

Welcome— please join us in the circle: Campfires as a tool for learning about Hostmanship.

Macmillion Fernandes, Erwin Losekoot, Laura Velten & Brenda de Zwaan

macmillion.fernandes@nhlstenden.com; erwin.losekoot@nhlstenden.com; laura.velten@nhlstenden.com; brenda.de.zwaan@nhlstenden.com

Hotel Management School, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

Rob van Vlokhoven & Alexander de Vries

Hostmanship Group NL



Introduction

Campfires have always been a part of society—a welcoming place where people can feel safe, away from the dark, cold and enemies. The founder of Scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell (Baden-Powell, 1908/2004), understood this, but education has also increasingly used campfire settings. This poster summarises the experiences of a group of lecturers and students co-creating a Hostmanship elective within a BA hospitality degree programme at NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. It uses feedback from participants and reflects on the role of the campfire sessions in our Hostmanship minor in creating a safe and welcoming space to host others (Nouwen, 1975), but also on the role of campfires as a valuable educational tool and learning environment. The focus of the teaching team was to create an environment where students would feel themselves in a supportive environment enabling them to have authentic conversations around the nature of hospitality and hostmanship and where new ideas and initiatives could grow and develop—we were pleased with the results!

Hostmanship

The class that this research is based on was one of the first times that the concept of 'hostmanship' and 'the art of making people feel welcome' (Gunnarsson & Blohm, 2011) was taught in a university setting in The Netherlands. The seven 'choices' (as everyone has choices in their daily lives) of Hostmanship underpin the elective class and the exercises were developed to encourage students to reflect on their own hostmanship opportunities and the actions of others. Students were also provided with academic papers on hostmanship (e.g. Medema & Zwaan, 2020) as well as literature on hospitality and hospitableness (Kelly et al., 2016; Lashley, 2008; Nailon, 1982; O'Gorman, 2007).

7 Choices of Hostmanship

1. Service—serving others is an honourable activity
2. Seeing the big picture—people judge an experience holistically
3. Dialogue—understanding others comes from listening
4. Responsibility— being open to criticism and taking responsibility
5. Consideration—treating others you meet as a gift worthy of respect
6. Knowledge—more knowledge leads to better decisions and actions
7. Joy—finding meaning and joy in what you do and how you do it

Campfires

Campfires have always been a formal part of scouting providing rituals and symbolism but also a safe space for courtesy, sharing and bonding. Everyone is expected to participate and no-one's contribution is criticised (Hurley, 1941; Mechling, 1980). They are complex social events with performances but also audience participation. Some academic conferences are now using them, especially when discussing culture and indigenous topics. Small groups and a lack of technology appear to help participants relax and engage. Importantly for education professionals, "the learner and teacher are simultaneously juxtaposed, so the learner is at the same time the teacher, and vice versa" but researchers do warn that "campfire sessions in contemporary educational contexts are however, confined by timetables, student numbers and curriculum content" (Connor & Napan, 2019, p. 6; p. 7). The hostmanship concept also recognises that the host-guest relationship is simultaneously juxtaposed and interchangeable.



Discussion/conclusions

Campfire sessions were used to 'land' the learning for the week and allow space for reflection and sharing, leading to genuine connections and meaningful dialogues. The circle contrasted with traditional classroom layouts and led to sharing of personal experiences in a non-hierarchical setting and with very high attendance and engagement. Students took responsibility for hosting sessions and presenting a book review. Reflective comments from participants included: *lots of talking and reflection; learning from ourselves and our journalling; a great recap moment; sharing my stories; it is not so hard to brighten someone's day; different perspectives; campfire was the chill, safe space; hosting campfires inclines the quieter ones to present their ideas; gave me some more experience in being a host and making others feel welcome.*

Participants made the triological links between industry, education and academic literature. What was noticeable is what happens when people slow down to share ideas and thoughts—understanding, creativity, empathy and passion. "There is something special that happens when people share space, air, ideas, feelings and worldviews while sitting in a circle" (Connor & Napan, 2019, p. 7). This comment was in the context of education, but the same is certainly true of hostmanship moments!

References

- Baden-Powell, R. (1908/2004). *Scouting for Boys*. OUP.
- Connor, H. & Napan, K. (2019). Campfire sessions as a pedagogy: A new twist on the indigenous art of story-telling. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, October, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2019.21>
- Gunnarsson, J. & Blohm, O. (2011). *Hostmanship: The art of making people feel welcome*. Dialogos Forlag
- Hurley, R.J. (1941). Storytelling: Campfire techniques in the classroom. *The Clearing House*, 15(9), 545-547. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3019065>
- Kelly, R., Losekoot, E. & Wright-StClair, V.A. (2016). Hospitality in hospitals: The importance of caring about the patient. *Hospitality & Society*, 6(2), 113-129.
- Lashley, C. (2008). Studying hospitality: Insights from social sciences. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(1), 69-84.
- Medema, M. & Zwaan, B. de (2020). Exploring the concept of hostmanship through "50 cups of coffee". *Research in Hospitality Management*, 10(1), 21-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22435534.2020.1790206>
- Mechling, J. (1980). The magic of the Boy Scout Campfire. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 93(367), 35-56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/540212>
- Nailon, P. (1982). Theory in hospitality management. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 1(3), 135-143.
- Nouwen, H.J.M. (1975). *Reaching out: The three movements of the spiritual life*. Doubleday.
- O'Gorman, K. D. (2007). The hospitality phenomenon: Philosophical enlightenment. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 1(3), 189-202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506180710817729>