explaining their reasons for signing up, Tappers commented on the variety of ways they first heard about the Maple Project including through their position as volunteers at The Wild Center (four mentions, including two who added they were already sugaring on their own and were asked specifically to help get the project started), word of mouth (three mentions), the local area newspaper (three mentions), TWC member newsletter, the maple exhibit at TWC, and the Maple Project buckets with the museum logo hanging on neighbors' trees (two mentions each). One other Tapper indicated that he essentially brought the idea of the Maple Project to the museum: "I originally talked with them to see if there'd be interest because I saw the museum as a great venue to promote the industry and they just embraced it."

Why they participated:

Opportunity to support The Wild Center/community. Nine Tappers said they were motivated to participate in the Maple Project because it felt like a good way to "give back" to the community (see first two representative quotes below). Of these, two who were TWC volunteers felt that signing up to be Tappers was another way to help get other people in the community involved too (see quote at the beginning of the next page).

"Even though we didn't grow up here, we've been here 15 years. It's our home and we want to see it thrive. This is a community project and The Wild Center was very clear they wanted the community involved."

"We have always been interested in supporting The Wild Center in general. And when they started the Tupper Tapper thing, we said 'Yes, come and tap our tree.'"

⁴ IES interviewed five Tupper Tappers in Year One and 11 in Year Two, for a total of 16 Tappers. The results of these conversations are presented as a whole unless otherwise noted.

“I’m a volunteer here at the museum since before they opened in 2004 and I have been doing maple here at my home in a very primitive form....I was asked by the museum to talk about my experiences with maple because what I was doing was so different at the time...I think they felt that what I was doing was closer to the home experience that someone could have in their backyard...”

Curiosity about the potential of a backyard resource. Seven Tappers said they were motivated to participate because they had maple trees on their property and wondered what they could derive from that resource:

“We’d never done anything in the forest that we have before. So the project makes you aware of the potential, just with the maple trees in the yard. I started to count them and said ‘holy cow!’ We’ve always had these trees and when this project come out [sic], we realized what we could do...”

“(My friends) are docents at TWC and they got me interested in it. They took me to a pancake breakfast where they showed a film that really peaked my interest...it showed that New York has huge potential (for maple syrup production). That impressed me so I thought I should check my property and see if I can do this.”

Opportunity to resume a childhood tradition. Five Tappers said another reason they were motivated to participate was their enjoyment of sugaring season when they were children, with one adding that the project was a way for him to introduce his young son to sugaring:

“My grandfather had a sugar bush. My mother told us stories...and it sounded like quite the adventure. When I was growing up...there was a sugar bush not far from my house and we’d go and watch the production and buy the syrup...”

“When I was younger I grew up around a farm area where we used to do tapping in the old style and I wanted my son to experience the maple sugaring process.”

Possibility of a future income stream. Four Tappers felt the Maple Project might be a way to “start something on our own,” such as a home business or even a new cottage industry in the area.⁵ As one explained:

“We live on 110 acres and it’s nothing but woods behind us and we have lots of maple trees. We read in the newspaper that (The Wild Center) was trying to get a maple sugaring process going and we thought how cool it would be to get our own little sugar shack going someday down the road.”

⁵ This reason emerged only in Year One, which suggests that in Year Two the focus was more on the community aspect of the project and less on its income potential for small business entrepreneurs.

SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=4)

How they heard about the Maple Project:

The teachers interviewed indicated their school has a very good relationship with The Wild Center (e.g., “We call it our other classroom”), and as such are in close communication about upcoming programs. When TWC offered the Maple Project, teachers listed different reasons to participate, as described below.

Why they participated:

Exposure to a backyard resource. All four teachers interviewed said they were motivated to participate because “it is something right in our backyard”, for example:

“The program shows (students) that something good literally flows from the trees outside.”

“I definitely want my students to know their surroundings, that they are not just living here, but they are really learning and knowing the names of the trees and how maple syrup is made and the history. I want to expose my students to all the processes surrounding them; how and why things happen here in the Adirondacks.”

Exposure to nature. One teacher said another reason for participating was that “as a teacher, your job is to make students more well-rounded and learning about the outside world.” She further explained:

“Although we live in the Adirondacks and we are surrounded by it, many kids here are like kids in urban areas in that they are plugged in to their electronics...By exposing them to the maple trees and the forest, you are hopefully instilling a love of nature.”

Opportunity for a multi-sensory and multi-part program. Two teachers noted that another reason to participate was the fact that the program would consist of “more than one presentation” to take place both in school and at the museum. One added that she appreciated the fact that “the kids would go outside and see the sap coming out, they would use tools to tap the trees, they would hear the sap pinging in the bucket, and they would taste it.”

TWC offers quality programs that work with teachers’ schedules. One teacher noted that another reason to participate was “how great the programs are from The Wild Center,” adding that “when you see a program from them, you just take it.” He further explained:

“They make it so, so easy for busy teachers: they send you a list with times, we sign up for the one that works for us, they come to the classroom, and they bring the curriculum and all the materials.”

MAPLE INTERNS (n=3)

How they heard about the Maple Project:

Of the three Maple Interns interviewed, two explained that they found out about the program through an advertisement for a “seasonal naturalist position” at TWC. The third “Intern” indicated he was actually a temporary employee who was hired by TWC staff to provide assistance with a specific aspect of the project, including mainly the management of the sugar shack. As such, their motivations to participate differed, as described below.

Why they participated:

Opportunity to do hands-on work in the outdoors. Two of the Interns said they were motivated to participate in the project because “naturalist work is hands-on” and “it would be a great opportunity to get outside (as well as) a fun way to be active in the spring time.”

Opportunity to support the natural food movement. Two of the Interns said another reason they were motivated to participate was that they are “into the natural food movement and eating locally produced food.” As such, helping to produce real maple syrup would be another way to live out their interest and pursuit of that effort.

Desire to learn more about sugaring. Two of the Interns said they were interested in the Maple Project because they wanted to learn more about maple syrup production, both historically and in modern times.

“I’m interested in the history behind sugaring, how far it dates back and it being a staple for the Northeast.”

“I grew up...on fake syrup and never knew fresh syrup existed until later in life...I thought it was interesting that it came out of a tree. There are so many trees here, so I thought (making it) would be a new skill to learn...”

Opportunity for employment. The Intern/temporary employee learned there was an opening in the Maple Project upon asking staff about the availability of paying jobs “and so I was a helping hand (my first year) and then I became the sugar maker this year....”

