Pathways

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Pathways

COEO

Formed in 1972, the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

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Pathways

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Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please contact the Chair for submission guidelines.

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Features

Columns

Editor's Log

The winter months in Ontario always provide an abundance of active and experiential outdoor learning opportunities for students. However, these opportunities are also accompanied by a variety of challenges and barriers. In many areas of Ontario, freezing temperatures and precipitation often combine to transform our communities and schoolyards overnight, suddenly erasing what was once familiar and known to students, and replacing it (actually covering it) with something completely new: snow. Snow has many special and unique properties, one of which being the ability to drastically change our local landscapes and outdoor learning environments—the places where our students travel, explore, play, and learn. So why all this talk of snow you ask? The *Pathways* Editorial Board has decided to set aside a future issue (Winter, 2023) and dedicate it to a special theme: Snow and Outdoor Learning. Our hope is that by announcing this call for articles early, we will give potential authors the opportunity (this upcoming winter season specifically) to experiment and explore, research and reflect, in and about the snow with their students, colleagues, or on their own. Theme related topics could include, but are not limited to: snow-based forms of transportation and physical activity; field studies within the subnivean environment; the material qualities of snow and snow as a "loose part" for creative and imaginative play; climate change and the impact on snow conditions in Ontario; winter camping and snow shelters; the administration and policing of snow and ice in schoolyards. As always, guidelines for authors and artists can be found on the *Pathways* webpage (www.coeo.org/pathways-journal/) and all submissions for this special theme issue must be received by September 1, 2022.

This issue of *Pathways* contains several contributions from graduate students, which highlights their research work and emerging ideas drawn from courses of study. We open with an article by Brooke Jones. COEO members might recognize this name, as Brooke was the recipient of the 2017 COEO Amethyst Award, which is presented to an emerging professional new to the field of outdoor education. This article summarizes her graduate research which explored the factors that constrain educators' ability to implement outdoor adventure education programming in rural British Columbia. We then hear from Katey Logan and Emily Parker--both graduate students within the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University—as they present two complementary papers that explore the process of decolonization through changes to place-based learning and early childhood education practices. Next, Giniw/Kory Snache shares some personal, professional, and cultural insight as he discusses his approach to outdoor education, while also revealing what he sees as some important similarities and distinctions between Indigenous land-based learning and typical OEE practices. This article is followed by a contribution from Bob Henderson. Bob shares some advice and encouragement for educators at all levels who are interested in proposing and planning place-based learning experiences for their students. And finally, we close this issue with a reflection from Emily Girouard, wherein she shares what repeated evenings gazing up at the stars has revealed to her about the value of outdoor learning.

Kyle Clarke
Editor

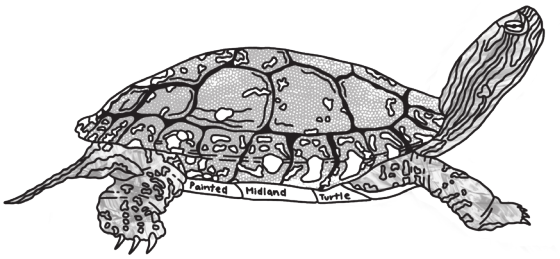
Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Amber Lapinsky. Amber is a Graphic Designer who is currently expanding her knowledge of the arts by studying Art Publication. She loves making all kinds of illustrations in different styles, either black and white or colour. As a designer, she is always trying to think outside the box and come up with unique ways of presenting new ideas. She is happy to hear from new people about potential projects, and invites potential clients or collaborators to contact her by email at amberlapinskydesigns@gmail.com.

President's View

Typically, at this time of the year I'd be feeling excited about having gotten out for my first paddle of the season and looking forward to my first jump in a lake. This year's a bit different though, as instead I'm feeling excited about having my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and am looking forward to my second dose. I know it will still be a while until things feel at all like they can get back to normal, but this feels like a huge step. I am grateful to be able to get a vaccination that will protect me and my community, and I hope that you will do the same.

Although we still are not able to gather in person we were able to have almost 100 enthusiastic wilderness leaders gather virtually this spring for the 2021 Ontario Wilderness Leadership Symposium (OWLS). I would like to start by thanking everyone who attended and participated in this year's event. Our focus this year was on the themes of anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-oppression in wilderness leadership, an incredibly important topic, but one that can be difficult to discuss. I am so grateful to everyone who shared their stories and knowledge throughout the weekend, and I hope that you took away some learnings that will help you grow as a leader. On that note, I would like to extend a huge note of gratitude to our presenters, all of whom played a major role in facilitating this atmosphere of learning. A big thank you especially to Caleb Musgrave, who not only shared his bushcraft knowledge with us on the Friday evening but who set the tone for the conference with his traditional opening and wrapped things up for us with his traditional closing. Thank you also to those who volunteered their time throughout the weekend to help things run smoothly as discussion facilitators and tech assistance. Additionally, I would like to thank our organizing partners for this year's event, Canadian Outdoor Professionals Association (CANOPA) and Project Canoe. I would also like to thank the Cabela's Canada Outdoor Fund for providing us grant funding that allowed us to keep the cost of this event low for participants.

Lastly, I would like to thank Liz Kirk and Kyle Clarke for once again taking on the major task of coordinating OWLS. This event would not be possible without all of your hard work.



Our webinar series has been off to a great start, with three successful webinars now complete: February featured Building Confidence with Knives with Kevin Fraser, March focused Breaking Barriers to Outdoor Education with Bonnie Anderson, and April was about OPHEA Guidelines for Outdoor Education with Deborah Diebel and Stéphane Giroux. Each of these webinars have provided fun opportunities to learn as a community and have discussions about different facets of outdoor education. We've got two more great webinars on the books: Virtual Summer Camp Programs with Barbara Sheridan, Liz Jankowski, and Danielle Barrett, and A Journey into Forest & Nature School with Matt and Kim Simpson. I hope you'll consider joining for one or both of these virtual gatherings.

Lastly, I wanted to let you know that our Board is working on plans for the 2021 Annual Fall Conference. At this point we do know that we won't be able to host our usual weekend-long event, but we are looking at options for a virtual conference or a single day, outdoor event. We will make a decision that feels best for our community and ensures we are following current public health guidelines. Stay tuned for more information, but whatever we end up planning, I hope to see you there!

Natalie Kemp
COEO President

Barriers and Supports for Outdoor Adventure Education in Rural British Columbia

By Brooke Jones

Introduction

For me, I have often sought out "adventure" in the outdoors. Family canoe trips in Algonquin Park, hikes on British Columbia's (B.C.) coastline, and solo travels through New Zealand and Australia's backcountry are some of the outdoor experiences that have fueled my love for adventure throughout my lifetime. I also weaved outdoor adventure into my education, having been a member of my high school's outdoors club and thoroughly enjoying Mlle. Voisard's (my grade two teacher) outdoor focus in her teaching pedagogy. I also worked for McMaster University's Outdoor Recreation Department during my undergraduate studies. My interest in becoming an outdoor (adventure) education teacher grew from all of these experiences as I recognized my passion for the field and the positive impact of this pedagogy, which I wanted to pay forward to students.

Soon after completing my studies in kinesiology and teacher education, I found myself moving across the country to the remote community of Tahsis, on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island, B.C., to co-facilitate an outdoor adventure education (OAE) program. Along with this drastic change in location, I accepted my first full-time job, bought a plane ticket, purchased a car, packed my belongings, and said good-bye (for now) to my Ontario friends and family—all within the timeframe of one week. I am sure that this adventurous approach to starting my first professional (teaching) position came as no surprise to those who knew me well.

Despite the feasibility, benefits, and uniqueness of facilitating OAE in rural contexts, research has noted there are multiple barriers that teachers face when doing so, which have been reflected through my personal teaching experience. Some of the barriers identified in the research included the high cost of travel, limited funding, and few certified and/or experienced educators to facilitate programming (Anderson & Jacobson, 2018; Coe, 2016; Hanna, 1992; Remington and Legee, 2017; Robertson, 2007; Waite, 2009). These barriers have been a reality that I too have experienced as an OAE educator in rural B.C. I have had to budget over one thousand dollars for transportation alone for a single trip due to the cost of transporting students from their school to a destination by water taxi and school bus. I have been overwhelmed, at times, by the overlap between my personal and professional life due to the very small community that I lived and worked in. I also was unable to facilitate certain activities, such as canoe certification courses, as I was unable to satisfy the industry-standard ratio of guide to student, nor could I logistically facilitate the program on my own, as a result of a lack of other certified guides in the region. Though I have thoroughly enjoyed my career as an OAE teacher in rural communities thus far, I have faced significant barriers frequently, which has greatly challenged me both

personally and professionally. I anticipated this was the common experience of other OAE teachers in rural B.C. too.

From my love of rural B.C. contexts, passion for OAE and my desire to further develop myself professionally came my desire to explore how I could continue to facilitate OAE in rural B.C. settings but more efficiently and effectively by utilizing supports and overcoming barriers. I wished to continue to provide students with a quality education that is engaging for them through adventure and support other OAE teachers in rural B.C. Recognizing the opportunity to explore my desire intentionally through the University of British Columbia's (UBC) M.Ed. H.O.P.E. program, I applied and shortly afterwards started developing this research project. While most OAE research and literature has focused on OAE's impact on students (i.e., academic, psychological), theoretical framing and development of programs, little research has been conducted specifically to teacher experiences facilitating OAE programs. To my knowledge, there has been no research specific to OAE in rural B.C. either, which added to my desire to focus on this topic.

Research Questions

The focus of my inquiry was to explore the factors that enable and constrain educators' ability to implement outdoor adventure education (OAE) programming in rural British Columbia (B.C.). My research questions were:

1. What supports do B.C. educators utilize to facilitate OAE programming in rural settings?
2. What are common barriers that these educators face when doing so?
3. What are strategies that these educators utilize to overcome such barriers?

Methods

Sample (Participants) and Unit(s) of Analysis

For this study, the sample used was composed of five outdoor adventure education (OAE) teachers who were employed at five different, publicly funded British Columbia (B.C.) schools, either elementary or secondary. Teachers employed by independent schools were not included in the study. This exclusion was made due to the low likelihood of independent schools being located in rural areas and the difference in barriers and supports (i.e., administration, funding, etc.) between the two types of schools, as noted by Choy (1998). Participating teachers had to be involved in the facilitation of their school's OAE program, whether it be through a specialized course (i.e., Outdoor Education 11 or 12) or a course that has OAE elements integrated into it (i.e., environmental sciences, physical and health education).

For my research, I adopted the definition that Ewert & Sibthorp (2014) proposed for an "OAE program": "a program that offers educational opportunities that take place in the outdoors and involve an element of real or perceived risk" (p. 170). Programs included in this study incorporated outdoor adventure (OA) activities into their programming, such as rock/ice climbing, backcountry hiking, white-water kayaking/rafting, canoe tripping, sailing or mountain biking.

The criteria for "rural" was based on the Statistics Canada definition of rural: "... the population outside settlements with one thousand or more population with a population density of four hundred or more inhabitants per square kilometre" (Munro et al., 2012, p. 4).

