PLACES THAT SPEAK:
DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CANADIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

A multicultural approach to diversity and social responsibility still prevails in Canadian early childhood education despite the critiques of Indigenous and early childhood education scholars. Acritical multicultural pedagogies have failed to interrupt the assimilation of children’s cultural backgrounds and continue to divert attention from the legacies of colonialism and racism in contemporary society. In 2019, the British Columbia Ministry of Education launched the revamped version of the Early Learning Framework which has committed to acknowledging the impact of colonialism while fostering children’s relationships with place. In light of this commitment, diversity and social responsibility need to be reconceptualized.

This dissertation investigates how young children encounter and learn about diversity and responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to in early childhood education. Taking a critical place inquiry approach, this study examines children’s relationships with place in a childcare centre located in a highly urbanized and culturally diverse neighbourhood in East Vancouver, Canada. First, I examine the prevalent narratives and practices about diversity and social responsibility that take place in the neighbourhood as well as within the childcare centre. Then, I identify the barriers that impede educators and children from encountering diversity and engage in responsible relationships toward place.

The analysis suggests that multicultural pedagogies continue to prevent educators and children from learning about the impact of colonialism in Canada. Early childhood policies, curriculum, and pedagogies implement – to different degrees – forms of protection by setting up boundaries, although sometimes necessary, in tension with pedagogies that support diversity and responsibility. More specifically, I demonstrate that: 1) adult concerns about children’s safety may preclude opportunities for them to engage with Indigeneity in the neighbourhood
reinforcing settler-colonial practices in early childhood education; and that 2) pedagogies that foster responsibility as dependent on the individual child not only limit access to certain places but also impede children’s engagement with responsible practices toward place. I conclude by discussing how the understanding of children’s relationships with place allows researchers and educators to reconceptualize the notions of diversity and responsibility in early childhood education and support educators in fostering children’s encounters with diversity through place.
Lay Summary

In the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canadian early childhood education needs to rethink its curriculum and pedagogies. This study examines how young children (3-5 years old) learn about diversity and social responsibility in a childcare centre in East Vancouver. The study demonstrates that uncritical multicultural pedagogies not only continue to prevent educators and children from learning about the impact of colonialism in Canada, but also impose key barriers between children and place. The key barriers are two: adult concerns about children’s safety and an understanding of social responsibility mainly as the child’s ability to self-regulate. Together, these barriers may preclude opportunities for them to engage with Indigeneity and a sense of collective responsibility so much needed in current times. Knowledge on these barriers allows early childhood educators to reconceptualize the notions of diversity and responsibility and foster meaningful encounters with diversity through children’s relationships with their place.
Preface

This dissertation is an original, independent, and unpublished work written by Claudia Diaz-Diaz. The fieldwork reported throughout this dissertation was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Certificate Number H16-00728).
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List of Abbreviations

BC ELF  British Columbia Early Learning Framework
CCLR  British Columbia Child Care Licensing Regulations
CCOF  Child care operating funding
CPP  Canada Pension Plan
ECEBC  Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia
FRC  Fraser River Centre
IRS  Indian Residential Schools
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SSI  Provincial supplemental security income
TRC  Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UBC  The University of British Columbia
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Dedication

To all Land defenders and educators across the globe.
Chapter 1:

Introduction

In Fall 2016, Kathleen Kummen, an instructor and the coordinator of the Early Childhood Care and Education program at Capilano University, wrote in *The Early Childhood Educator*,

> The truth is multiculturalism is a settlers’ issue and does not recognize that these lands are steeped in cultures that have existed here for thousands of years. Multiculturalism is a policy created by the Canadian government to address diversity among the people who came to these lands from other countries, and not the cultures that existed prior to contact. (p. 11)

*The Early Childhood Educator* is a journal published by Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC), a non-profit organization that has represented over 900 early childhood educators in the province of BC since 1969. Kummen’s critique of multiculturalism as a settler strategy to address diversity in early childhood education represents the sentiments of a growing number of early childhood educators and researchers. On September 11, 2018, two years after Kummen’s publication, the BC Ministry of Education released to the public the *Revised British Columbia Early Learning Framework (2018 Revised BC ELF)*, a draft version that explicitly commits to decolonizing early childhood education pedagogies. This draft version became the official *BC Early Learning Framework (2019 BC ELF)* the following year (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). The new framework defines decolonization as the process of

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1 In this dissertation I use both the terms early childhood educator and teacher interchangeably. Early childhood educators are teachers who specialize to work with young children.