RESTAURANT OWNERS (n=2)

How they heard about the Maple Project:

Restaurant owners who were interviewed said they learned about the Maple Project through TWC staff who frequent their restaurants and invited them to participate.

Why they participated:

Potential to satisfy customers. The restaurant owners explained that “people ask for real maple syrup all the time.” Thus, when owners had the opportunity to taste the syrup produced by The Wild Center, they found it to be “delicious” and decided it was something they should offer their customers.

Opportunity to support a local organization/product. Both owners added that by offering Maple Project syrup to their customers, they would be supporting The Wild Center and the Tupper Tappers who provide the sap. As one noted: “It’s local, so that’s important.”

II. *Participants' experience with the Maple Project.*

Participants' involvement in the Maple Project varied by group. That is to say, Tupper Tappers, school teachers, Maple Interns, and Tupper Lake restaurant owners had different experiences given their roles in the project. The feedback obtained clearly showed that The Wild Center made it "so easy" to be part of the project in some form—especially because the museum played such a large part in facilitating and supporting that participation, and signing up provided new and welcome opportunities for all those interviewed.

TUPPER TAPPERS (n=16)

The Maple Project offered Tappers the option of tapping their own trees or having The Wild Center tap their trees for them. Tappers could then choose to take their sap over to the museum, or have the Maple Interns come pick it up. The sap was boiled at the museum's "sugar shack" and once sugaring was complete, all Tappers received some syrup (with the quantity of syrup being dependent on the amount of sap their trees had produced).

Appreciation for the option to be involved as little or as much as desired. Specifically, nine Tappers indicated they tapped their own trees and then took the sap to the museum. Tappers said they chose this option because it allowed them to be "more involved" with the project (three mentions), they wanted to help TWC/Maple Interns (three mentions)⁶, it was within their knowledge/ability to do so and/or because "if you take the sap in yourself, you get 60% (of what your contribution of sap yields)." See representative quotes below:

"I went to the TWC and they gave me some taps and buckets and bags and explained what to do and I came home and did it. TWC offered to come down and do it, but I said I'd do it myself. I've lived here all my life so I know the difference between a maple tree and a cherry tree. Then you take the sap up to TWC and you get a chance to visit with everyone there."

"We have one maple tree and (the first year) we agreed to let TWC tap it and their volunteers collected the sap. But for the past couple of years, we have been collecting our sap and the sap from five other neighbors on the street. We collected the sap so TWC didn't have to send their Interns. It's hard work for them and on our street, all the trees are very close so it was easy collecting. We carried the buckets to the back of our Subaru and brought it to the sugar shack."

"I volunteered to take the sap in myself, which means you got 60% back in syrup; if TWC picks it up, you get 50%...you have to empty the bags every day because the sap spoils quickly."

⁶ Indeed, these Tappers noted that they had been sugaring on their own before the Maple Project got started, so initially their participation was that of advisors to the museum, providing guidance on how to get others in the community involved in a collaborative effort to produce maple syrup. As the project continued, these Tappers continued to work closely with The Wild Center.

The other seven Tappers who were interviewed indicated they relied on the museum to take care of all or most of the process for them. These Tappers indicated they chose this option because they either did not have the time to collect the sap on their own (three mentions), there were logistical issues to collecting/transporting sap (e.g., the distance they live from the museum is too far to drive every day, in particular with large quantities of sap; two mentions), and/or they had other limitations, such as a physical impediment (two mentions):

“It was a win-win. I have lots of huge maple trees in my yard. TWC came and tapped them, they collected the sap, they boiled it, and at the end, they gave me a bottle of syrup. It was so nice not to have to do all that...”

“TWC offered to let us tap the trees, but I have an injured arm so I’m not able to do it. But I walked around with (the Maple Interns) and pointed out the maple trees we have and then they determined if they would be good for tapping. They also picked up the bags every evening.”

“We live five miles from TWC and we’re not always able to bring in the sap (so) we do rely on (the Interns to do that) quite a bit.”

“TWC called us and said this is when we’re looking to start tapping. They supplied us with taps and buckets and they came out and showed us how to tap the trees. We have lots of maple trees. We went snowshoeing through the backyard. Our girls were involved in helping us collect the sap. In the first year, we tapped 20 trees. The next year I think we did 50. The hard part is that we live 5 miles from TWC and so we weren’t always able to bring in the sap. Every day we’d have TWC come pick it up or we’d take it in so the sap didn’t go bad.”

Meeting up at the sugar shack. Thirteen Tappers noted that they made a point of stopping by The Wild Center to watch the boiling, whether they were dropping off their sap themselves or had had the Maple Interns pick up their sap to take to the museum. Tappers said they enjoyed seeing their sap get turned into syrup, as well as the opportunity the sugar shack afforded to talk with TWC staff and other Tappers/residents who happened to be there at the same time:

“I’d go to the sugar shack sometimes and see how the boiling was going and talk to (the Maple Interns) and have a taste.” (Tapper)

“Often when you drop off the syrup, there are three or four other guys there. It was late afternoon and there were people I knew. You talk about what’s going in the sugar shack. The collecting part is a bit solitary, but the sugar shack is a nice little community center, you talk to your neighbors there. I was going daily or every other day and I’d spend like half an hour there.” (Tapper)

Marking time with maple season. Seven Tappers explained that their experience led them to begin looking forward to sugaring as a “harbinger of spring.” Specifically Tappers said they got tired of being housebound all winter and the Maple Project gave them a reason to go outside, check their trees for sap production, and remind them that spring is on the way:

“In the winter, it’s cold so we’re not able to be out as much. But this project gave us the motivation, the push, to get out there, to have the girls go out in the fresh air and be right out in the backyard...”

“The winter was very long this year. The program gives (my) kids something to look forward to; they know spring is coming when the sap starts to run. It’s a good morale booster.”

“We can go out to our trees and see the fluctuating temperatures—the sap starts to run as the temperatures go up—and we know we are headed in the right direction. That’s why (sugaring) is called “a ritual of spring” and you’re not just reading about it in a book, you’re seeing it happen.”

SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=4)

The Community Maple School Program was comprised of three interactions, including one classroom visit by the Maple Interns to introduce students to the topic, one classroom trip to the museum's sugar shack, and one more classroom visit to reinforce concepts. Teachers talked about the experiences that these interactions gave them and their students:

Opportunity to link to other subjects/concepts. All four teachers mentioned at least one subject or concept that the Maple Project content linked to, including science (four mentions), the environment, music (three mentions each), nature/natural processes, math, cooking (two mentions each), habitats, writing, history, and/or nutrition (one mention each). See representative quotes below:

"The Interns came to class and they walked the kids through the science of sap: where it comes from, how it is extracted from the tree and that whole cycle, the micro life cycle of that ecosystem...then we went outside, right up to one of our maple trees. But we didn't tap it right then because the Interns realized it was not the right conditions, and I thought it was such a great teachable moment to show the kids that the right conditions have to be there..."

"We would always try to tie it into a writing activity and we would try to tie in poetry and singing with it. One year we made our own pancake breakfast; one year we made maple muffins, the kids and I. I always tied the program into healthy eating, so comparing homemade syrup to the one you buy in the store and talking about high fructose corn syrup (that is used to sweeten the store bought version)... As much as I could I tied the program to the natural environment because of what the trees provide for us—we talked about the parts of the tree, the functions of all the parts of the tree. We talked about chlorophyll and how the bark protects the tree... We talked about what trees provide for people as well as other creatures; we did tons of work on habitat. So (the Maple Project) is just a perfect tie in."

"It's a good science program. This year the Interns did a song to learn about the sugaring process, then they went outside and identified the trees...One of our teachers started something called 'Adirondack Day' so the children become aware of what's going on, become aware of where they live. One year we made maple candy because we try to tie things into the environment as much as we can..."

"There was an activity where the students had to look for 40 empty one-gallon containers dispersed in the snow; the students had to run around and gather them all up and when they saw the pile they were like 'Wow!' Then (the Maple Intern) picked up one container and said: 'This is how much syrup you get.' It was a great visual for the students to understand how many gallons it takes to boil down to get one gallon of syrup."

Opportunity to access content in different ways. All four teachers talked about the ways the Maple Project, in particular their class visit to the sugar shack, gave students an opportunity to see, observe, listen, talk, touch, and taste, for example:

“We went to the sugar shack and did a scavenger hunt to find the different things it takes to make syrup...the students were writing, listening, talking, seeing, touching, so the Maple Project offered multiple modalities of learning.”

“The second interaction was at The Wild Center when we went to the sugar shack. The shack is very small so they (break the students into groups) to keep them busy while they wait to go inside. They do a scavenger hunt to look for things related to sugaring, the lines, tanks, woodpile, smokestack, and so on. The kids then got to see the sap during its boiling, how the water is removed, and they got a taste, which they loved.”

Option to support concepts as much or as little as desired. A couple of teachers noted that they were free to support the Maple Project with additional activities, such as to prepare students in advance for the topic and/or reinforce new/related concepts afterwards:

“I would do a background for the kids first, so the kids would have some idea about it before the Interns came...”

“Teachers could choose how much they wanted to work on the Maple Project, for example they can add a math component to the science that is already there...”

Opportunity to expose students to new career opportunities. One teacher also mentioned that the Maple Project “planted a seed” about jobs in the maple industry, including in particular jobs for girls:

“There are people who work at (maple production) as a career and this is an option for them...I feel like the kids got awareness of yet another possible vocation...and it was important for my female students to see the Interns who are female, see girls in the sciences talking about the science of the sugaring process. I did point that out so they could be aware.”

MAPLE INTERNS (n=3)

The experience of the Interns reflects their responsibility for carrying out the Maple Project:

Opportunity to work with the local community. All three Interns explained that they were responsible for reaching out to area residents to determine their interest in being a Tupper Tapper, then going out to Tappers' properties to help identify/tap maple trees, collect sap when it started to run, as well as work in the sugar shack to boil the sap and turn it into syrup. In addition, two of the Interns planned, developed and delivered the Community Maple School Program to K-4 students at the local elementary school. In carrying out these responsibilities, they got to know many people in the local community:

"First we had to call everyone who had participated last year and see if they were interested in participating again this year and if they were—most of them were—then we either supplied them with the equipment to tap their own trees or we went to about 45-50 houses and tapped their trees on their property.... So I got familiar with them, just from calling them and then when we tapped their trees, we stopped and chatted with them every day..."

"Prior to the tapping, we went into the schools and did in-class programs with classes K-4; that was a fun component of the Internship and as part of that we showed the children how to tap the trees on the school property and then they came out to the sugar shack...seeing the kids and seeing their excitement had an impact on me..."

"When I was a young child, I didn't like coming up (to the Adirondacks) that much (because) I act different than the people here... I like coming up here now that I'm older, and with this project I've been able to make more acquaintances. When (the Tappers) bring the sap, I can call them by name, I can talk to them about how their trees are doing..."

RESTAURANT OWNERS (n=2)

Restaurant owners' experience with the Maple Project revolved around the promotion of the maple syrup produced by The Wild Center and the Tupper Tappers:

Opportunity to raise the profile of the local area. In their interviews, restaurant owners noted that offering their customers Maple Project syrup was a way to “drum up some excitement” for Tupper Lake and The Wild Center, as one explained:

“I had a lot of customers who collected sap for The Wild Center. They would bring their photos of themselves getting their sap and there were photos of the osmosis machine with the children at school and some of their teachers. I put those pictures up on some of the tables and people would recognize themselves and also tourists see that we’re selling syrup locally from The Wild Center...People come from all over and The Wild Center is definitely an attraction...I see people looking at the bulletin board in my restaurant and if the museum could distribute more pamphlets (that would be helpful).”

III. Specific connections participants made through the Maple Project.

The Wild Center was particularly interested in understanding the types of connections that Tupper Tappers, teachers, Interns and restaurant owners made through their experience with the Maple Project. In Year One, the evaluation clearly demonstrated that Tappers made connections to others (including their family, members of the community and/or TWC), as well as made connections to the forest/nature and sugaring traditions of the past. In Year Two, evidence of these types of connections was specifically sought and obtained from all participants.

TUPPER TAPPERS (n=16)

Tappers' connections with others:

The Maple Project facilitated connections among fellow Tappers and other members of the Tupper Lake community. Fourteen Tappers said that through their participation they got to know their neighbors better, as well as reacquaint themselves with old friends they had not seen in a while; in at least three cases, the Maple Project enabled Tappers to meet new people. These connections were made while Tappers were out and about in town (see first two quotes below), when they went to the museum's sugar shack to drop off sap and see the boiling (see third and fourth quotes below), and/or when they or others saw the Maple Project buckets hanging on trees in the neighborhood (see fifth quote at the beginning of the next page).