Data Collection & Instrumentation

A qualitative methodology was utilized in the form of open-ended interviews with participants. Questions explored the barriers and supports that participants faced when facilitating their rural outdoor adventure education (OAE) program. Questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix B. A list of barriers

and supports that had been identified in similar research by Hanna, G. (1992) was provided to participants before their interviews to use as a reference when developing their responses. The list of barriers from this study included senior administrative support, teacher comfort and competence, resources (curriculum materials), safety/liability, timetabling, equipment, terrain/sites, transportation, and budget. It was hoped that, through the interviews, themes would emerge on what barriers and supports exist specifically in rural B.C. settings when facilitating OAE programming. Interviews took place over Zoom, an online conferencing program, between January and February 2021. Conducting interviews online allowed me to collect data in a way that was convenient, cost-effective, safe, and comfortable (i.e., got to choose where the interview was conducted) for both myself and the participants. The interviews were recorded using Zoom software and saved to a secure location. They were then prepared for transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were conducted, recordings of the interviews were transcribed into text form and reviewed by the participants "to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences" (Birt et al., 2016, p. 2). Thematic analysis was chosen as the method of analysis, given the qualitative nature of the study (i.e., open-ended interviews) and outdoor adventure education itself (i.e., flexible and ever-changing environments) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Guided by thematic analysis, I coded and then identified emerging themes from and across each of the interviews (Glaser, 1992). A deductive approach was used, while keeping in mind the themes that had emerged from similar research I had reviewed (i.e., senior administrative support, teacher comfort and competence, resources/curriculum materials, safety/liability, timetabling, equipment, terrain/sites, transportation and budget) and my own experiences as an outdoor adventure education (OAE) teacher (Hanna, 1992). By combining information from a variety of sources, the resulting themes that emerged were well-supported and developed.

Discussion

Theme 1 – Barriers

Category 1: Transportation

Of the barriers that emerged from the data, "transportation" was mentioned by four of the five participants, two of them identifying transportation as the "most limiting" barrier. Transportation was also a barrier identified by Hanna (1992) when researching barriers to facilitating outdoor education (OE) in Alberta. The prevalence of responses demonstrated the significant limitation that transportation imposed on rural outdoor adventure education (OAE) programs, specifically due to travel conditions, cost, time demands and driver/vehicle access. The participants reported having to travel through rugged environments (i.e., steep roads with potholes, turbulent ocean conditions) to reach their destinations. One participant, Robin, described how winter weather, in particular, impacts travel in their region as it often brought heavy rain and high winds, resulting in cancelled water taxis, washed-out roads and debris being blown onto roads. The cost of travelling, regardless of the destination, was also high for many of the participants' OAE programs. In comparison to non-rural settings, I have found through my own experiences facilitating OAE programming that the cost of transportation is significantly higher in rural settings. This is due in part to the specialized vehicles required (i.e., large water taxis, buses suitable for logging roads). Jordan explained, "Transportation is a huge barrier because any time that we need to ride the bus to do anything, it costs like a thousand dollars." Given that rural OAE programs are located far away from other towns/cities where most OAE-related amenities (i.e., ski hills, camps, trail systems) are located, the time required to travel to most destinations, when necessary, is also significant. Darcy

described their struggles facilitating trips: "... you just can't do it in a day ... you can't do field trips unless you're overnighting somewhere." Lastly, participants expressed difficulty accessing vehicles (i.e., parked in a distant location) or drivers to use for their program (i.e., lack of qualified staff/parents available). For Robin, this was because their program's vehicle was stationed at their school district board office, which is nearly a three-hour drive from where their school is located. Jordan also had to cancel multiple trips due to a lack of available and qualified drivers. From my experience guiding OAE trips, I also experienced a lack of driver availability. In my case, the lack of drivers was due to the limited school district's operations staff being overbooked and few parents having (reliable) vehicles to offer. In summary, the data revealed that travel conditions, cost, time demands, and driver/vehicle access were transportation barriers for rural British Columbia (B.C.) OAE programs.

Given that transportation is a significant barrier to facilitating OAE in rural B.C., it is important to consider how one could minimize or even eliminate this obstacle to enable OAE programs to facilitate more efficiently. Programs could strive to facilitate their programming within or closer to their community so that they would not be required to travel far, if at all. As mentioned in Chapter 1, rural schools tend to be near large, useable outdoor spaces where OAE could take place. Utilizing these local spaces could significantly reduce the cost of transportation and even add to the value of the programming. Wattchow & Brown (2011) describe in their book, *A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor Education for a Changing World*, how participants of a place-based OAE "... journey provided an opportunity to connect with their local area, as something special or more meaningful..." (p. 132). Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2012) also note in their book, *Learning Outside the Classroom: Theory and Guidelines for Practice*, that "a key aspiration is for learning contexts to be as authentic and connected to participants' 'real world' as possible" (p. 41). School districts and administrators can support OAE teachers in doing so by providing related professional development (i.e., place-based education training). Teachers can also utilize resources, such as the two books noted above, to research how to facilitate programming in their local environment. Local, rural OAE programming could, therefore, not only significantly decrease costs but also add to the value of the learning experience.

Category 2: Access to Guides

The ability to meet certain guide to student ratios for higher risk outdoor adventure education (OAE) activities can dictate whether certain trips will be feasible or even approved by a school board. As rural populations are smaller, the likelihood of having certified outdoor guides may be lower when compared to urban centres. This is a barrier that I have faced as an OAE teacher in rural British Columbia (B.C.) as I have had to dismiss the idea of taking students caving due to the lack of caving guides locally, despite having an extensive caving system in the community. I also had to transport students an hour and a half to arrive at a location where climbing instructors could help me facilitate a top-rope program. As for my study's participants, Taylor described how they had to recruit, hire, and train guides themselves to meet safety standards for trips. They felt that they were "essentially running a small guiding business on top of the academics". When Blake was able to hire guides that were willing to travel to their community to help facilitate a program, it was difficult to host them as local resources (i.e., accommodation, grocery stores) are limited and/or seasonal. Blake described how they were, "... hiring companies in and then putting up guides in my house for the three days because there isn't another option in September for them to stay places." Meeting the required guide to student ratio is, therefore, a barrier that rural B.C. OAE teachers face when facilitating their programming.

Though Taylor and Blake have been able to overcome this barrier creatively, as described above, having easier access to guides and/or training locally would have allowed them to facilitate programming with greater efficiency. In my positions as an OAE teacher, I have been generously provided time and financial support by my administrators to obtain and maintain certifications, which has allowed me to facilitate several outdoor activities independently, such as archery and canoeing. I would hope that other rural school districts/ administrators in B.C. would be willing and able to do the same to enable their OAE teaching staff to facilitate their programming independently. I also feel it would be beneficial to certify other teaching staff as they would be familiar with the students, area, and would increase the number of students who could participate, should there be a guide to student ratio that needs to be maintained.

Another alternative to obtaining certifications, travelling to or hiring guides is to utilize the knowledge and skills of local community members. Blake described a successful mentorship that their program once facilitated along with members of their community: "... there's been a lot of retired people with time, who know a lot of stuff or would have been willing to support the school." Rather than depending on guides, rural OAE programs could participate in outdoor activities that don't require certifications and incorporate elements of adventure, while utilizing the support of local expertise. For example, while I was teaching in Tahsis, my students and I went for a hike with a community member who was very knowledgeable in the area of geology and caving. They helped guide my class as we hiked, identified different kinds of rocks in the area and discussed how the local cave system was formed. Rural OAE teachers in B.C. could, therefore, utilize the expertise that local community members could offer and facilitate activities that are not certification dependant.

Category 3: Risk of School Closure

The looming risk of rural school closures was identified as a barrier by some of the study's participants. As stated by Egelund & Laustsen (2006), "School closures have been common in rural areas since the middle of the last century [20th], when new and modern schools replaced small old-fashioned schools with only one or two classrooms" (p. 429). Participants in this study also expressed concerns for school closures, indicating that this is a problem that rural British Columbia (B.C.) communities still face today. For example, Taylor stated, "It was always 'we're going to close one or the other.' So, the two communities, miles down the road from each other, were fighting with each other ... I guarantee you it's like that all across rural B.C." Taylor, therefore, had much uncertainty about the future of their outdoor adventure education (OAE) program. While teaching in Tahsis, the topic of if and when the school I taught at would close due to low enrollment was frequently discussed. Because of this, I was always a little concerned about whether my job would be relocated and if the OAE program I helped facilitate would continue in the future. The risk of school closures, therefore, is a barrier that rural OAE programs in B.C. face.

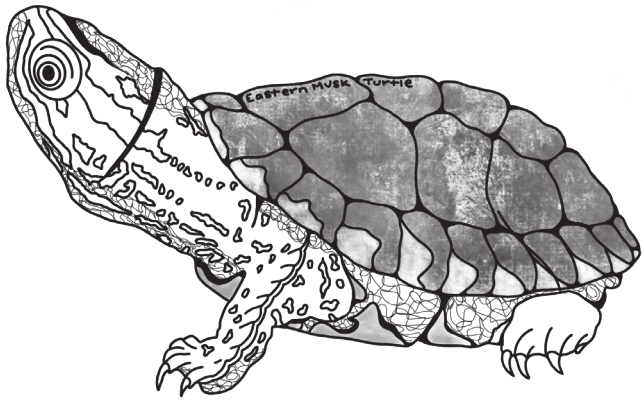
In contrast, to prevent school closures, Blake described how their community promoted the creation of their OAE program to increase student enrollment. Blake explained how, "When it first started, it kept the elementary school open ... there were two students left in the elementary school and there was a significant danger that the school would close." This suggests that using OAE programming as a method to increase enrollment and/or attractiveness of a school could decrease the risk of school closure in rural communities.

Category 4: Filling the Position

Another barrier for rural outdoor adventure education (OAE) teachers in

British Columbia (B.C.) that was identified was the difficulty that school districts had when hiring for an OAE teaching position, whether it be a new or existing job position. Previous research reported that rural communities have difficulties recruiting teachers in general, even more so when seeking specialized teachers (i.e., physics, etc.) (Collins, 1999; Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010; McClure & Reeves, 2004). This has been attributed to reasons such as geographic isolation, weather conditions, distance from larger communities, distance from family, and inadequate shopping facilities (Murphy & Angelski, 1997). I quickly recognized the limited number of applications that school districts receive for available teaching positions in rural B.C. after accepting my first contract. Shortly after commencing my position in Tahsis, I found out that I was the one and only candidate who applied for the position, which greatly surprised me as I assumed OAE positions would be highly competitive. For two of the participants included in the study, Robin and Jordan, their current teaching positions came to be after they had been working in the school district and were then asked to develop an OAE program in a school. Though neither of them reported having much experience guiding, nor (m)any OAE-related certifications, their administrators had trust in their abilities, and they gained experience as they developed the program. Taylor, who facilitates a developed program, voiced concern about the potential of finding a qualified replacement for them when they retire and, consequently, whether their program will continue in the future. They expressed that, "... (the position) limits the number or the kind of person that wants to do this. So, I worry about the succession of a lot of these programs." Rural B.C. school districts' difficulty with recruiting OAE teachers is, therefore, a barrier that participants in this study identified.

To overcome this barrier, rural BC school districts must be strategic when recruiting OAE teachers. Collins (1999) describes how administrators can be effective in doing so by targeting candidates with rural backgrounds or interests, promoting the benefits of teaching in rural schools to candidates, and recruiting residents. As an OAE teacher in rural B.C. myself, I applied for my teaching positions specifically because of the wording that was included in the job postings (i.e., "outdoor education teacher"), suggesting that specific wording can make posting more attractive and noticeable for OAE teachers. Job posting language and strategic recruitment could, therefore, help administrators in rural B.C. recruit OAE teachers.