2 In this dissertation I use three versions of the *B.C. Early Learning Framework (BC ELF)* for comparison purposes. The 2008 *B.C. ELF* version, the 2018 *Revised ELF Draft*, and the 2019 *BC ELF*. 
exposing the effects of colonization on Indigenous communities through a deep ongoing
examination of early childhood education pedagogical practices. The 2019 BC ELF seeks to
expose the effect of colonization and transform BC early childhood education by aiming “to
resist language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonial oppression and
marginalization of Indigenous people” (BC Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 7). In tune with
Kummen’s argument, the 2018 Revised BC ELF emphasizes that educators must learn the history
of these lands – comprising the territories of Indigenous people in what is now known as British Columbia – to interrupt the settler colonial project of erasure of Indigenous people from their territories.

I open with the words of Kathleen Kummen and the 2018 Revised BC ELF to introduce
this doctoral dissertation about diversity and social responsibility through children’s relationships
with place in the settler colonial city of Vancouver. While this dissertation focuses on a single
childcare centre, I situate this study in the context of British Columbia and its attempts to foster
cultural and ethnic diversity through early childhood education. All Canadian provinces have
included diversity and social responsibility in their early learning frameworks as a key learning
area (Langford, 2010). Cultural diversity, particularly in Canadian cities, has demanded that
early childhood education deepen cross-cultural understandings and respect for diversity as a

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3 The 2018 B.C. Revised Early Learning Framework and 2019 B.C. Early Learning Framework were elaborated in consultation with Métis Nation BC, First Nation Education Steering Committee, and the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.

4 These provinces include Quebec, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, and New Foundland Labrador. The Prince Edward Early Learning Framework refers to inclusivity instead of diversity, but it does include social responsibility. In 2017, the government of Canada announced the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework which sets the foundation for federal, provincial and territorial governments (Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon). An Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework has been co-developed with Indigenous partners to complement the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework to convey the cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and families (Government of Canada, 2018).
form of social responsibility (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2006). In 2008, the first British Columbia’s Early Learning Framework (BC ELF) introduced the “social responsibility and diversity” learning area along with four others (i.e., well-being and belonging, exploration and creativity, and language and literacy) (B.C. Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2008). The social responsibility and diversity learning area aimed to support young children “to learn about their own heritage and culture and that of others, and to recognize the connection between their own actions and the wider world” (B.C. Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2008, p. 33).

In the 2019 BC Early Learning Framework, the Ministry of Education introduced four living inquiries (formerly called learning areas) and pathways (formerly called learning outcomes). The living inquiry, now called “identities, social responsibility, and diversity,” is embedded in the premise that “awareness and understandings of one’s family background, culture(s), heritage(s), language(s), values, beliefs, and perspectives in a pluralistic society” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 84) is key to respecting diversity. The revamped framework acknowledges the need to celebrate and weave together “diverse abilities, cultures, languages, traditions, and heritages” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 84) while at the same time, “educating others about the impacts of colonialism” (p. 84). These two aims – celebrating diverse cultures as well as educating about the impact of colonialism – are challenging for early childhood educators, if we consider that “celebrating diverse cultures” has long been understood

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5 The shift in names was intentional to move away from a language that suggests learning as a static process with predictable learning outcomes. The change in language also reconfigured the former learning areas and learning outcomes regarding diversity and social responsibility.

6 Pedagogical narrations or documentations are a pedagogical tool used by educators to support children in the four living inquiries including diversity and social responsibility. Educators can engage in pedagogical narrations by documenting daily practices and sharing these with colleagues, children, and families. Through this documentation, educators can make children's learning process as well as educators' pedagogical choices visible and open to critical reflection.
within a multicultural framework. Educating about the impacts of colonialism entails teaching about Indigenous peoples’ dispossessions of their lands and languages as well as about the displacement of their families and cultures which has long been ignored in multicultural accounts of cultural and ethnic diversity. As I explain in this introductory chapter, and in more detail in Chapter 2, Indigenous scholars (e.g., St. Denis, 2011) have strongly criticized a multicultural approach to diversity for failing to acknowledge a history of colonization and racism and instead focusing on the provision of a multicultural society.