"It connected me to other people in the community who were also participating. I knew them from other venues, for example there were some seniors at the Senior Center who participated in the program and so it gave us a topic of conversation. The program didn't really introduce me to new people but it gave me a greater connection to people I already knew."

"We've been (in Tupper Lake) 88 years...in our church community we see a lot of people and volunteering at The Wild Center we see quite a few people. The Maple Project brought us a little close to some of our neighbors. We actually put The Wild Center in touch with our neighbors to get them involved in the program."

"Often when you drop off the syrup, there are 3-4 other guys there, it was late afternoon and there were people I knew. You talk about what's going on in the sugar shack. The collecting part is a bit solitary, but the sugar shack is a nice little community center, you talk to your neighbors there. I was going daily or every other day and I'd spend like ½ hour there."

"Throughout the whole time I was involved, I got to meet a lot of community leaders. They'd go into the sugar shack and I'd see people I haven't seen in years! I've been here in Tupper since '86, so it'd be 'Geez, I haven't seen you!'"

“We are new to the community so the Maple Project gave us an opportunity to meet new people and see what others are doing in the community, and also gave us a way to participate. Our neighbors across the street have a 6-year old boy and when I would see him outside I’d call to him to come over and try the sap and I’d tell him about it; they weren’t involved in the program because they don’t have any maple trees...And then just simply seeing everyone’s buckets on the trees, when I walked my dog. I’d see the neighbors’ buckets and we’d stop and say hello and ask how their maple trees are doing. So we were able to meet some people in our immediate neighborhood that way.”

The Maple Project reinforced connections with family members with whom Tappers participated. Twelve Tappers indicated they participated with their spouse and/or their children.⁷ These Tappers all said that the project was a good way to get their family involved in doing a leisure time activity together (see first two quotes below). Participating with young children or grandchildren (six mentions) seemed to be an especially enjoyable aspect of the experience because it was an opportunity to see the process through their eyes, as well as to promote sugaring as their own, new tradition (see third and fourth quotes below):

“(The project) makes me think about being together as a family outside, going through the woods and checking our trees and then bringing the sap to The Wild Center. It was a nice time to spend together.”

“(The project helps me feel connected) with my family—they come and keep me company at night when I boil the sap. They help gather the sap, they help bottle it.”

“When my granddaughter came over to watch the tapping, it really tickled me. I was glad to see another generation interested in the process. I enjoyed doing this with my granddaughter.”

“We have pancakes together in the morning with our syrup. We talked about the Maple Project at the dinner table, we talked about the process, we talked about me when I was a kid—my father tapped trees. It’s family conversation and family experience and something the children will take forward. It’s something they will remember when they grow up. It’s kind of a traditional thing—we started a new tradition with them, we picked it up from when I was a girl.”

⁷ The remaining four Tappers of the 16 who were interviewed for this evaluation said they participated alone.

The Maple Project established or reinforced Tappers' connections with The Wild Center. Ten Tappers mentioned feeling “closer” to the museum as a result of their participation in the project. For six of these Tappers, these connections were primarily established as they got to know the Maple Interns when they came to collect sap on their property and/or when they visited with the Interns at the sugar shack (see first quote below); four indicated that they had a greater sense of affinity for, if not ownership of the project as volunteers/advisors who provided extra or additional assistance (see second and third quote below). At least two Tappers said their involvement with the project prompted them to become members of the museum (see last quote below).

“What I really enjoyed was meeting the young people who were coming to pick up the sap, they were so excited and upbeat and positive, they were friendly, and seemed so excited about what they were doing. They were young people from out of town, just digging what they’re doing, they are so passionate.”

“When The Wild Center opened, I had conversations with them about how a maple program could work...I have become more connected to the people who are participating in the project and everyone at TWC; they have great volunteers who keep the project running...”

“I’ve been involved with the maple program since the beginning...My wife and I participated, it’s what we had to do ...the museum is like a second home for us...”

“We had heard about The Wild Center when we first moved here, then we saw the maple exhibit and I decided to become a member because I wanted to participate in the project. We knew that by becoming members we would get all the emails and reminders about it...We feel closer to TWC because of the maple program. We are more involved in TWC, other than just visiting. It’s gotten me more interested in other programs they offer during other periods of the year. We have also met other people at TWC: one of the animal caretakers...”

Tappers' connections to the forest/nature:

The Maple Project reinforced Tappers' appreciation for the Adirondacks and the outdoor lifestyle the region promotes. All the Tappers interviewed clearly indicated that they had made a conscious choice to live in the Adirondacks, in large part because of their love for the area and the different types of outdoor activities that it affords. Indeed, a number of Tappers talked about how the Maple Project resonated with other homesteading hobbies and/or environmental jobs they do. As such, their participation in the project mainly served to strengthen their connection to the outdoors and nature; see representative quotes below.

"I've lived in the woods and outdoors since I was a child...so the program reaffirmed the appreciation that I already have for the wild. We're not city dwellers here, we live having space between our houses. When you come here to live, it's because you've chosen it."

"We go outside a lot, we garden a lot. We grow corn and peppers and everything you can imagine. We like to eat fresh food. (Before we became Tappers) we used to buy maple syrup from a guy who sugars down in Harrisville..."

"Well, I am into the natural living concept, living naturally and taking advantage of what nature has to offer. It's a philosophy of mine, and the maple program taps into that. I collect chaga (a mushroom of sorts that grows on birch trees) and make chaga tea and collecting maple sap to make maple products is part of that concept."

"As a naturalist...my awareness of the forest precedes my involvement with the maple program. It's maybe caused me to look at a specific species more closely—the maples. What kind of maples we have, how do you tell difference between soft and hard maple and I've learned to tell them apart which I couldn't before..."

The Maple Project increased Tappers' appreciation for the way nature supports the sugaring process. Five Tappers said they came to understand that with sugaring "you're at the mercy of Mother Nature," with a couple mentioning the importance of protecting the trees so that they can continue to produce sap; see the representative quotes that follow below:

"We had strange weather this spring so (the Interns) stopped coming for a while because the sap stopped flowing in April when it got really cold again. Then (the Interns) came back when the temperature went back up and the sap started flowing again...."

"I just think it gave us a sense of pride for what nature can bring us with the maple syrup, and the benefit of keeping trees healthy so they can produce. Maple syrup satisfies our needs. We talked with my son about the process of how nature and maple syrup comes together."