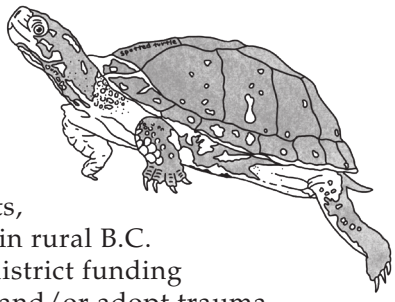
Category 5: At-Risk Students

Teaching in rural contexts comes with the reality that several students in these communities' schools often are at-risk and consequently require greater academic and/or emotional support. This has been demonstrated by various studies, including that of DesMeules et al. (2012) who wrote:

> ... rural residents of Canada are more likely to be in poorer socio- economic conditions, to have lower educational attainments, to exhibit less healthy behaviours, and to have higher overall mortality rates than urban residents (p. 25).

Providing the supports that this population needs and deserves was identified as a barrier by participants, Taylor and Darcy. This is an experience that I, too, faced as

an outdoor adventure education (OAE) teacher in Tahsis as I felt as though I had inadequate training and time to be supporting a high proportion of my students who required significant emotional and academic support. I not only planned for, but expected a student to be in psychological distress while on an OAE trip as a result of traumatic experiences they'd been involved in. This was in addition to all of the other responsibilities that come with planning for and facilitating a trip. Lewis & McCann (2009) wrote how at-risk students often manifest their welfare issues through "challenging behaviours at school, including withdrawal, truancy, disengagement, resistance and disconnection" (p. 895). I suggest again that professionally and mentally training to support a student who exhibits such a behaviour significantly adds to the already high demands on (OAE) teachers. As previously mentioned, DesMeules et al. (2012) found that "rural residents of Canada are more likely to be in poorer socio-economic conditions" (p. 25), which was a reality that Taylor and Darcy experienced. As a result, this impacted the amount of funding their program could utilize, given that many of their students were unable to cover course/trip fees themselves. Managing the demands of supporting at-risk students is, therefore, a barrier that rural OAE teachers face in British Columbia (B.C.).



To overcome the financial and emotional barrier of working with at-risk students, OAE teachers in rural B.C. could utilize district funding opportunities and/or adopt trauma-informed practices. As previously mentioned, multiple participants of this study could not collect fees for OAE programming costs from students as their students' families could not afford to pay them. In response to this, Taylor, Robin, Darcy's school districts helped cover some of their program's fees, lessening the financial burden on their students. My previous employer, School District 84 (Vancouver Island West), also covered all of the expenses of their district's outdoor program so that it was financially accessible to all students. OAE teachers in rural B.C. could also adopt trauma-informed practices to satisfy the needs of their at-risk students while preventing themselves from experiencing compassion fatigue, as recognized by Bannister (2019). Bannister (2019) explains how trauma-informed practice encourages teachers to, "... focus on building strong socioemotional skills and building a safe school environment for all learners" (p. 2) by adopting practices such as having routines, teaching lessons with a social-emotional focus or having spaces available where students can feel safe and calm. Rural OAE teachers in B.C. could, therefore, utilize district funding and trauma-informed practices to overcome the financial and emotional barriers of working with at-risk students.

Category 6: Professional/Personal Life Balance

A barrier that participants expressed they face as outdoor adventure education (OAE) teachers in rural British Columbia (B.C.) is the broad overlap between their personal and professional lives. Bandy (1980) determined that, from the results of a questionnaire and interviews that were conducted with B.C. teachers and administrators, the reason why most teachers left rural positions was because of sociological reasons, specifically isolation and lack of privacy, not the teaching situation. This was an experience of Blake: "It's a small community. I can't go to the gas station and not have a forty-minute conversation with everybody. You can't be anonymous in these communities." In addition to a lack of privacy, participants found that amenities available in their communities were often limited in their number and hours of operation. Blake described their experience: So, I can shop on Sunday, and

I can get gas on Thursday. The only times I can get food or gas. So, there's a societal barrier to teaching the program ... Because we just have very limited resources.

Despite my love for the local scenery and the opportunity to facilitate such a unique OAE program, I too found that I was limited, particularly socially, living in Tahsis. This was one of the reasons why I chose to relocate to Nelson, as I would still live in a rural community, yet have the opportunity to develop a network with like-minded people that were closer to my age. Being unable to have separation from one's personal and professional life was, therefore, a barrier that was identified by OAE teachers in rural B.C.

Burden's (1982) research on the interactions between teachers' personal and professional lives identifies multiple ways rural OAE teachers in B.C. could overcome this barrier. Their study's participants, too, expressed difficulty in separating their personal and professional lives and, consequently, this negatively impacted their personal lives. "Releases of tension" (p. 12) that Burden's (1982) participants utilized to decompress from or avoid stress included involvement in community leadership opportunities (i.e., coaching sports), discussing topics that were not school-related with colleagues, accepting summer jobs that weren't related to teaching (children) and working on hobbies, to name a few. As an OAE teacher, I often continue to engage in outdoor adventure (OA) activities after school as a way to support my mental health, though I do specifically seek out opportunities to do so with people and places that are different from what I would do at work (i.e., go to different camping sites) to have some distinction between my personal and professional life. These are, therefore, some examples of strategies that rural OAE teachers could use to overcome the barrier of having a broad overlap between their personal and professional lives.

Theme 2 – Supports

Category 1: Location

One of the supports that rural, outdoor adventure education (OAE) teachers in British Columbia (B.C.) benefitted from was their proximity to outdoor spaces. Given that the participants' OAE programs were all located in rural settings, rather than developed urban areas, it was no surprise that they were only a short distance away from usable and natural spaces. For example, Jordan, in discussing their school's location, shared that, "You can get to the ocean in two minutes when walking. And then we can get to some pretty sweet trail systems in old- growth cedar within forty-five minutes of leaving school." In Nelson, where I currently teach OAE, my students and I can access walking and biking trails, lake and river systems, extensive forests and natural beaches by foot or bike within thirty minutes. Being able to do so has enabled me to integrate a variety of settings in which I facilitate my lessons, which naturally create learning opportunities that integrate place, environmental and land-based teachings. With such easy access to lush outdoor spaces, OAE teachers in rural B.C. may, therefore, have the ability to facilitate programming easily, without having to spend time travelling and paying for associated transportation costs.

Category 2: Timetabling

A support that helped multiple participants facilitate their outdoor adventure education (OAE) program was their school's timetable. Timetable flexibility has also been indicated as a support to OAE in similar research (Hanna, 1992). Participants, including Taylor, Robin and Alex, spoke of their teacher colleagues' flexibility in their schedule, the ability to work a four-day workweek, and/or longer blocks of class time. For example, Taylor expressed appreciation for the ability to have, "... flexibility in the academic schedule so that I can bring the kids out when the conditions are appropriate." I

can attest that, from my own experience as an OAE teacher, that the flexibility to work around weather conditions is vital to ensure the comfort and safety of the school group. Having to cancel a trip that you have planned and prepared for, rather than being able to reschedule it, is devastating for both teachers and students. Miller (1991) discussed how rural communities often have multigrade classes that range from one-room schools spanning five or more grades. This was also the case for participants Blake and Robin, as well as my experience teaching in Tahsis. With this comes the opportunity to adopt a primary/middle school format, whereby a teacher is a primary instructor for multiple subject areas. The ability to work with students for longer, consecutive periods is advantageous in the way that it provides the opportunity to travel to other locations and/or engage in longer learning activities, even if it's within the parameters of a school day. Having a flexible timetable is, therefore, a support that OAE teachers in rural British Columbia (B.C.) have been able to utilize in the facilitation of their programs.

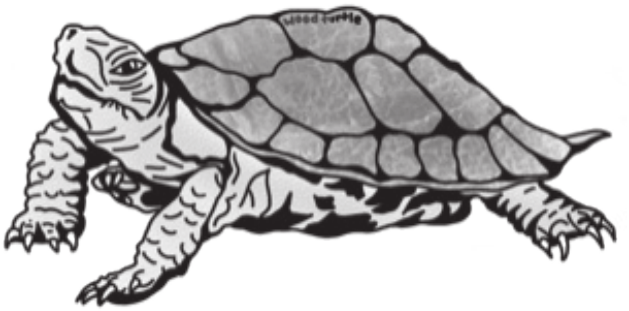
Category 3: Administrative Position

Two of the participants in this study expressed that a benefit of their position was that they were assigned an administrative title. Rather than being hired as a teacher and having to work within the language of their school district's collective agreement, they worked as an administrator. This resulted in them having more flexibility in their position, including workplace location, work hours and timetabling of their program. Robin shared their experience as an outdoor adventure education (OAE) teacher before the change in position: "I found that hard, running the outdoor education program in (community) as a full-time teacher. It's a little bit too much." Following the position change, they felt that: "... it's more flexible. The expectation is that I'm planning from home and then I go in to run the trips. That is an okay expectation or burden on me to get the kids from point A to point B." For Jordan, who facilitated their program using a condensed timetable, being an administrator meant that they would not be breaking their local collective agreement, which required programming to take place within certain hours on weekdays. During my time as an OAE teacher in Tahsis, I also experienced the tension and confusion that arose from the demands of my OAE position while simultaneously striving to work within my teacher union's collective agreement. Though I did appreciate the security and consistency of having such an agreement, I often found myself having to negotiate with my administrator and my local teacher union president on what working conditions (i.e., workdays, working hours and responsibilities) were fair for my position. Given that rural school districts are potentially more willing and able to make such job assignment adjustments, it could be suggested that more OAE teachers in rural British Columbia (B.C.) should adopt this same approach and that it would, consequently, allow them to facilitate their programs with more efficiency.

Category 4: Connection with Community

Participants identified their programs' deep connection to their local communities as a support in and of themselves. Barley & Beesley (2007) described communities in rural contexts as, "... strongly connected to their schools through formal partnerships, the centrality of the school facilities, and personal investment of community members' time and money" (p. 9). From my experience as a teacher over the past four years, I have recognized that most schools, whether they are located in a rural context or not, have a relationship with their community. However, it was obvious to me how much more integrated and deep this connection was in Tahsis and Nelson compared to other schools that I have attended and observed. Participants in this study identified examples of how their rural communities have supported their local outdoor adventure education (OAE) programs,

by way of mentorship opportunities, lending/donating equipment, parent drivers/chaperones, providing funding and sharing (traditional) knowledge. For one participant, Blake, the creation of their OAE program was community-driven, rather than being initiated by the school district, as it allowed the local elementary school to remain open. They stated that "... it was a community-driven initiative. The school board didn't drive it, but it was the community and the teacher at the time, who kind of came together to find a way to make the school continue to exist." In return, many of the participants' programs, including those of Taylor, Robin, Jordan, Darcy and Blake, gave back to the community in the form of building (bike) trails, doing beach clean-ups and monitoring aquatic sanctuary zones. Taylor and their students' contributions to their community were particularly notable, given that they have, "... built four venues with over six thousand vertical feet of mountain bike trails ... the entire infrastructure of the trails in (the region)." Such a project would have positively contributed to the well-being, recreational opportunities and health of their community. Data from this research project, therefore, reflects the unique and deep connection that OAE programs in rural British Columbia (B.C.) have with their local communities.