To face the challenges of diversity, the revised framework offers pathways that help educators and children engage with the living inquiry of identities, social responsibility, and diversity. The framework suggests that, in order to engage with social responsibility, it is important to provide children with varied opportunities to become involved in community or even global projects in which they can explore issues of social justice. For example, the framework outlines the following questions to guide educators in supporting children’s engagement with social responsibility:

In what ways do children have opportunities to discuss real life issues such as poverty, race, war, gender, discrimination, and inequity? How are relationships fostered among children and adults of diverse heritages, histories, and cultural backgrounds? How can children become aware of diverse worldviews and perspectives? How can children begin to recognize and respond to discrimination and inequity? […] Dialogues can bring tensions and disagreement. How do I create a culture where disagreement is a positive force? (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 88)

In the 1970s, Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal government started to design what later became the official Multiculturalism Act. The Act offered official recognition to cultural and ethnic
minorities in order to repair the lasting harm that policies of assimilation caused them. Since then, multiculturalism has been framed in the public imaginary as an essential part of Canadian national identity (Jedwab, 2014; Winter, 2011). Nonetheless, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars (Ahmed, 2007; Ashton, 2015; Bannerji, 2000; Bear Nicholas, 2008; Day, 2000; Day & Sadik, 2002; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Légaré, 1995; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007; Short, 2005; St. Denis, 2011) have strongly critiqued what they describe as a liberal multicultural approach to diversity. Instead of offering recognition to cultural and ethnic minorities, a liberal multicultural approach continues to treat Indigenous people as only one more ethnic minority within Canada, negating their rights to self-determination and to their lands. In short, liberal multiculturalism overrides the damaging consequences of ongoing colonization and reinforces a project of erasure of Indigenous people from their lands and places (St. Denis, 2011).

With this critique in mind, my dissertation research takes as its point of departure the view that the ideas of “diversity” and “social responsibility” in early childhood education should be reconceptualized and should move away from a multicultural approach. Gilroy (2005) argued more than a decade ago that despite a growing political environment against cultural and ethnic diversity around the globe, “the briefest look around confirms that multicultural society has not actually expired” (p. 2). In other words, Gilroy was referring to the diversity of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds that co-exist in contemporary multicultural society. Nonetheless, Gilroy warns us about the dangers of assuming that group homogeneity, and not diversity, is the rule that brings people together. Instead of abandoning any ambition toward plurality, he argues that the political conflicts in multicultural societies must be addressed in the context of imperial and colonial history since it “continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer-imperial countries” (p. 2). During my fieldwork, I observed the complexities that Gilroy
was referring to. While diversity and difference have been framed and celebrated as a desirable feature of Canadian society, the long history of assimilation of cultural and ethnic difference in Canadian early childhood education illustrates Gilroy’s point about group homogeneity over diversity and the need for addressing the assimilation of difference in the context of colonial history.

The 2019 BC ELF offers a promissory opportunity to adopt other approaches to diversity by following the pedagogical principle of connection and reconnection to land, culture, community, and place. The new framework states that “there are no pre-set ways to engage with the four living inquiries; instead pedagogy should be grounded in the place, land, families, histories, and cultures of local communities” (B.C. Ministry of Education, p. 65). The framework aligns with an arguably recent but growing development explored in the early childhood education literature that has demonstrated that place plays a crucial role in exposing the effects of colonization in early childhood education settings (e.g., Nxumalo, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). While this literature has focused on place in early childhood education settings, its role in children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility in urban contexts is still underexamined. Building on these efforts, this dissertation aims to examine narratives and practices in early childhood education about diversity and social responsibility through children’s relationships with place, paying attention to the places that children do and do not have access to. Although most studies about children’s relationships with place have been done in early childhood education centres located in urban settings, studies of children’s relationships with place have usually been situated in natural environments, for example, through forest walks and encounters with wild animals. My dissertation seeks to make a contribution in this area by uncovering children’s encounters with diversity in a highly urbanized area through
neighbourhood walks and examining the barriers that early childhood educators face in engaging with pedagogies anchored in place.