“(The Maple Project) gave us a better understanding of the tree. We learned that towards the end of the season, when the time comes to take the tap out, you want to do it so it doesn’t damage the tree. You want to respect the tree, and you don’t want to overdo it, otherwise you can kill it, so you have to use moderation.”

Tappers’ connections to the past:

The Maple Project reminded Tappers of their own past experiences with sugaring. Eleven Tappers said that participating in the project brought back fond memories of childhood tastes and traditions:

“When I was growing up, my uncle had a big sugar bush near Carthage, NY. We picked up sap with teams of horses, the tubs were on sleighs. We took the buckets and dumped the sap into the tub. He had 13 kids and we’d go down and help with the boil and then have a sugar party and eat ‘jack wax’ which is the hot maple syrup poured on the snow.”

“It was a simpler time, we all did it as a family: my dad, my mom, my brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles. We were outdoors together keeping the fire going, having a cookout; it was time you spent with family. We also had a small pot of sap and we’d throw in some hot dogs, let them cook for a few hours, then you put them over the fire so they would crisp up, and I remember thinking they tasted like the best thing since sliced bread, it’s such a vivid memory. We ate them on a stick and they had this sweet smoky flavor.”

The Maple Project offered Tappers connections to local area history. In tapping their own trees, nine Tappers said they gained insight into the historical role that maple sugaring had once played in Tupper Lake:

“(We found out that) the previous owners of this property had tapped the trees. We found the old buckets in the woods. So knowing that the trees had been tapped before...connected us to the past of the property.”

“The project also reminds me of when there was sugar bushes around. I don’t think they’ve done sugaring here in 40 years. The project makes you think back to when it was done; they did it because they needed it.”

“The 86 acres of woods that I now own with my wife used to be part of 54,000 acres that belonged to Abbot Augustus Low, an entrepreneur who came to the Adirondacks and started the Horse Shoe Forestry Company, which eventually included a sugaring operation from 3 sugar bushes...So it’s cool that I own a little piece of that history. And I’m still learning about what he did, I spend time looking for more information on him.”

SCHOOL TEACHERS (n=4)

Teachers were asked to provide their perspectives on ways they thought the Maple Project prompted their students to make connections to others, to nature and to sugaring traditions of the past.

Students' connections to others:

The Maple Project reinforced students' connections to The Wild Center. Given the close relationship that the school has with the museum, all four teachers indicated that “we are there all the time, The Wild Center is part of the conversation at our school” and as such, “there is a pretty strong connection already.” However, as one teacher explained: “The maple program was a new program that gave us a new way to interact (with the museum).” Indeed, another teacher said that the museum’s programs are in some cases the only way that students have the opportunity to stay connected to The Wild Center:

“There are some students who are not able to go to TWC except through the school system, either because they are financially disadvantaged or some other situation, so they love it; it’s something they wouldn’t get to do otherwise.”

The Maple Project motivated students to visit The Wild Center with their family. Specifically, three teachers indicated that bringing the project to the schools was a way to get parents, and ultimately “more people” to go to the museum:

“In some kids, the program really generates interest to take their parents to the museum and do other programs...”

“Some kids went home and told their parents that they could (the Maple Project) at home. Parents came and asked me how it works and I told them it’s through TWC and all you do is sign up (and) TWC does everything for you.”

“(After the Maple Project) I sent a letter home letting parents know that the local library has passes to TWC that you can check out and go to the museum that way.”

The Maple Project connected students to other people in the community. Three teachers said students reported seeing the same buckets around town that the Interns had put on the school’s trees, and this made them aware their neighbors were also participating in the project:

“Some of my students said ‘My neighbor taps their trees’ because they saw the buckets with the museum logo.”

Students' connections to the forest/nature:

The Maple Project helped students see the forest for the trees. All four teachers explained that students' experience with the project taught them to look more closely at trees:

"Students were recognizing the trees, asking 'Is that a maple tree? Does that tree make sap? Can you make something with that sap?' Instead of just walking by the trees, they were thinking about them."

Students gained new awareness for maple trees as a natural resource that must be cared for. All four teachers said students made the connection that maple syrup comes from maple trees; this knowledge helped students realize the importance of protecting the trees:

"There was this awareness that 'Oh, this yummy stuff I put on my pancakes comes from the trees around me, so I have to take care of the forests because it provides something for me.'"

"Every grade did a project to display at TWC for Adirondack Day and the second grade did a book on the natural resources of the Adirondacks and for the prompt 'What is the tree a natural resource for?' every single kid put 'maple syrup'...I think they were looking at the trees and the forest as a natural resource, as something in their backyard they can use, and it just gave them greater appreciation for the things in their environment and taking care of things."

"On Earth Day, we do a book that has different activities and in one activity we ask what they would do if kids ran the world. One kid wrote that you shouldn't cut down a tree because of the syrup you get from it. It's relevant to them: they can make the connection to the importance of trees in our environment through the syrup."

Students' connections to the past:

Students made few, if any, connections to sugaring traditions of the past. Two teachers indicated that as far as the history of sugaring in the area, "we really didn't get too much into that," though one noted that she expected those connections to be made later when students visited the Adirondack Museum, TWC's partner in the Northern New York Maple Program. One teacher said she tried to tie what students did with the Maple Project into the idea that people used to tap their trees out of necessity (see first quote below); another teacher recalled that during their visit to the sugar shack, the Interns mentioned how people used to make maple syrup long ago (see second quote at the beginning of the next page).

"I would tell my students that when I went to school, we couldn't just run to the store and get it...you had to grow your own food..."

“They showed the kids photos of old sugaring operations, and how people went out in the snow with their snowshoes and such.”

MAPLE INTERNS (n=3)

Interns’ connections to others:

Interns forged a strong connection with each other as they worked together to carry out their responsibilities of the Maple Project. All three Interns explained that their “common interests” and common purpose as they spent the maple season working closely together resulted in “a very solid team,” as two described:

“The three of us were working all day together in the sugar shack, boiling, and then two of us went out and collected sap every day so were in the car together 4 hours a day. Maybe we were tired, but at the end of the day it was about the maple project. We were all invested in it, and so it was really great to work with these guys, we’re all hard workers.”

“We knew what we needed to do each day, and we just did it. It was a good vibe and we were able to laugh and be happy about how much syrup we made each day.”