Category 5: Connection with Students

Similar to the way that rural teachers often have a deep connection with their community, as noted by Barley & Beesley (2007) in their article "Rural school success: What can we learn", participants in my study described their close relationship with their students. This is something that I have experienced, having lived and worked in rural communities, as you are usually spending both your personal and professional time with or around your students. For example, I worked with the students at school and frequently saw them at the only local recreation facility after school. Not only was the benefit of having a close relationship with students personally satisfying for me as a community member, but it also had positive impacts on my professional life as a teacher. I was able to personalize my teaching approach to every student given that I was very familiar with their background and could integrate local references to recent experiences we shared both in and outside of the school setting. Outdoor adventure education (OAE) teachers in rural British Columbia (B.C.), therefore, have the benefit of having strong connections with their students, which directly and positively impacts their programming.

Theme 3 – Problem Solving Mindset

The third theme, "problem-solving mindset", was generated from codes that suggested that the participant was adopting an optimistic and creative approach when faced with a barrier when facilitating their outdoor adventure education (OAE) programming. This theme was not expected to emerge from the data as it was not explicitly addressed in my research questions, yet I found it to be one of the most impactful results. This is because it highlighted a unique and admirable mindset demonstrated by the participants and one that I have strived to adopt myself as an OAE teacher.

Category 1: "Finding a Way"

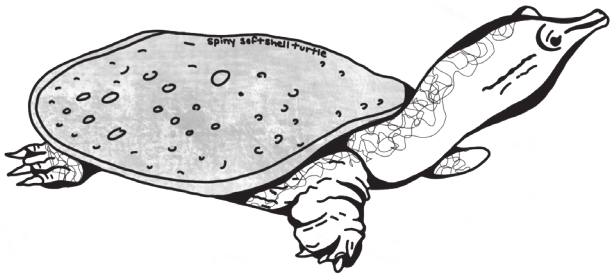
A category that emerged from all of the participants' codes was "finding a way". In their own manner, each of the participants expressed their willingness to "find a way" to see through the success of their outdoor adventure education (OAE) program. The

following quotations are a few examples of when this theme emerged from the participants' interviews: "There isn't anyone else other than yourself. You kind of have to be self-reliant and figure out how to make things happen" (Blake), "So, it puts the ball back in my court to say, 'Okay. what can I learn here and how quickly can I learn it? Or what can I get certified in to help run some of these programs?" (Robin), "You're young, you're stoked, you'll find a way" (Taylor) and "... you can always find a solution ... if you want your program to run you have to find a way to work with it or around it" (Darcy). A similar mindset was identified by Waite (2009), which they identified as a "... strong determination to overcome barriers ... where staff showed commitment to finding ways to solve problems preventing access for children to the outdoors" (p. 6).

The "can-do" ideology was consistent with the OAE objective to develop psycho-social skills in its participants, such as resiliency (Allan & McKenna, 2019). Similar to the way that OAE programming has been shown to have a positive impact on youths' resiliency (Allan & McKenna, 2019; Overholt & Ewert, 2015; Whittington et al., 2016), the participants in this study essentially "practiced what they preached" by demonstrating a growth mindset through their professional work. This problem-solving mindset was a characteristic that I also personally recognized in many individuals, not just OAE teachers, in the community members in both rural British Columbia (B.C.) towns in which I have lived. Residents of both Tahsis and Nelson learned to grow their food, do repairs on their home appliances and seek out recreational opportunities, for example, without depending on the convenience and abundance of resources that are available in more urban areas. This suggests that this mindset and persistence is a quality that is unique to rural B.C. communities and are qualities that OAE teachers in such communities have adopted. By doing so, participants in this study creatively overcame barriers they faced and epitomize the resilience that OAE aims to instill in its participants.

Conclusion

The results of this study may help better inform all levels of school districts, teachers, administrators, superintendents, school board members, and educational stakeholders, on their perceptions of and decisions made around rural outdoor adventure education (OAE). These results could, therefore, allow established and/or newly developed OAE programs in rural British Columbia (B.C.) to operate more successfully. I will also apply the results in my teaching practice as I have recognized supports I can utilize more effectively and ways I can overcome certain barriers that I continue to face in my current teaching position.



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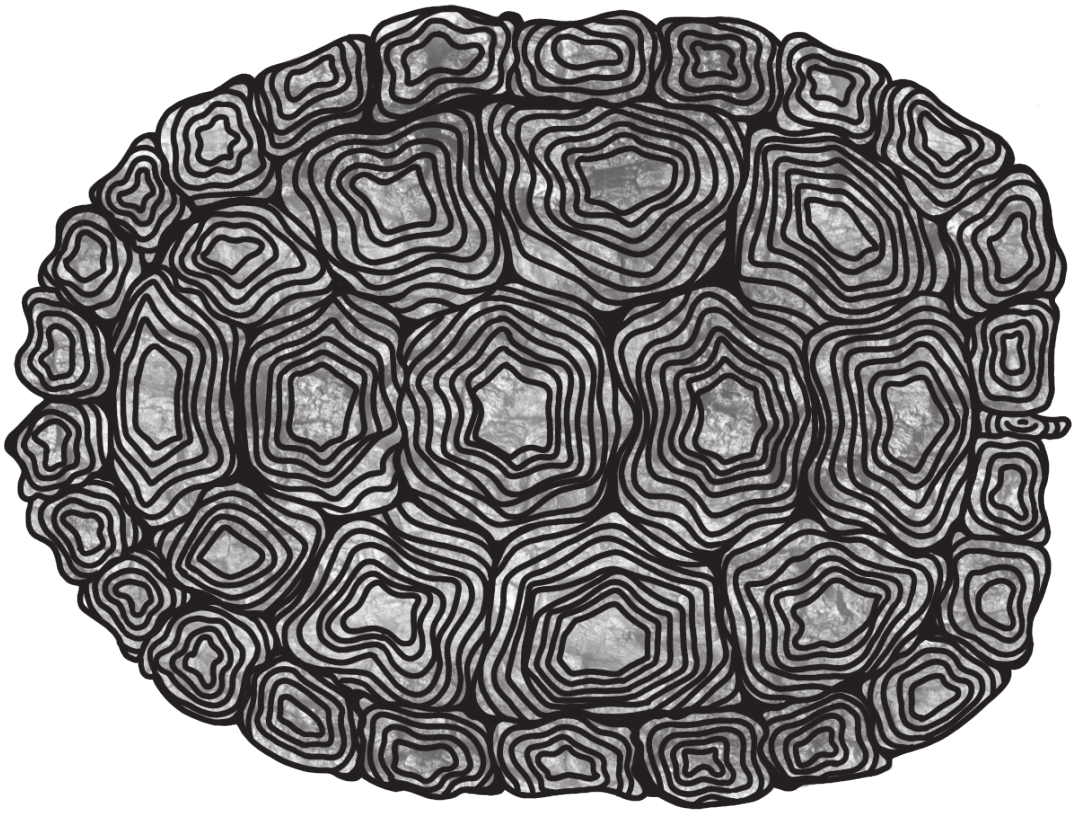


Beyond Place-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education

By Katey Logan

Place-based learning within environmental, outdoor, inquiry-based, and experiential early childhood educational settings is increasingly embraced by educators and frequently demanded by parents (Nelson et al., 2018; Webber et al., 2021). However, many scholars question whether or not these pedagogical approaches to early childhood are appropriately working towards the decolonization of education or if they are in fact extended structures of privilege and whiteness (McLean, 2013; Nelson et al., 2018). Nelson et al. (2018) express concern for this growing trend when they state:

> [The] persistent colonialist and capitalist values continue to permeate popularized early childhood environmental education frameworks in North America. These frameworks perpetuate the construction of early education as a market to compete for scarce resources; 'resources' that include dwindling 'nature spaces' to cultivate a 'close-to-nature' child. (Nelson et al., 2018, p. 5)

Furthermore, Webber et al. (2021) criticize place-based learning as repackaged progressive approaches to learning within existing settler serving structures. The adoption of place-based pedagogy by many early childhood programs is viewed as best practices in education but frequently does not appropriately root the learning in nor do they acknowledge the Indigenous knowledge systems in which this learning stems from (Brayboy & Maughn, 2009).

This paper is separated into two sections, the first being an academic essay and the second, a personal reflection. The primary focus of the academic essay is to interrogate place-based practices typically approached through a Eurocentric lens as an insufficient means to unsettling the colonial structures entrenched into early childhood institutions. This essay first defines place-based education and then discusses underlying assumptions and problematic applications of place-based pedagogies in existing Eurocentric early childhood educational settings. Finally, critical place-based and land-based learning are defined and proposed as a means for settler educators to begin their journey towards disrupting the hegemonic power of the current Eurocentric approach to early childhood education. Within this approach, both critical place-based and land-based education are utilized/employed simultaneously to examine students' relation to land. The second section will focus on my personal growing understanding of land-based education as a result of the Master of Education program at Lakehead University.

Positionality

I am a white settler teacher, auntie, daughter, sister, and wife residing on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot people within Treaty 7 to include the Siksika, the Piikani, Kainai, Tsuut'ina, and Stoney Nakoda First Nations and Métis Nation (Region 3). It is important to acknowledge my position to provide context for the purpose and intentions within my writing (Lambert, 2014). I write from my own sense of place, which is in relation to the Indigenous land in which I reside. This paper is not to take the narrative of a settler or to appropriate Indigenous knowledge systems as my own, but to provide critical reflection and appreciation towards the shared Indigenous research and resources that can be integrated within early childhood education. I am committed to my own lifelong decolonizing journey and continue to acknowledge and learn from the gaps that exist due to my anthropocentric and Eurocentric western education. Throughout

the essay below, I continue to build an understanding on how I, as a non-Indigenous educator, can meet the needs of all of my students without reinforcing and repeating acts of colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The central priority to this essay is to continue to grow as an educator with practical insights into how to unsettle my practice and to continually question "whose placemaking will be given priority" (Pedersen, 2021, para. 16) in early childhood education (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). This learning curve is steep, uncomfortable, and at times uncertain. However, these experiences are essential in learning about and responding with humility to the power relationships associated with my positionality (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Place-Based Education

Place-based education emphasizes the use of local environments with interdisciplinary learning to create human connections to places (Gruenewald, 2003a; Sobel, 2008). Initially associated with rural settings, place-based education sought to connect youth "to their natural and built environments" (Webber et al., 2021, p. 12) through community-driven initiatives. This approach to education aims to frequently connect students' learning to the greater community as an alternative to decontextualized classroom experiences (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). As a result, it is argued that students establish deeper connections to their local community, thus increasing their appreciation and commitment to the natural world (Sobel, 2008).

In creating a sense of place and belonging, place-based learning utilizes local knowledge within real-world learning experiences (Harada, 2016). Benefits include learning about the environment, grounding learning in local natural environments, fostering care ethic behaviours, developing an understanding of ecological patterns in a bioregion, and recognizing how human actions disrupt these patterns (Webber et al., 2021; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Place-based education emphasizes the need to conserve the local environment and support community well-being (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). Creating a connection to place can initiate our understanding of a greater context, "place is what takes me out of myself, out of the limited scope of human activity...A sense of place is a way of embracing humanity among all of its neighbors. It is an entry into the larger world" (Pyle, 1993, as cited by Louv, 2008, p. 68).