To understand the barriers that educators and children encounter in drawing on place as a pedagogical approach to learn about diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education is especially important in the context of British Columbia. In this dissertation, I identify some of the challenges for educators in a context where the aspiration to decolonize place and pedagogies in early childhood education is becoming more prominent as the 2019 BC ELF demonstrates. Despite the efforts of many BC early childhood educators (e.g., Nxumalo, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015), the reality is that “there is no infrastructure to support them in professional collaborative learning” (BC Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 11), a fundamental condition for engaging in decolonial pedagogies. As I demonstrate throughout Chapter 5, 6, and 7, all of the early childhood educators in the childcare centre where this study was done are women and first-or second-generation immigrants who face important challenges in their role as pedagogues. Policies, regulations, and pre-service or in-service training that may lack in continuity, depth, and specificity to their own contexts have imposed rigidity and hampered the freedom of early childhood educators to make pedagogical changes in their classrooms as my findings suggest. As a group, early childhood educators are oversubscribed and yet historically underpaid and undervalued as professionals (Saulnier & Frank, 2019). This continues to be true, despite the latest government measures in the Province’s Child Care BC plan (i.e., new recruitment and retention strategy that includes wage enhancement, on-the-job training opportunities, early childhood education bursaries, and professional development) to redress this historical debt with BC early childhood educators (British Columbia Government, n.d.; ECEBC, 2018).
While I do not claim to decolonize place and pedagogies in early childhood education through this dissertation, I acknowledge, and am committed to critiquing, the colonial legacy that early childhood education carries forward by interrogating children’s relationships with place in the context of a settler colonial country like Canada. I am interested in understanding the role that children’s relationships with place play in their learning about diversity and social responsibility in Canadian early childhood education. More specifically, I am concerned with these research questions: 1) How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter and learn about diversity and social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to? and 2) What barriers stand in the way of educators and children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre (FRC) encountering diversity and social responsibility through place?

To answer these questions, I examine the prevalent everyday narratives and practices about diversity and social responsibility in the FRC. I pay special attention to the places that children do and do not have access to and how these places inform children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility. I also examine the barriers that stand in the way of educators and children encountering diversity through place in their everyday narratives and practices in the FRC. I believe that attention to children’s relationships with place will allow me to understand why early childhood education might be more permeable to certain knowledges and practices toward diversity and difference while it is less permeable to others.

Children’s relationships with place have been widely studied within and across disciplines like sociology of education (Apple, Ball, & Gandin, 2010), children’s geographies (Elwood & Mitchell, 2012; Horton & Kraftl, 2006; Tuan, 1977), history of education and childhood (Burke, Cunningham, & Grosvenor, 2010; Diaz-Diaz & Gleason, 2015), and early childhood education. In early childhood education, for example, researchers have paid attention
to children’s perceptions and uses of physical space (Einarsdottir, 2005), childcare centres as places for learning and participation (Emilson & Folkesson, 2004; Nordtømme, 2012), and young children’s knowledge of social status and social differentiation in early childhood settings (Lofdahl, 2007). Other studies have focused on early childhood pedagogical and physical spaces in terms of quality of care (Pessanha, Aguiar, & Bairrão, 2007) and the production of early childhood through institutional practices and children’s everyday lives (Vuorisalo, Rutanen, & Raittila, 2014). Since most of these studies have been conducted in European countries, they have not addressed children’s relationships with place in settler colonial societies. These studies conceptualize place and social space as discrete entities with clear boundaries between them and children themselves. In these studies children continue to be the focus of research, whereas place, while having more predominance, still remains secondary in the analysis.

**Children’s Relationships with Place in Settler Colonial Societies**

Children’s relationships with place in settler colonial countries, like Canada, are deeply intertwined with the legacies of colonialism (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). Early childhood education has played a key role in reinforcing those colonial legacies through its everyday practices, pedagogies, and curriculum. A number of scholars have proposed unsettling the assumptions that have turned early childhood education into a structure that benefits the ongoing settler colonial project. This project includes attempts to erasure Indigenous presence from their traditional and ancestral lands.

A number of scholars have argued that unsettling and decolonizing work requires challenging the status quo by tracing the material and symbolic consequences of colonial legacies in early childhood education. For example, Nxumalo (2015) has studied the natural
places that children often visit as part of their forest walks. Ashton (2015) has critiqued how liberal multiculturalism continues to assimilate the other by making sense of them within their own dominant frameworks. Bear Nicholas (2008) has demonstrated how Western human-centric notions of pedagogies, like developmentally appropriate curriculum, work against decolonizing early childhood education. For these scholars unsettling early childhood education has meant problematizing understandings of place (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017) as well as examining the role that neoliberal rationalities play in such understandings (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). To challenge both settler colonial and neoliberal understandings of place, scholars have recentered pedagogical practices around Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land or moving toward Land Education approaches (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). An unsettling project in early childhood education also needs to contest the long-standing assumptions that presuppose the inability of children to be exposed to difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998; Duhn, 2012).