The Maple Project facilitated new connections between Interns and Tupper Lake residents. All three Interns said they got to know many of the members of the local community as a result of their activities in support of the project, including in particular going out to tap trees on residents’ properties and working in the sugar shack; the two Interns who delivered programs to the local school also got to know the area children:

“(Connecting with people in the community) was probably my favorite part—we got to go to the school and the kids recognized us. I learned about 100 names in Tupper Lake just from driving the route and...if I went to the local bar or saw them in the grocery, I could talk about their trees and how they were doing....And the folks that were dropping off their sap, we got to know them better because we saw them every day—these were folks that were invested in the project also, not just to get the syrup at the end. People would come and hang out in the sugar shack.... We put folding chairs out for people on the patio that the sugar shack is on. There would be some who’d stop by for 10 minutes and then we had regulars who liked to come and chat and hang out and talk about the season...”

Interns' connections to the forest/nature:

Interns felt a visceral connection to the maple trees. Two Interns indicated that while they intellectually aware of maple trees, they were thrilled to see/taste sap for the first time:

"(Before the Maple Project) I knew there were trees here, I knew what a maple tree was, but I didn't know that you could tap a tree and drink sap from a cup!"

"Even though I knew sap was going to come out of the trees, the first day it started dripping, I was ecstatic, it was exciting..."

Interns felt connected to nature by virtue of having to spend time outdoors. Two Interns said going outside to tap trees and collect sap reinforced their appreciation for the forest:

"Here (in the Adirondacks) you are surrounded by trees...there are so many uses of plants and trees and spending time in the forest helped me appreciate that more."

"We were outside collecting sap and trudging through a foot and a half of snow to get to the trees and... that's part of why I love this job is because I get to be outside all the time. Even though it was cold, it was quiet, and we had a job that needed to be done and what better than working with your hands and feeling strong..."

Interns expressed awe for the role nature plays in the sugaring process. Two Interns mentioned they felt a greater connection to nature as they came to realize the power of nature in facilitating the creation of maple syrup:

"The maple season is not determined by people, it is determined by the trees..."

"Making something from nature is also pretty cool and potent. You are taking this raw material and turning it into something else."

Interns' connections to the past:

The Maple Project offered Interns connections to local area history. Part of the Interns' responsibilities at The Wild Center were to provide different educational programs to the visiting public. In doing so, all three Interns said they learned more about the history of sugaring in the Adirondacks, as two described:

"One of the other things we did (as Interns) was to create a portfolio for visitors about A.A. Low, an entrepreneur who lived in Tupper Lake in the 1900s. He had one of the largest sugaring operations in the world here in Tupper Lake. Tupper Lake goes far back in sugaring traditions and so now it's neat we are doing this again here."

"Sugaring dates back to Native Americans and I did a program at the museum talking a little bit about how Native Americans would collect sap in birch bark containers called 'mokuk.'" We did an art project called 'Make Your Own Mokuk' where kids could cut out the shape and paint it however they wanted and it was on a string so they could then take it home."

The Maple Project as a reminder of childhood experiences with sugaring. One Intern said that the Maple Project reminded her of growing up in Vermont:

"Being from Vermont, real maple syrup was always a part of my upbringing. Also, my uncle was a maple farmer and every year we'd get a fresh quart of maple syrup from his farm. When I was younger I visited the farm and had some involvement with it..."

RESTAURANT OWNERS (n=2)

Owners' connections to others:

By offering Maple Project syrup at their restaurants, owners had way to connect with patrons, as well as the Tupper Tappers who help produce it. Both owners mentioned that patrons enjoyed having real syrup, which led to conversations about where it came from. As one said:

“People enjoy the syrup. They’ll ask where it came from and we say that the Tupper Tappers made it.”

Owners' connections to the forest/nature:

The Maple Project reinforced owners' appreciation for the fact that maple trees produce syrup. Both owners marveled at the role nature plays in creating a food that people enjoy so much, for example:

“The Maple Project shows you how nature and the trees can produce something so delicious...”

Owners' connections to the past:

For owners, the Maple Project provided little connection to sugaring traditions of the past. One owner said she was unsure of the way the Maple Project related to sugaring traditions of the past. The other said: “Before I was born, there was a maple syrup plant here in Tupper Lake” but that otherwise “tapping is something that has been going on here for a lot of years...”

IV. Additional benefits of the Maple Project perceived by participants.

The Wild Center was also interested in learning about the ways that Tupper Tappers, school teachers, Maple Interns and restaurant owners felt their participation was beneficial to them and others in their community. In fact, all groups mentioned similar takeaways as described below.

Participants learn more about and gain appreciation for the process of sugaring. Twenty participants (thirteen Tappers, four teachers and three Interns) said the Maple Project gave them new/additional insight into the different stages of “maple season,” in particular the time and effort it takes to see the process through, but also about the different equipment needed and what each does:

“A lot of manpower is needed in very intensive work for a short time. When you’re sugaring, you’re there from dawn until dusk and the wood has to be chopped beforehand, everything has to be clean, you have to watch the sap every minute so it doesn’t go beyond a certain point and so the pan doesn’t burn...” (Tapper)

“I’ve lived here my whole life so I was aware that sugaring goes on in spring, but I didn’t have much appreciation for how on top of things you have to be. Once the sap starts to flow, you have to be ready with your supplies. You only have a week or two to collect the sap. It’s a critical time of year.” (Tapper)

“I didn’t realize that it required 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup!” (Tapper)

“Inside the sugar shack is the reverse osmosis machine that takes the water out and reduces the amount of time needed to boil the sap...” (Tapper)

“The Maple Project takes students full circle—they tapped the tree, they saw the sap coming out of the tree, they saw it being boiled and then they saw it on their pancakes. For students, the greatest benefit of participating is being part of the entire process.” (Teacher)

“During the three weeks we were sugaring, it was easily a 60-hour work week, because we started at 8 or 9 in the morning and then finish up at 8 or 8:30 at night after making the rounds (collecting sap from Tupper Tappers). We would collect in the evenings and then boil during the day when the museum is open so that folks could stop by and see (the process).” (Intern)

Twelve participants (nine Tappers, two teachers and one Intern) were excited to learn more about the way sap/syrup can look/taste, as well as the different ways maple products can be consumed:

"I was surprised at how sweet sap actually was. It comes out (of the tree) like water....and you can drink it like water. During the sugaring season, we keep a 5-gallon bucket in the fridge and just dunk our cups into it and have a glass." (Tapper)

"When (the Maple Interns) come to our school, they give the students a taste of the sap, which is like water and, of course they enjoy that!" (Teacher)

"I discovered that they can make maple syrup cotton candy! They only take 1 tablespoon of syrup to turn it into granulated sugar and then spun sugar." (Tapper)