Place-based education focuses on the human/non-human binary experience where children's affections towards the natural world are a direct consequence of their experiences in these environments. This approach perceives nature as separate from the child and requires a child-centered reconnection and discovery, as though the land's sole purpose is for settler colonial legitimacy (Bang et al., 2014; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017). Founded on Eurocentric dichotomies, nature is perceived as separate from humans and a resource that requires intervention, management, and protection (Coulthard, 2010; Nelson et al., 2018; Simpson, 2014). When the child is positioned as outside of or separate from nature, the exploitation or manipulation of "others" is justified due to sentiments of superiority (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nxumalo, 2015). Furthermore, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo (2015) assert that within Western attitudes, there is a nature/culture dichotomy reinforcing an imaginary divide between "wild" and urban habitats. Natural landscapes are then seen as objects of investigation, and are composed of non sentient beings and resources to be exploited.

According to Gruenewald and Smith (2008), "by connecting to and appreciating places, children and youth begin to understand and question the forces that shape places; they develop a readiness for social action, and, with the proper adult guidance, the skills needed for effective democratic participation" (p. xx).

However, it can be argued that place-based education is the simple act of learning in a particular place, lacks critical perspectives such as Indigenous knowledge systems, continues to uphold settler colonial agendas through public education, and is a reactionary response to environmental conditions (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; EnviCenterCU, 2012; Gruenewald, 2003b; Scully, 2020; Simpson, 2014).

Critical Pedagogy of Place

Critical pedagogies of place consider the social and ecological well-being of places in order to "challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant [cultures]" (Gruenewald, 2003b, p. 3). Within critical pedagogy, Lupinacci et al. (2019) emphasize an ecocritical framework that highlights the connections between social and environmental injustices to the perpetuation/acceptance of western cultural habits such as "domination, individualism, and consumerism" (p. 2). Furthermore, ecocritical education considers alternative narratives beyond Eurocentric schools of thought to include knowledge systems such as Indigenous interconnectivity and kinship, questions anthropocentric education frameworks, and engages students to learn from "more-than-human [teachers]" (Fawcett, 2005; Lupinacci et al., 2019, p. 6; Maina-Okori et al., 2018).

Critical pedagogy of place interrogates connections humans have with one another and the shared environments in order to understand collective responsibilities in conserving and restoring relationships to place for future generations (Gruenewald, 2003b). Focusing on the "intersections between cultures and ecosystems," critical pedagogy of place considers the reinhabitation of places that "teach us how to live well in our total environments" and the decolonization of ways of thinking that exploit and oppress people and places (Gruenewald, 2003b, p. 10). Critical place-based education asks students to consider what connections they have to places, what relationships exist between land and Indigenous peoples, and what role they can play in disrupting the settler colonial construct of land as material and commodity (Bang et al., 2014). Critical place-based approaches to education are more considerate and inclusive to additional perspectives, such as Indigenous worldviews. However, critical place-based pedagogy continues to uphold the notion that humans are separate from places, whereas land-based education "extends beyond a material fixed space... is a spiritually infused place grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, cultural positioning, and is highly contextualized" (Styres & Zinga, 2013, as cited in Tuck et al., 2014, p. 9).

Land as First Teacher

Land-based learning centers Indigenous epistemologies; asserts that land encompasses all people, animals, rocks, soil, and water; and considers the deconstruction of settler colonial legal boundaries of place (i.e. Eurocentric views on land and citizenship) on past, present, and future Indigenous lands (Calderon, 2014; Coulthard, 2010). According to Calderon (2014), land includes a complex relationship between "peoples, geographies, natural landscapes, settler laws, and the resulting violence of this long-standing globalization project" (p. 25). Current settler notions of land through critical place-based approaches to education do not adequately prioritize Indigenous-informed understandings and do not link place to the strategic attempted acts of genocide against Indigenous peoples (Calderon, 2014). Land-based pedagogies shape collective truths by privileging Indigenous voices for reliable and viable knowledges of sustainable systems for future generations (Calderon, 2014; Lowan, 2009). Outdoor education is therefore inherently Indigenous and has existed for thousands of years (Webber et al., 2021).

Webber et al. (2021) assert that "[superficially], land-based education

and PBE work towards the similar ends of social and ecological justice; however where [place-based education] supports students in developing positive relationships with 'their' places, land-based education addresses issues of sovereignty from Indigenous perspectives" (p. 19). Within current early childhood educational settings and critical place-based education, land-based pedagogies would invite students to consider the colonial processes that impact and shape places; explore differing views behind the use and understanding of land; reconsider relationships to the land as dynamic, contextual, and cultural; reject settler supremacy towards inevitable and necessary human expansion; question how the past, present, and future contexts of this place impact who they are and how and where they live; and question the anthropocentric normal by understanding the relationality and connectivity we all share (Calderon, 2014; Tuck et al., 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

If settler colonialism is founded on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, then land-based learning is integral to the decolonization process of education in reconnecting Indigenous peoples to land and their associated "relations, knowledges, and languages" (Wildcat et al., 2014, p. II). Additionally, land-based education would invite educators to question the Western notions of truth embedded within the national narrative (McLean, 2013). The only way for all settlers to develop a true understanding of land-based practices is to acknowledge the "notion that all places were once, and continue to be, Indigenous" (Webber et al., 2021, p.19) and to truly listen to what Indigenous people are telling them (Ayed, 2020). It is imperative that Indigenous knowledge keepers are consulted in order to ground land-based education programming in teachings that are respectful to and a reflection of the Indigenous practices of that place (Lowan, 2009).

Personal Reflection

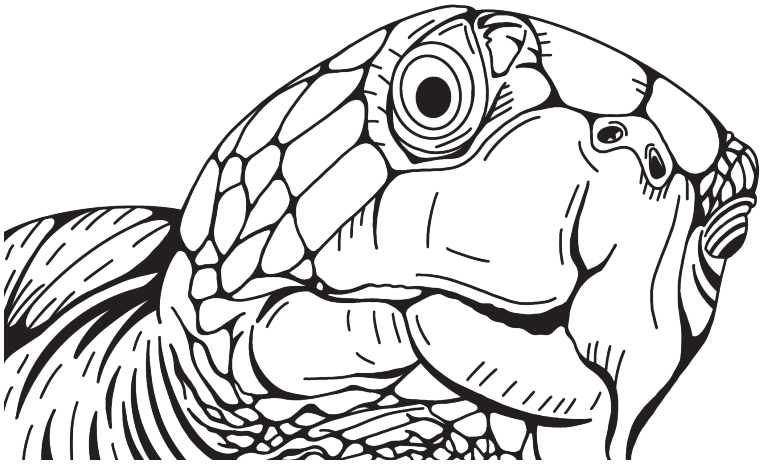
Prior to the Master in Education program at Lakehead University, much of my understanding of land-based education was devoted to providing students with unbiased and uninhibited time in natural environments. I believed that by bringing students hiking to the Rocky Mountains, to journal at the tops of Nose Hill park, and to assess the diversity of fauna and flora in Fish Creek park, I was prioritizing the natural world over our otherwise artificial and contrived experiences on field studies. I had very little understanding of the further damage I was causing by neglecting Indigenous perspectives into my practice and by taking a neutral stance to issues of Indigenous sovereignty (McLean, 2013; Thornton et al., 2021). Through a series of misdirected and misinformed intentions, my actions were merely reinforcing the white social construct of a barren and unoccupied wilderness. Typically perceived as an issue of the past, these present day decisions I was making in education were further justifying and reproducing the occupation and domination of "spaces" by white settlers (McLean, 2013).

A recurring theme throughout many of the courses I've taken is the frustration from educators over the lack of support from administration and various policies in taking students outside, beyond the constraints of their classrooms. While this is a legitimate concern in some districts, I did not have this excuse to hide behind. My current context expects teachers to be out of the building at least 25-30 times per year. Although COVID-19 provided an unusual year for this, we were still encouraged to be out in the community for much of our learning. I unfortunately consider this flexibility in instruction as a luxury as I know this is not the norm for many. One would think that this would provide ample opportunities for centering land-based learning, but there were still many things missing in my practice. Despite the flexibility that my current context affords me, it is clear that I have

a lot of work to continue to do to better understand my own positionality, the stories that shape this land in which I am a settler, and ways in which I can dismantle my own power in privilege towards an Indigenous futurity rather than that of settlers (Tuck et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is clear that I have a shallow understanding of early childhood development and how best to meet the needs of these learners through environmental education in the early grades (Clausen, 2012). This was the initial motivation in taking land-based focused courses. However, I know there is a lot more that I could do moving forward.

One of the most pivotal moments in my career was about four years ago, while on an overnight field study with my students in Edmonton. I had arranged for us to spend the day with Dr. Dwayne Donald from the University of Alberta along the North Saskatchewan River. In anticipation of this day, my students and I devoted a lot of time to learning about this area, gathering stories we could learn from, and understanding respectful relations that would be required in expressing gratitude for this day with him. As a result, our hearts and ears were fully open to experiences with circle protocol, learning from stories of Napi, listening to the implications of Fort Edmonton on the surrounding Indigenous Nations, and understanding the issues surrounding the Rossdale Burial Site. While I know that this experience was a once in a lifetime presence we were very lucky to have, I prioritized the time this connection required and hope that these opportunities become the norm in education.

Finally, one of the elements of this profession that I continue to struggle with is how to effectively navigate and balance the social, economical, and environmental costs of the oil and gas industry in a province that is reliant on this revenue. Often, teachers are fearful of angry parents that perceive these lessons as an attack on the industry. As a result, educators in this position shy away from teaching to the resulting environmental



degradation, and marginalization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Eaton and Day (2019) criticize the popular "pro-environmentalist" programs such as Inside Education and SEEDS as they are funded by the oil and gas companies, are forms of greenwashing, and deflect attention from the burdens placed on surrounding Indigenous communities. Furthermore, these programs stress individual behaviour changes as ways to lessen the environmental impacts of the fossil fuel industry, rather than question the corporate power of oil and gas companies themselves (Eaton & Day, 2019). Centering Indigenous epistemologies with a land-based approach to oil and gas education has the potential to provide a balanced approach to resource extraction education in Alberta. Furthermore, this will create space for multiple perspectives that result in noncontroversial understandings of land as a collective responsibility and necessary for all beings to heal and thrive (Greenwood, 2009; Styres et al., 2013). While these concerns mostly arise in Division II (grades 4-6) and Division III (grades 7-9), prioritizing land-based pedagogy in early childhood education would set a foundation for tackling these issues in the older grades.

There continue to be many gaps in my understanding that are essential to continuing my learning beyond the Master of Education program. I

continue to learn more about the theory surrounding land-based pedagogy and the practical applications to education and my practice. While I have found a lot of comfort throughout this program learning about and affirming/challenging the theoretical sides of this learning, how this lives in everyday teaching is not something that is easily learned in an online format. For example, I am currently working through understanding place-names and the establishment of provincial and federal parks I frequently visit to better understand the impacts this had on surrounding Nations in Treaty 7 Territory. Since these are sites frequented by students and educators in my school board, these layers of understanding need to be better prioritized. As mentioned above, the most impactful applications of theory are through experience, and in order for this to happen, I need to continue to listen, connect, and learn alongside the teachings from this land in which I am a visitor.