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) remind us that despite the fact that places are borderless, humans have set up boundaries – physical and symbolic – to demarcate difference. In early childhood education, policies, curriculum, and pedagogies implement – to different degrees – forms of protection by setting up boundaries makers (e.g., fences, gates, access to places), which are often necessary, but may also be in tension with – and can potentially do a disservice to – pedagogies that support diversity and social responsibility. I aim to critically examine some of those boundaries in order to reveal the complexity and multifaceted work that is needed to support young children in learning about diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education.
Hierarchies of difference have long positioned white middle class men closer to the top of the social hierarchy of power while positioning racialized groups including Indigenous women, and children closer to the bottom (Genishi & Goodwin, 2008; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). These hierarchies have been used to create barriers, technologies, and systems that separate, divide, marginalize, or simply exclude individuals because of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, class, and ability. Indigenous critique has demonstrated that liberal multicultural approaches in education have failed to give official recognition and to redress the harm caused by assimilation of difference. Settler colonial educational systems (Battell & Barker, 2015) like early childhood education may continue to reproduce (not entirely, but frequently) the barriers that separate children from certain places and certain stories.

**Rationale for the Study**

Children’s ability to become more socially aware of and responsible toward the challenges of cultural and ethnic diversity constitutes a major imperative for early childhood education in the current changing world. Armed conflict and human-induced environmental disasters globally have forced families with young children to leave their countries. As a result of the growing immigrant and asylum-seeking populations, a radicalization of responses to human difference is reflected, for example, in an increase of anti-migratory policies (Raymond-Flesch, 2018) around the globe. In these cases, othering – labelling people as threats – remains at the centre of radical responses against cultural, racial and ethnic difference. Nonetheless, many Canadians continue to be proud of their multicultural values of tolerance and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity (Abella & Molnar, 2019). Nonetheless, the reputation of Canada as a multicultural country
continues to divert attention from the social inequalities and injustices that affect Indigenous communities as the result of ongoing colonization. The case of Indigenous children seems to be one of the most acute, as they are overrepresented in Canada’s child welfare system as well as in poverty rates in BC (Macdonald & Wilson, 2016). According to the BC Child Poverty Report Card (First Call, 2018), 44% of Indigenous children living on reserve live in poverty. These numbers demonstrate the damaging consequences of a long history of assimilation of Indigenous children that justified cultural genocide through the era of Indian Residential Schools (Milloy, 1999). These imaginaries of Canada as a respectful and tolerant nation toward cultural and ethnic diversity have largely filled in the gap between pedagogical choices and practices (St. Denis, 1999; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013) concealing Indigeneity as one more cultural minority in Canada.

   Early childhood scholars (e.g., Genishi & Goodwin, 2008; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; MacNaughton, 2006; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017; Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006; Yelland & Frantz Bentley, 2017) have largely investigated the experiences of exclusion and marginalization of young children’s diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in early childhood education classrooms. These studies have focused on the social relationships among children and educators that explain processes of exclusion and marginalization based on hierarchies that privilege white and middle-class backgrounds. These perspectives have moved the field of early childhood education forward by offering curriculum and pedagogies that interrupt the relationships of power at the core of injustices in marginalization, exclusion, and assimilation. Nonetheless, the

7 To determine this number, Statistics Canada’s Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM) after income taxes was used.
human-bounded focus of these studies about diversity and difference in early childhood education has overlooked the role that the non-human world broadly, and place more particularly, play in children’s encounters and learning about diversity and social responsibility. In other words, while social relationships are key to learning about diversity and social responsibility, I argue that they are not the only means by which children become aware of cultural and ethnic diversity and the challenges that accompany living together with cultural and ethnic difference without assimilating it into sameness. To move toward theoretical frameworks that acknowledge the multiple relationships that children take part in and that contribute to their learning, this doctoral study seeks to understand how children learn about diversity and social responsibility through their relationships with places in early childhood education.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Children’s Relationships with Place

An important context for this study is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released a report with 94 calls to action to the Canadian government, and the Canadian people more generally, to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation. A number of calls appeal directly to the wellbeing and education of young children. For instance, the TRC’s Call to Action 12 requires “the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 321). It is important to highlight that the TCR is not only concerned with the welfare of Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) children, but also with building capacity among non-Indigenous people living in Canada to understand and respect Indigenous history, rights, knowledge, and spirituality (TRC’s Call to Action 63.3). In the
section entitled “On Education for Reconciliation” (Calls to Action 62 to 65), the report demands the creation of age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada, as mandatory education requirements for kindergarten to grade 12 students. Although the TRC’s Calls to Action do not include explicit reference to early childhood education, age should not limit the possibilities for engagement in these much-needed conversations.