"We do a maple meal—the neighbors and I get together for a meal whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner, and every food has maple in it: maple glazed sweet potatoes, maple glazed ham, maple cake, carrots all glazed with maple. We also have a brewing company here in Tupper Lake, Raquette River Brewing, and they made a maple flavored porter with maple provided by The Wild Center. It was a big hit, they run out of it [Sic] twice in one day!" (Tapper)

"I collected the sap and brought it in to the sugar shack. If I was lucky, I'd stick around for a Wild Center 'Sap Sucker.' That is maple sap, not quite to the syrup stage, but warmed with bourbon. It's incredible, kind of like a hot toddy." (Tapper)

"The students learned about the different grades of syrup—if it's produced at the beginning of the season or at the end, it changes the color." (Teacher)

"People with families are teaching their kids how to tap and use sap as a substitute for sugar and that just goes a long way with learning about eating well." (Intern)

Seven participants (five Tappers and two Interns) said they learned more about mapling by representing TWC at regional maple conferences and/or attending lectures by/at Cornell and/or the museum that went deeper into sugaring technology and other issues regarding the industry, for example:

"Cornell has a research station here in Lake Placid and they come to The Wild Center and put on a program and we will get people who have their own sugar bushes come looking for answers to questions (about) new tapping technology...folks also come to talk about the things that are threatening to the forest—we have insects and diseases that are affecting maple. These are things that I wouldn't have known if it weren't for the museum."

"I went to a conference in Utica to learn more about mapling. We also learned from last year that we needed two Interns instead of one to make production more efficient and we got a new evaporator, so we made syrup quicker and the shack was not as hot..."

In terms of learning about the sugaring process, six participants (five Tappers and one restaurant owner) agreed the Maple Project was an effective way to teach the next generation about sugaring and its benefits; as such, offering a maple program in the schools was an important aspect of the project:

"Knowing that the people involved here were actually teaching the children at the school about all this process of making the syrup is phenomenal. Without the education for the children, (the community) would not be able to keep (sugaring) through the generations." (Restaurant owner)

The Maple Project provides a sense of community and belonging. Twelve participants (including nine Tappers, two Interns, and one restaurant owner) felt that the Maple Project is "a great community project" that encourages Tupper Lake residents to "come together" and create something that they could not easily do on their own (see first two quotes below). In doing so, participants gained a sense of common purpose or "camaraderie," which also enhanced a feeling of belonging (see last two quotes below):

"I've met quite a few folks who are participating and it gives them a sense of community because for a lot of people, it's not something that they would have done themselves and so we encourage each other to try it. We start with one tap and we go from there." (Tapper)

"The Maple Project shows you how you can work together to achieve something in the end. It's not just The Wild Center doing it, but it's everyone working together." (Tapper)

"The most important thing for me was that somebody came into our community and saw something they felt could bring everyone together...(The Maple Project) has involved lots of people and it has made a difference to lots of lives...it is a community activity that has given me a sense of belonging." (Tapper)

"People have their TWC buckets hanging in their yards and so when people see those on neighboring properties, they say 'Oh, I see you're participating in the Maple Project, we are too!'" (Intern)

Pride in maple as a locally sourced product. Twelve participants (including six Tappers, four teachers, one Intern and one restaurant owner) noted that their experience in the Maple Project made them feel proud for their community to produce syrup from its own backyard. Their pride manifested itself on a concrete level, such as when they tasted the final product or saw the museum's sap-collecting truck around town (see first two quotes below), and at broader level, when they realized how the Maple Project serves to highlight the positive aspects of their town and "puts our name on the map" (see last two quotes below):

"The students loved to tap the tree....Of course they liked getting to see the sugar shack and getting a taste. They said 'This is it and it's from our tree.'" There was quite a bit of pride and they felt ownership that the syrup was being made from their tree at school." (Teacher)

"One thing that is really neat is to see the truck with the wagon they use to collect the sap. You'd go out and see the guys riding around. The vehicle became part of the community, just watching them ride by for that two week period on the side village streets. If I was running to the store, I'd see them riding by, doing their job. Maybe you had to be in the program to appreciate (seeing the truck) but it's something unique to the village of Tupper Lake..." (Tapper)

"In a time when it has become popular to trash or look down on our town, (the Maple Project) is a great way for our kids to see that there are neat things that happen in Tupper Lake, good things are made here." (Teacher)

"There are not many things that put Tupper Lake on the map in a positive way....there is not much to do here in the winter if you are not an ice fisherman or a snowshoer or a skier...so the maple program is another thing that other communities in the Adirondacks don't have." (Tapper)

"(The Maple Project) brings to light the opportunity of forest resources that are normally used for lumbering that can be nurtured and used to create a wonderful product instead of wood...maples are a renewable resource for us here in the Adirondacks." (Tapper)

Appreciation for The Wild Center as an asset to the community. Ten participants (eight Tappers and two Interns) mentioned the central role that the museum played in getting the Maple Project going, recognizing that the museum provided Tupper Lake residents with the know-how, materials and other resources to turn sap into syrup (see first three quotes below). At the same time, one of the Interns noted that while Tappers appreciated the help they got from TWC, it may be worth asking them to provide more support to the project in order to keep it going (see last quote below).

“The Wild Center brought the idea to the community and showed them the process and people who had never been involved in sugaring started tapping their own trees.” (Tapper)

“We live five miles from The Wild Center and we’re not always able to bring in the sap (so) they come to pick it up...and we do rely on that quite a bit.” (Tapper)

“The Wild Center has made it easy for us to (be involved in the program). It’s a case of yes, you can tap my trees and collect my sap and then I get some syrup. The program is not a demand on the community, it’s anything but...I think it gives the community a better appreciation of The Wild Center. (The Maple Project) shows that The Wild Center is a vital part of our community. It’s not just for tourists, it’s for us, too.” (Tapper)

“Tappers enjoy the process and enjoy the syrup of course; they would not be able to do this without The Wild Center and so they benefit from using our resources and allowing us to boil down their sap....but a lot of work ends up resting on our shoulders and I think the community should take on some of those responsibilities. Hopefully they realize they need to band together more to keep the program running.” (Intern)

Optimism for the future of Tupper Lake and the Adirondacks. Ten participants (eight Tappers, one Maple Intern and one owner) expressed hope for the potential of the Maple Project to revitalize their town/area. See four representative quotes below:

“Even though we didn’t grow up here, we’ve been here 15 years. It’s our home and we want to see it thrive. Lots of young people here, they grow up and go off to university and they probably will not come back...but the museum is doing a lot to keep people associated with the museum. If your community has something that is nationally or internationally promoted, that’s a great thing.” (Tapper)

“The program brings fresh energy, new excitement, something to do...there are not a lot of job opportunities here, so when I see The Wild Center employing these young people from out of town who are so passionate and excited and want to come and work in this program, it makes me feel happy and hopeful for our community.” (Tapper)

“I’ve lived (in the Adirondacks) my whole life and one thing I have thought of was what an opportunity for this economy if you could get more trees tapped. If there was a way to do this and to export it, it could be a new business venture....and turn The Wild Center into a place that creates jobs. It would be more than a fun community project.” (Tapper)

“We’re trying to restore our town, we have a dying town here...we’re trying to get some clothing stores and other businesses here. Maple syrup is something that people used to do here, so they want to bring that back.” (Restaurant owner)

Of those participants who expressed hope for the potential of the Maple Project to revitalize their town/area, five offered suggestions for ways The Wild Center could continue to implement the project in order to accomplish that goal. Specifically, two felt the museum should hire full-time staff that manage the project throughout the year and thereby alleviate the pressure of getting trees identified, tap lines set up, and syrup bottled, marketed and distributed within the “intensive” few weeks that the sap runs; two suggested keeping TWC open during April when it is usually closed so that tourists and others can visit the sugar shack and see the maple production equipment running; one mentioned that TWC should begin tapping the maple trees on the large adjoining property that the museum had recently acquired; one said more families need to be encouraged to participate.

Sense of gratification in helping out. Eight participants (six Tappers and two Interns) mentioned that, for them, one of the greatest benefits they derived from their involvement with the Maple Project was the sense of reward they felt by helping The Wild Center:

“I didn’t do (the Maple Project) just to get the syrup, but that was a plus. I like The Wild Center, I like the people there...It’s self-gratification that I’m helping somebody, the museum, the town.” (Tapper)

“(The greatest benefit of participating) was just getting to be part of stuff and to be able to help by collecting from our neighbors. It gives me a sense of worth when I’m able to help out.” (Tapper)

“(The greatest benefit of participating) was making sure that I could get the job done to make the best product that the community will enjoy...” (Intern)

Appendix A—Interview Guides

Northern New York Maple Project Interview Guide-Tupper Tappers

Interview Date: _____ Name: _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about the NNYMP! The purpose of my phone call is to learn more about your experience with the program and, because we know it has had a very powerful response among participants, I also want to spend some time exploring aspects of the program that prompted that response. This conversation should be 30 minutes long; do you still have time now to talk? (If not, when would be a good time? _____)

1. How did you get involved in the maple project? (Prompts: How did you hear about it? What prompted you to participate? With whom did you participate?)

2. Please tell me what all you/your family did as part of the project.

3. How did the Maple Program give you a greater sense of connection to others such as...

Your family?

People in the community?

The Wild Center?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted these connections?

4. How did the Maple Program give you a sense of connection to sugaring traditions of the past, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this connection?

5. How did the Maple Program give you new appreciation for the forest/nature, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this appreciation?

6. What has been the greatest benefit of participating in the Maple Project for you?

7. How do you think the Tupper Lake community has most benefitted from the project?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**The Wild Center
Northern New York Maple Project
Interview Guide-School Teachers**

Interview Date: _____ **Name:** _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about the NNYMP! The purpose of my phone call is to learn more about your experience with the program and, because we know it has had a very powerful response among participants, I also want to spend some time exploring aspects of the program that prompted that response. This conversation should be 30 minutes long; do you still have time now to talk? (If not, when would be a good time? _____)

1. How did you get involved in the Maple Project? (Prompts: How did you hear about it? What was your role in having TWC come to your class to do the maple sugaring program? Why was the program important to you?)

2. Please tell me what all you/your class did as part of the project.

3. What are some things your students learned in the maple sugaring program?

4.a) What aspect of the sugaring program did students appear to enjoy most? Why?

4.b) What aspects of the sugaring program did students appear to enjoy least? Why?

5. In what ways do you think students' attitudes towards the forest or nature changed as a result of participating in the maple sugaring program? (Probe why or why not)

6. What other connections do you think students made, such as connections to....

Everyday life—

The community—

Sugaring traditions of the past—

The Wild Center—

7.a) What was the greatest benefit of participating in the Maple Project...

For your students:

For you:

**Northern New York Maple Project
Interview Guide-Maple Interns**

Interview Date: _____ **Name:** _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about the NNYMP! The purpose of my phone call is to learn more about your experience with the program and, because we know it has had a very powerful response among participants, I also want to spend some time exploring aspects of the program that prompted that response. This conversation should be 30 minutes long; do you still have time now to talk? (If not, when would be a good time? _____)

1. How did you get involved in the maple project? (Prompts: How did you hear about it? What prompted you to participate? Why was the project important to you?)

2. Please tell me what all you did as part of the project.

3. How did the Maple Program give you a greater sense of connection to others such as...

Your colleagues at TWC?

People in the community (Tupper Tappers)?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted these connections?

4. How did the Maple Program give you a sense of connection to sugaring traditions of the past, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this connection?

5. How did the Maple Program give you new appreciation for the forest/nature, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this appreciation?

6. What has been the greatest benefit of participating in the Maple Project for you?

7. How do you think the Tupper Lake community has most benefitted from the project?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**Northern New York Maple Project
Interview Guide-Restaurant Owners**

Interview Date: _____ **Name:** _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about the NNYMP! The purpose of my phone call is to learn more about your experience with the program and, because we know it has had a very powerful response among participants, I also want to spend some time exploring aspects of the program that prompted that response. This conversation should be 30 minutes long; do you still have time now to talk? (If not, when would be a good time? _____)

1. How did you get involved in the maple project? (Prompts: How did you hear about it? What prompted you to participate?)

2. Please tell me what all you did as part of the project.

3. How did the Maple Program give you a greater sense of connection to others such as...

People in the community (your patrons)?

The Wild Center?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted these connections?

4. How did the Maple Program give you a sense of connection to sugaring traditions of the past, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this connection?

5. How did the Maple Program give you new appreciation for the forest/nature, if at all?

Follow-up: What aspect(s) of the Maple Program do you think promoted this appreciation?

6. What has been the greatest benefit of participating in the Maple Project for you?

7. How do you think the Tupper Lake community has most benefitted from the project?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?