
Head Teachers' Leadership Academy

Chill 'n' Still

The essence of introducing the Chill 'n' Still lies in the art of effective storytelling, the ability to weave a story that connects the group, the themes that are emerging from their reflections and transports them to a place where they naturally slip into a quiet, reflective mode.

The poetry of place names

Some tutors use the journey from Glasgow or Edinburgh to Staffin and the "poetry of place names", followed by imagining how young people from cities react to silence, darkness, starlit evenings, landscape, weather etc.

Silence in the Age of Noise by Erling Kagge

There is a powerful opening story about silence being a presence not an absence. If you read the book there are lots of useful quotes that can provide a focus for Chill 'n' Still e.g., "Silence is about re-discovering, through pausing, the things that bring us joy."

~ Listen to Erling on Fearn Cotton's Happy Place podcast [here](#).

A Book of Silence by Sara Maitland

Sara Maitland's 40 days in the wilderness on Skye 20+ years ago, recalled in A Book of Silence allows for an imaginative re-creation of what it would be like to live in an utterly remote cottage and begin to appreciate the geological grandeur of the Cuillins, learn the different sounds of wind and rain as she gradually let her mind get back into her body. She writes about how her senses were sharpened, even her porridge tasted more porridgy (she describes it more beautifully than that) culminating in what she describes as "a fierce joy, far beyond 'happiness' or 'pleasure'." Throughout the experience she is learning the truth that when our minds are over-busy the world seems that way too. But when our minds are stilled, the world can feel that way too. Not everyone can take six months out, but everyone can find six minutes...

~ read a review of Sarah's book [here](#).

~ more from Sarah Maitland in her Seeds of Silence [page](#).

Blair and Ardoch

Both Ardoch and Blair provide rich natural references. The view from the front entrance at Blair is dominated by magnificent redwood trees brought from America over a century ago as small saplings. The redwood is the skyscraper of the forest and the world's biggest living



organism – sometimes growing over 300 feet tall. But surprisingly, they have very shallow roots seldom going below about 10 feet. How do they manage to grow so tall? The answer is their sociability. Their roots travel vast horizontal distances and intertwine with other redwoods to form a supportive and strengthening community that allows each tree to survive millennia.

Ardoch has a beautiful view but one you may not know the significance of. The view over Lomond is arguably the most significant in Scotland. Conic Hill and the islands running across the south end are caused by the Highland Boundary Fault, one of Scotland's greatest geological features which bisects the country from Stonehaven in the East and north of Arran in the west. It resulted in the low-lying sedimentary landscape in the south and the mountainous metamorphic in the Highlands to the north. The fault is more than just physical, the fault line caused a linguistic separation with English to the south and Gaelic to the north. It is also a socio-political separation with a feudal system to the south and a clan system to the north. A clan system which only ended in the in the mid-19th century following the battle of Culloden. But it's also the reason you are here. Had the Highlands not been so remote, Columba may have chosen somewhere else to spread the good news over 1400 years ago.