Conclusion

Through critical place-based education, students establish connections to their local environments and examine ways in which existing power structures marginalize local communities. Land-based learning would then strengthen place-based practices by centering Indigenous epistemologies. Although place-based and land-based learning sometimes share common objectives of decolonization, the omissions of Indigenous epistemology and ontology further "perpetuate oppression, rather than foster reconciliation, among Indigenous and Eurocentric worldviews" (Webber et al., 2021, p. 20). Therefore, by centering Indigenous worldviews, critical place-based and land-based education can work together simultaneously to disrupt the relationship to power that humans possess over land (Scully, 2020). Furthermore, these two approaches to early childhood education would provide students with the time and space to listen to and learn alongside the land and their more-than-human actors (Kimmerer, 2013).

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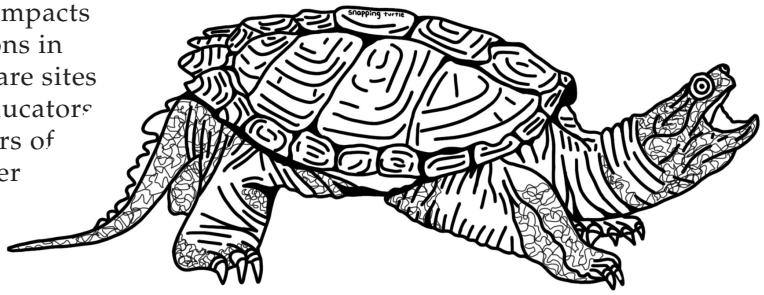

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Decolonizing Education

By Emily Parker

Introduction

"[Indigenous] communities continue to suffer the effects of colonization and Eurocentric policies that erode the base of Indigenous knowledge necessary for the healing and development of [Indigenous] peoples" (Battiste, p.16, 1998). This quote from Battiste's *Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education* truly encapsulates the Canadian education system, as it pinpoints colonization and racism at the forefront of academia. As a newly trained teacher, and student studying Indigenous Education, I have come to recognize a commonality amongst my Master of Education courses. This commonality is in the lack of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and perspectives in education, and the painstaking presence of colonization.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established and mandated in 2008 to "guide and inspire Indigenous peoples and Canadians in a process of truth and healing on a path leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect" (TRC, 2015). In a response to the trauma "brought to light", based on interviews from Indian Residential School Survivors, the TRC created an extensive and comprehensive Calls to Action list, for how the Canadian government, both provincial and federal, can reconcile with Indigenous peoples. The calls to action for education include adequately funding schools, especially for band or reserve schools, making a prioritized effort to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, allowing for greater parental involvement in Band 17 school, and the development of "culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Indigenous families" (TRC, 2015). Based on these calls to actions, amongst the many more listed, my questions are as follows; "what does this look like in actual practice?", "how can I support these calls to actions?", and "what are the best practices for Indigenizing education and supporting Indigenous students?".

In this paper, I will discuss how the Canadian education system perpetuates colonization, and I will also propose ways to decolonize education. First, I will examine how education is centred around "whiteness" and Eurocentrism. Next, I will highlight land-based pedagogy and ways to Indigenize learning. Lastly, I will further explore pedagogies and practices to implement in the decolonization of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Overall, I will seek to solidify exact ways in which non-Indigenous educators can decolonize their practice and support Indigenous students.

Positionality

My name is Emily Parker. I identify as a cisgender female and my pronouns are, she and her. I am a white, Euro-Canadian settler. My ancestry includes immigration from Scotland and South Africa to Barrie, Ontario, Canada. I currently reside in Barrie, which is located on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, and a part of Treaties 16 and 18. I have grown up in an upper-middle class, nuclear family.

My educational background includes completion of an Honors Bachelor of Arts from Western University, with a double major in Anthropology and First Nations Studies. I have also completed a diploma in Social Service Work from George Brown College. More recently, I have graduated from Lakehead University's teacher education program, and am now pursuing a Master of Education specializing in Indigenous Education and Social Justice Education. Furthermore, I

have completed professional development in the topics of outdoor education, land-based pedagogy, reconciliation, and have learned from Elders from various Indigenous communities in Ontario to further understand Indigenous ways of knowing. My related professional background includes working with youth involved in the Criminal Justice System. More specifically, I worked in Restorative Justice and facilitated Restorative Circles in order to hold youth accountable for their actions, resolve issues with victims of crime, and assign sanctions as an alternative to proceeding with criminal charges. While working in this position, I became fully trained in Restorative Practices, and learned how to use restorative approaches for conflict-resolution and communication. I recognize that Restorative Practices originate from Indigenous knowledge, culture, and traditions.

Despite this vast knowledge and training, when I first began my journey as an educator, I felt that I was ill-equipped to properly teach Indigenous content in the classroom. I had a basic understanding of Indigenous pedagogies but did not understand how to fully implement them. Furthermore, being that my beliefs are very socialist and structuralist, I was and am very focused on dismantling the Canadian education system, but do not know how to do so concretely, through my teaching practice. During the past two years, I have had the opportunity to begin to more fully understand the challenges I encountered by exploring the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism and colonial attitudes in contemporary society and in my own practice.

Whiteness in Education

As a white, settler educator, it is important for me to understand the how the current Canadian education system projects "whiteness" and perpetuates colonialism. As explained by McLean (2013), "whiteness is the socio-spatial process that constitutes particular bodies as possessing the normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege". It is through this whiteness that Indigenous peoples and communities continue to suffer the effects of colonization. As Battiste explains, the current curricula in the Canadian education system serves "as another colonial instrument to deprive Aboriginal communities of their knowledge" (Battiste, p.16, 1998). When Indigenous histories, ways of knowing, and languages are deliberately excluded from curriculum documents and implementations, the Canadian government and non-Indigenous educators are sending the message to Indigenous students that their culture, traditions, and teachings are invalid and less important than "Eurowestern" teachings (Clarke, p.19, 2015). These messages and intentional exclusion perpetuate colonialist values as Indigenous students internalize these messages and begin to give way to the westernized education system. Battiste takes this example further through the analysis of cognitive imperialism. Cognitive imperialism has caused many cultural minorities in Canada to believe that their poverty and powerlessness are the result of their cultural and racial status and origins (Battiste, p.21, 1998). Furthermore, cognitive imperialism in the education system leads to ignorance and perpetuation of Eurocentric thought. Many teachers in the public school system have not taken courses about and from Indigenous peoples and tend to see Indigenous peoples as an "anthropological culture" in its limited sense of concrete objects like beads, buffalo, and bannock" (Battiste, p.22, 1998). This then leads to inaccurate lesson planning and facilitation of Indigenous content, which in turn, impacts both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students as again, colonialist and Eurocentric values are being prioritized, leaving Indigenous Education as an afterthought. Ultimately, the Canadian education system and greater society centers around Western worldviews and white-settler norms, and those who do not conform to it are left marginalized due to different abilities,

cultures, and belief systems (Clarke, p.18, 2015).

Strictly looking at Canadian environmental education, McLean (2013) shows how environmental education programs use curriculums that situates racism and colonialism in Canada, as that of the past. This, in turn, "masks the violence of ongoing white-settler colonialism, reifying Canadianness as "goodness and innocence."" (McLean, p.355, 2013). Furthermore, the normalization of whiteness continues to be a theme within environmental education through various dominant narratives of Canadian nation building" (McLean, 2013). These narratives include excluding whiteness from the violence of colonialism, defining Canadian nationality as being "good" and "innocent", the erasure of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge from outdoor education, and the perception of wilderness as an empty space, waiting to be discovered. Ultimately, these narratives "continue to entitle white people to occupy and claim originary status in Canada, signifying wilderness and the environment as a white space" (McLean, p.354, 2013). Excluding whiteness from the violence of colonialism works to keep white settlers ignorant in terms of understanding their own positionality within society and Canadian history. This also erases Indigenous histories and de-politicizes environmental issues. In turn, environmental issues are seen as "natural disasters" and the role of colonialism, capitalism, and their on-going impacts on Indigenous peoples is broadly ignored (McLean, 2013). Another key narrative of environmental education is the perception of wilderness as an empty space, waiting to be discovered and explored. Firstly, this idea in itself encourages colonialism as white students and people are "conquering" new, untouched places. Secondly, the idea of wild, empty spaces erases "Indigenous Peoples and histories from the land [and] justifies the white-settler state" (McLean, p.355, 2013). In order to combat these issues and decolonize environmental education programs, it is essential for curriculum to consistently and significantly focus on addressing the historical impact of white-settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples. This will lead to the construction of an anti-colonial pedagogy of the environment (McLean, p.356, 2013). Furthermore, environmental education programs need to focus on radical politicization and critical analysis (McLean, p.361, 2013). This will help students to question their own power and privilege and address white-centered and Eurocentric messages that they receive throughout all aspects of Canadian society.

Land as Pedagogy

Land-based learning is an Indigenous education pedagogy that can be used to decolonize education. In *Land-Based Pedagogies: A Path to Decolonizing Environmental Education in British Columbia*, Benton calls on different scholars to complete the following definition:

Land-based pedagogies reflect the Indigenous understanding that the Land is an all-encompassing, sentient, living thing, that has existed since time immemorial; it is the air and the water, the rocks and the soil. The Land is an "animate and spiritual being constantly in flux… It refers not only to geographic places and our relationships with… landscapes but also gestures to the ways that discourses within places inform and are informed by [Indigenous] vision, pedagogies, and teaching practices" (Styres et al., 2013, p. 37). The Land and the People have grown up together through the years; when Indigenous people talk about the need to care for all their relations, they see the Land and all the things in it as their relations, not just the other humans living on the Land with them (Kajner, Fletcher, & Makokis, 2012) (Benton, p. 21, 2017).

With this deep connection to the land, it is clear that Indigenous worldviews

encompass holistic views of the world where the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual parts of an individual cannot be separated from their community or home (land) (Calrke, p.16, 2015). Furthermore, as Simpson (2014) argues, "Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes." For the Nishnaabeg, for example, learning from the land means that each person develops their own relationship to the land, all people then come together to share knowledge, where each person is celebrated for their differences and what they bring to the community, and they also have the responsibility of sharing what they have learned with others (Simpson, 2014). By learning from a traditional Nishaabeg story of maple syrup tapping, Simpson has come to understand that we can learn from the land, but also learn *with* the land. Land-based pedagogy is a full-bodied experience that is practiced within family, community, and throughout generations using "kinetics, spiritual presence, and emotion" (Simpson, p.7, 2014). It is through the land that meaning is made and stories are built. In hopes that generations will begin to live like Kwezens (rejecting colonial views, building relationships with both human and nonhuman, learning from history and storytelling), Simpson describes: "we shouldn't be just striving for land-based pedagogies. The land must once again *become* the pedagogy" (Simpson, p.14, 2014). Overall, land-based learning offers more than simply getting students into nature, instead, it focuses on connecting students to the land that they live on in ways that directly connect with Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Restoule et al., 2013). I think that land-based learning decolonizes education by consistently legitimizing Indigenous education and addressing environmental and social justice issues that stem from colonial practices and settler actions.

Although land-based learning is extremely important in Indigenizing and decolonizing education, Lowan Trudeau (2017) argues that land-based pedagogy is "largely discursive" and often lacking Indigenous voice. This is because of the lack of Indigenous perspective and understanding when non-Indigenous educators attempt to facilitate land-based learning, with no prior education or experience with Indigenous peoples. Instead, critical Indigenous pedagogy of place can be used to emphasize the importance of Indigenous perspectives. Furthermore, Lowan Trudeau argues that Indigenous pedagogies can be difficult, as "Indigenous diaspora" (feelings of alienation, loss of land and identity, longing for ancestral territories) is common across Canada. To fully incorporate critical Indigenous pedagogy of place into practice, Lowan Trudeau encourages educators to use autobiographical and autoethnographical narratives to understand the self, as well as the history of particular places. Furthermore, comparing Indigenous and Western narratives of places can be a powerful exercise for acknowledging, "the historical and contemporary cultural and ecological pedagogies of place" (Lowan Trudeau, 2017). Therefore, critical Indigenous pedagogy helps educators and students to reflect on the content of environmental education and refocus on Indigenous perspectives and histories when learning about land.

The Power of Connection

Even with the outline of land-based pedagogies and practices, it is further important to acknowledge and empower what Simpson calls "Indigenous Resurgence". Indigenous Resurgence recognizes that Indigenous individual, family, and community practices are just as political and practice resistance just as much as rallies, protests, and blockades. In fact, "the daily actions undertaken by individual Indigenous people, families and communities often go unacknowledged but are no less

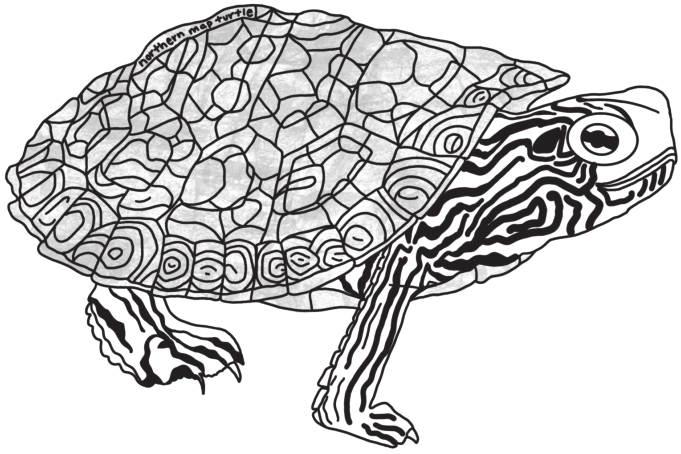
vital to decolonial processes" (Simpson p.16, 2011). Simpson describes that the only way too fully engage with land-based learning is through individual and community well-being, re-connecting to the importance of family and community, raising awareness about the impacts of colonization on Indigenous lands, waters, minds, bodies, and spirits, and through healing traumatic experiences and disconnection from the past (Simpson, 2011). Because cultural knowledge, language, and traditions are passed on through generations in daily tasks and life skills, Indigenous families and communities are engaging in decolonization by keeping Indigenous education alive and thriving through language and connection. Although the colonial education system has kept families separated through both time and space, when Indigenous communities are able to reconnect with each other and their traditional territory, they are able to strengthen their knowledge and practices, thereby showing their resistance.

Restoule, et. al's *Learning from Place: A Return to Traditional Mushkegowuk Ways of Knowing*, furthers the idea of Indigenous Resurgence through place-based education as it details of a research project that required Mushkegowuk Cree youth of Fort Albany First Nation to interview Elders about the history and relationship of their people to their traditional territory (Restoule, et. al, p.68, 2013). These interviews were conducted over a 10-day river trip with the youth, Elders, and other adults, who travelled together throughout their traditional waters and lands to learn about "the meaning of paquataskamik, the Cree word used for traditional territory, all of the environment, nature, and everything it contains" (Restoule, et. al, p.68, 2013). This process of learning from Elders and engaging in a trip were important in decolonizing the education that the youth had been taught, and for re-remembering and being re-introduced to traditional ways of knowing (Restoule, et. al, p.69, 2013). Throughout the research, an underlying theme emerged and asked the questions: "what is the role of land/territory, and what strategies are people developing to maintain the Mushkegowuk 'way of life,' particularly in face of pressures to enter into the world of large-scale extractive capitalism?" (Restoule, et. al, p.73, 2013). To answer these questions, a critical pedagogy of place was used to identify, recover, and create spaces that teach about living in the specific environment, and to name and change ways of thinking that exploit and oppress people and places. More specifically, the community chose the river as a theme and location for the trip because of its cultural and historical importance (Restoule, et. al, p.74, 2013). This research project provided Mushkegowuk Cree of Fort Albany First Nation with the opportunity to community-build using place-based education, and work towards decolonization by re-learning and re-connecting with their culture, language, and traditions. Overall, Indigenous Resurgence contributes to the decolonization of education as Indigenous peoples reclaim their ways of knowing through communication and connection, while also bringing families and communities together through everyday practices and traditions. In turn, Indigenous students feel connected to their culture, confident in their knowledge, and understand how the two can help them succeed socially, emotionally, spiritually, and academically.

Decolonizing Early Childhood Education

When specifically considering the decolonization of Early Childhood Education (ECE), Regus (2019), recommends three interconnected responses to colonialism and the decolonization of ECE. These responses include focusing on the deconstruction of inequality, addressing colonial beliefs in curriculum and institutions, and addressing colonial culture in education. Ultimately, Regus recommends educators consistently work towards an anti-colonial character in their practice, which is called

"autonomous ecology". This practice involves dissecting the ECE system, culture, and curriculum to unveil the "shadow of colonialism" (Regus, p.422, 2019). More specifically, educators need to ensure the accessibility of their programs to BIPOC students and those with low socio-economic status and reconstruct and initiate a curriculum with a non-Western perspective. Furthermore, ECE should be recentred from the perspective of the children's mindsets. This means having students teach about their own perspectives, cultures, and knowledge themselves, to others. This empowers children and disables the power dynamic between the "all-knowing educator" and the child (Regus, 2019). When dominant norms in ECE practice are challenged, what emerges is a just, inclusive, peaceful, and parallel space for all children.



While Regus provides concrete examples of how to practice decolonization in education, Berman & Abawi (2019) introduce a critical pedagogy to inform practice, called the reconceptualist movement. The reconceptualist movement was started by scholars and educators who wanted to change the "dominant discourses of developmentalist-based theories of early childhood by implementing a multidisciplinary and multi-theoretical approach to how we think about and practise ECE" (Berman & Abawi, p.165, 2019). Reconceptualists study and implement theories from subjects such as anthropology, sociology, gender studies, constructivism, and bio-ecological systems theory, in order to dismantle dominant norms of early childhood education practice (Berman & Abawi, p.165, 2019). Ultimately, reconceptualists argue that philosophies and practices for early childhood education derive from "Western norms of childhood development that are standardized, colour-blind, ahistorical, apolitical, and, supposedly, neutral" (Berman & Abawi, p.166, 2019). These norms have also been developed from research that was completed on white, middle-class, able-bodied, English-speaking children, which continues a colonialist, Eurocentric, and white supremacist status quo, "despite immense growth in the diversity in social, political, economic, and technological arenas that mark globalized childhoods" (Berman & Abawi, p.166, 2019). Berman & Abawi further explain that "ECE curriculum in Canada, which claims to be inclusive and celebrate diversity, may implicitly include white settler norms and position some "diverse" children as "other". By teaching from colonial pedagogies, educators are further oppressing, surveilling, and dominating children (Berman & Abawi, p.173, 2019). With all of this in mind, ECE is in need of educators who follow and promote a post-colonial framework. This framework understands that under colonialism, children and childhood are categorized in the way that colonized peoples were and are oppressed. This means that in education, children are constantly subjected to surveillance and domination (Berman & Abawi, p.177, 2019). Post-colonial educators then, see children as autonomous and celebrate the knowledge each child brings to the classroom. In turn, this practice decolonizes ECE as educators let go of their power and empower children to take control of their own education and share their experiences and perspectives to inform others. Overall, both Regus and Berman & Abawi offer different practices and pedagogies to equip educators with the ability to decolonize their teaching practices and classroom, in hopes of

ultimately dismantling the Canadian education system entirely.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has addressed how the Canadian education system perpetuates colonization, while also proposing ways to decolonize academia, with a specific focus on Early Childhood Education. As a new educator, and as a white settler, I have learned about the importance of being an ally to Indigenous peoples in order to promote and facilitate education that acknowledges colonial and settler violence and addresses the sociohistorical reality of Canadian nationhood (Battiste, p.24, 1998). Moving forward, I hope to continue my journey in becoming conscious of oppression and being critical of the Canadian education system, while working towards Indigenizing all learning spaces (Clarke, 2015).

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Teaching in the Trees, Learning from the Forest

By Giniw/Kory Snache

When you first step into the forest, the first sound you typically hear is that of the chatter from a squirrel. That distinct call and chatter is usually received by other species such as jiindiisi, the blue jay, and aandeg, the crow. Usually, a chorus will then form with others denoting an early warning system, and letting the whole forest know that newcomers are present and are potentially a threat. Isn't that a beautiful thing? Creation working together to create a safe and inclusive environment for one another. What a great teachable moment! What a perfect example of teamwork and reciprocity.

So, what is the difference between outdoor experiential education and Indigenous outdoor education? In the moment mentioned above, there is much to gain. For most, it is just the common noise of the forest. However, what is happening in that moment is greater than what is perceived or can be heard. From an Indigenous education lens, the chorus of calls and chattering can easily be used as a teachable moment that can help prepare the group by creating a sense of understanding before moving forward.

In a moment like this, I will explain to the group the idea of sacred reciprocity, how creation is working together to feel safe and included and that is how I would like our group to proceed. I would explain the concept that we are entering another nation's territory: that of the birds, plants, four leggeds, and the ones we cannot see. I will ask the group; who do you think I am speaking about? The people I hail from, the Ojibweg, believe that the earth and the sacred relationship that sounded through the forest was there long before humans came to be here on Turtle Island. These relationships existed long before us Humans were lowered to the physical realm (earth) for a reason and purpose. Before the group advances, we discuss these concepts and collectively agree that we will respect everywhere we tread because we are entering someone's land. How powerful is that?

I use this introductory activity with each group I work with, whether the students or participants be Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Not only this, a non-Indigenous person can also talk about how the Anishinaabeg came to be without crossing any line of cultural insensitivity. The key with this, is to ensure that your information is accurate and that it is attributed to a credible source. In familiar OE terms, this aligns with the concept of "leave no trace". However, setting the tone at the beginning of any excursion in this fashion makes the individual realize there is something greater than themselves happening with each moment we travel. The benefits are numerous. Greater sharing, collaboration, positivity, awareness, and above all, a focus on being present in the moment.

Throughout whatever journey we may be on, when a person is on the land they are learning through what Asher (1996), has described as Total Physical Response, also known as TPR. This style of teaching and learning is highly effective, especially when teaching language, because all of the learners' senses are engaged. This is also highly beneficial for kinesthetic learners. If this is combined with project-based learning and collaborative approaches to learning, it becomes easier to manage and can spark greater conversations amongst participants.

A great example of this occurred when I was working with a forest school. I was taking students out on a walk to discover animal trails and tracks and before we departed, I gave each student some trail mix to bring and items of their choice and off we went. At certain points we found a deer run, salamanders under rocks, a porcupine den, deer scrapes, and bear marks on beech trunks, as well as numerous bird nests. During lunch, we sat

in a circle discussing two questions: Why do you think those awensiwag (animals) decided to make their homes or runs where they did and how do you think the species would feel if we took them away or interrupted the process? It caused deep reflection with emotional responses.

After, I explained the idea of gifting and offerings in Anishinaabeg culture and the idea of how we have kinship with all living things based on the laws of nature. How our people give offerings before and after we harvest, anything we take, we give back with gratitude and reciprocity and sometimes song and prayer. I tasked each student with going and leaving an offering at an area they identified with most and to say aloud: This is important to me because I feel…, I am leaving an offering because…, and, you are important to me because... Afterwards, we gathered and debriefed, giving each student the opportunity to talk about how they feel about their actions. That is wholistic learning with scope and sequence—focused on the individual and the environment and the idea of stewardship and reciprocity: the backbone of Indigenous understanding.

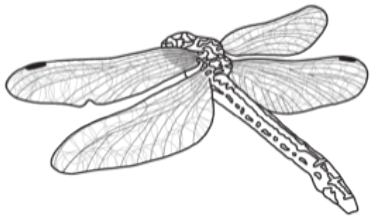
This understanding is incorporated into any Indigenous focused school, organization, or class because it includes an important aspect of Indigenous worldview: the idea that we cannot possibly be balanced and wholesome if our spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional needs are not met or understood. It fills up the individual to become more balanced and confident and considerate of other living things around them and their impact of actions and words. How can we possibly be good students if we can't be good people? How can we treat our kin with kindness without actions of kindness?

Everything we are as Indigenous people comes from the land, our values, language, governance, understandings, songs, and ceremonies. The entirety of our identity. When pursuing education in a system steeped in western ideology, for the most part what you learn and absorb is delivered by a teacher or instructor. The more knowledge you gain, the more successful you should become later in life. In Anishinaabemowin, the language spoken by my people and the most dominant people in Anishinaabewaki (Ontario), we say kinomaagewin, which literally means ki (earth), nomaage (take direction from), and win (a way of being). Again, everything we are. That is our education model, the foundation of the people.

References

Asher, J. (1996) *Learning another language through actions*, Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.

Giniw/Kory Snache has been an outdoor educator and guide for the past 16 years in various capacities, both nationally and internationally. He is currently an outdoor education teacher at Rosseau Lake College.



Traditional Mode of Travel, (i.e., Canoeing)

by Bob Henderson

Editor's note: Stories that bespeak the critical incidence in one's personal life narrative deserve to be shared and explored for the socio-cultural links that can be made with others. Out of such links we begin to see the common story elements we share as experiential educators in settings people may or may not understand and/or value our work. By sharing stories, we explore and can come to understand our work within an enlarged cultural context.

Early in my teaching career, I had one of those life-shaping experiences of which one is forever revisiting when questions of professional identity and one's "place" of practice are raised. The Chair of my university department (physical education at that time) had challenged me in my first year of "formal teaching" (1981) to bring my apparent Canadian Studies focus to the Interdisciplinary Programme of Canadian Studies. The problem was, this particular focus was largely experiential (note the foreshadowing element of his story). Sure, I had some book smarts, but my "experiential" history, literature, and geography was really where I hung my hat. We could call this camping and reading widely about where one was travelling/dwelling. It is that simple. Perhaps the university and I were not an obvious match. But I was to learn that this would be my strength within a "higher education" where some (okay, a few) faculty and many students were craving a combination of book/library with trail//classroom, more authentic real world applications in learning with greater agency. Outdoor Education would be a model to achieve such liberal arts goals even if few in universities recognized this and fewer still supported it.

With time, I organized a course proposal titled, "Heritage and Resource Issues for the Canadian Shield". This would be a two week field studies course. We would base camp out of a lodge in the Temagami area where we would meet local folks on both sides of the issue of commercial resource extraction versus preservation efforts centered on initiatives to create a park reserve—not an uncommon scenario. We would also study the region as a small part of the overall Canadian Shield, from a historical, anthropological, and literary basis. The final week would be a canoe trip to capture, in my promotional words at that time, the feel of the fur trade through our own sweat and cussing on the portage trail; the aesthetic of the "talking tongues"; the pines and Archibald Lampman poetry; the aura of Indigenous peoples rock art (pictographs); and the stories of a bye-gone era relived through our own storytelling and bannock baking around the campfire.

All had gone well during the explanation of the first week's curriculum to the department. No questions—just silent nodding. Once my explanation of the course shifted from the classroom to the canoe trip component—the most experiential component (though I would argue both combined were experiential (Blenkinsop et al, 2016)—I was stopped dead like a wrapped canoe in the river. "This canoe trip, that's phys-ed; that's fun," came a voice from the academic committee. The tone made clear what the words themselves left neutral. Fun was not suitable, neither was this physical, visceral, experiential phys-ed thing. Let's call that embodied knowing. Education should be a somber affair…for professional credibility? Perhaps I've never figured that out. I was dumb-founded, short of breath and expression. I hadn't expressed the above promotional experiential sentiments within the affective domain of learning during this first round of curricular negotiation. These thoughts were with me but not at a place in mind for fast-on-your-feet articulation. Quickly, given my absence of response, I was sent back to the proposal rewriting stage. Expectations were clear: I would delete the canoe trip.

What to do? The canoe trip was the glue. The canoe trip would make all the words, the debates, the readings come alive. But for most in that academic committee that

demands explaining too. As any experiential educator knows, the canoe trip (in this case) was at the heart of this reality-centered project departing from textbooks and standardized procedures of lectures/labs/tutorials. The canoe trip was the searching, creative, discriminating environment that moves beyond rote activities and the distribution of structured knowledge. Our learning would be experiential and thus individually structured: personal and practical; beyond socially structured, largely theoretical, abstract, and technical knowing. Learning would be personal. Learning would be lively, visceral, and at depths and points of integration that I, as co-learner, could not necessarily be accountable for.[1] In Outdoor Experiential Education there is the opportunity for so much darn personal learning that the educator is often required to trust the journey.

I returned to the next meeting with a new set of labels for the "fun" canoe trip. Camping became primitive arts (thanks to Aldo Leopold for this one). Canoeing became a traditional mode of travel (I could thank Sigurd Olson and Grey Owl for this). You get the picture. Campfire time became a Northern heritage stories workshop. In short, the fun experiential phys-ed canoe trip finally got accepted. Nothing changed really, other than my own learning to gain "voice" in a less than supportive setting. I should add, I did have a few champions in the group.

The moral is: be persistent, know your audience, make your experiential learning labels suit their sensibilities without compromising your intentions, and acknowledge the intensity that can exist for experiential methodologies so you can be prepared. I think there are more morals to this professional identity story than offered here, but in true experiential fashion, you think it through from here for yourselves. That's more fun.

Endnotes

[1] A useful comparison of conventional school methodology and experiential practice can be found in "Learning with environments: towards an ecological paradigm for education". Noel Gough, in Ian Robottom, *Environmental Education: Practice and Possibility.* Deakin University Press, Deakin, Australia, 1987.

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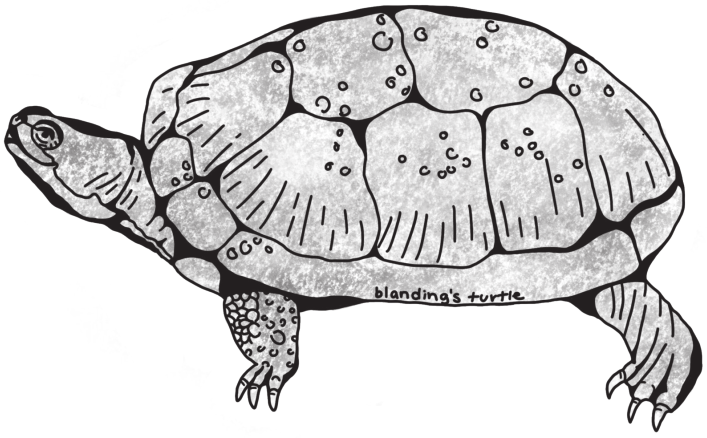
Bob Henderson is a retired professor from McMaster University. He is involved in a Wild Pedagogy International Professional group. He maintains a blog on this topic on his website www.bobhenderson.ca.

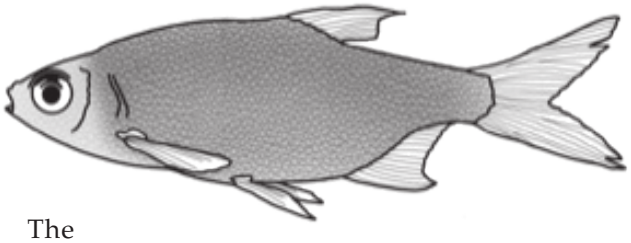


Space for Outdoor Education

By Emily Girouard

There is something mystifying about a star-filled night sky that will have you craning your neck and staring for hours, just to get a glance of the seemingly inexplicable. I work as an astronomy guide at a campground, and every night, I go out into a meadow and talk to dozens of people about something that humans have been ogling at for thousands of years. Looking up at the unobstructed night sky, I can't help but wonder how many people in the generations before me have done exactly what I'm doing now; standing in front of a group of eager guests wanting to know more about the celestial bodies that surround us. Different groups of people from all across the world and throughout human history have studied the stars, told stories about them, used them for navigation, and multiple other purposes. What I am doing here is not new, I'm just the next in a long line of outdoor educators, astronomy enthusiasts, and philosophers to stare glassy-eyed to the stars and want to share that feeling of wonder with others.

I spend these warm nights talking to people about why stars shine, why Ursa Major is in the shape that it is, or why we can see the stars and planets at all, proving that the cosmos are in fact, explicable. I am met with bewildered stares and gasps as people look through the telescope and see Saturn's rings, or when I explain that we're looking at whole galaxies. One night, before heading out to the park's dark sky preserve, I had an eight-year-old boy from Toronto ask me if he could see more than the six stars he could count at home. I told him yes, but he should probably make sure to count them all, just to be sure. That little boy represents exactly what I love about outdoor education. When it comes to the natural phenomena around us, we are often oblivious. There are plenty of things in nature that, to many, are just that—just part of the natural world as anything else is. They're often things we don't see every day or that we just don't pay much attention to, and therefore when we do, they seem to us wild and exceptional. And this is why outdoor education is so important. The look on that kid's face when he saw the Milky Way, and the questions about space that ensued, that is the point of outdoor education. Sparking curiosity and compelling the mind to be inquisitive of the natural world.



The idea that people learn better outdoors is not a new concept, but it often comes across as so. As outdoor educators, we have to fight for this type of learning in our schools, communities, and lives. We perform studies and do research on how green space improves cognitive function, we see it in classrooms, and now it has become a 'new' practice in a lot of schools. But humans have been teaching in the outdoors, with great success, for as long as we've been here. Standing in that field with a green laser pointer in hand, telling ancient stories and marveling at the omnipresence of space spread before me, I can't help but wonder why there is even a question as to why outdoor education matters.

Emily Girouard is a fourth year student in Outdoor Adventure Leadership at Laurentian University in Sudbury. She loves the outdoors, and especially sharing her passion for adventure with kids and adults alike. She is working towards becoming an outdoor education teacher, so she can bring the outdoors into the classroom, and the classroom into the outdoors!

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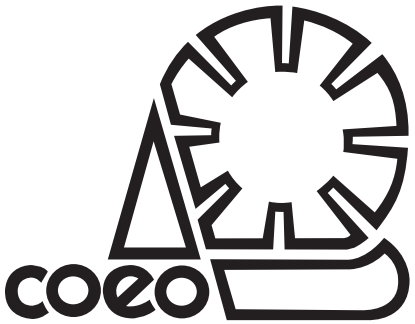

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