The TRC requires that Canadians address the historical damage and suffering that Indian Residential Schools have caused as result of the unequal Indigenous-settler relationships with both adults and children. As Pamela Palmater (2018) has claimed: “Reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous peoples has never been about multiculturalism, diversity or inclusion” (para. 1). She emphasizes that reconciliation is not about cultural awareness, which is why a liberal multicultural framework in early childhood education effectively obscures truth telling and justice regarding Indigenous sovereignty and restitution of their ancestral lands. As long as multiculturalism continues to obscure the settler-colonial project of erasure of Indigenous people from their lands, early childhood education pedagogies will remain inadvertently entangled with colonial legacies.

Research approaches anchored in place respond to some of the challenges that emerge from the TRC’s Calls to Action but also impose some challenges to the field. Pedagogies that attend to place move away from pedagogies that mainly focus on the cognitive and socio-emotional development which has been so valued in early childhood education. Developmentalism has been located in a much larger discussion about early childhood education as a mechanism to reduce the social inequalities that affect young children (OECD, 2012; World Bank, n.d.). In these narratives, early childhood education can provide children with
opportunities for healthy development and preparation for academic achievement as well as give parents, and particularly mothers, more opportunities to join the labour market. The assumption behind these economic rationales (Heckman, 2000; Heckman & Masterov, 2005; McArdle & Hatcher, 2015) represented by the image of “the investible child” (Prentice, 2009) is that the problem of social inequality is one of economic redistribution and is located in the people affected by those inequalities, in forms such as poverty or cultural marginalization. While these concerns regarding children’s wellbeing are important, a perspective that targets the individual child and their cognitive and socio-emotional development reduces the role of early childhood education merely to a focus on the individual within a narrow field of development. This posits important challenges to pedagogies that address issues of diversity and difference in early childhood education. Children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development can be reconciled with attention to diversity and respect for difference in early childhood education without assimilating all pedagogies into so-called “developmentally appropriate” practices (Lubeck, 1998). Pedagogies of place in early childhood education practices should not be discussed in terms of either or none, but rather as a framework for an ethical practice (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

Some scholars have argued that the debate about reconceptualizing the purpose of education is continually dominated by discussions about how academic outcomes are achieved, measured, and improved (Biesta, 2009). In a context where measurements and standardization continue to dominate the educational research and policy arena, keeping up the debate about difference and responsibility is much needed and should not be displaced by debates about readiness for school or standardization of learning outcomes (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; 2005; Moss, 2014). Canadian early childhood education and care institutions have not been
immune to the growing influence of neoliberal approaches to educational policy and to the increasing reliance on market-driven provision that focus their discussions about responding to the demands of the 21st century knowledge society. A growing market-driven provision of early childhood education in Canada puts a strong emphasis on school readiness, academic outcomes, standardization, and measurement (Beach & Ferns, 2015; Child Care Now, 2014; Cleveland, 2015; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; 2005; Friendly, 2015; Penn, 2011; Vandenbroeck, 2015). In this context, it is more relevant than ever that educators and scholars examine the role of early childhood education in creating spaces where children learn about diversity and responsibility. A close examination may provide educators and researchers with insights about whether early childhood education can aspire to be education for supporting children in their uniqueness. Biesta (2009) calls this function the “subjectification role of education” which acknowledges students beyond subjects to be qualified for, and socialized into, society. Children’s relationships with place offer an opportunity to reconcile attention to children to their uniqueness but always in the context of their multiple relationships with place.

Locating the Study

From November of 2016 to June 2017, I carried out my fieldwork in a single, licensed group childcare centre that I named the Fraser River Child Care Centre (FRC). This childcare centre is located in a culturally and ethnically diverse area in what is now called East Vancouver. Coast Salish communities referred to the area by their word for cedar, Khupkhahpay’ay. This area is bordered to the south by the Fraser River. Despite the fact that the area around the riverbank was one of the first recorded settlements of Indigenous people, the river was officially named after Simon Fraser (who led an expedition in 1808) by the officials of the North West company
I chose Fraser River as a name for the childcare where I conducted my doctoral study as a reminder that “naming” represents one of the unnoticed legacies of colonization in educational and urban settings.

The FRC serves 25 children between 30 months to school age (under 6 years old). According to the Neighbourhood Community Profile (City of Vancouver, 2012), the community surrounding FRC has a large number of low-income households and a lower than average median household income compared to the rest of Vancouver. The community profile also indicates that a higher percentage of the population identifies as Indigenous: the community identifies as 9.2% Indigenous versus 1.2% Indigenous in Vancouver as a whole. While the neighbourhood has been historically a more affordable place to live and has welcomed a considerable number of low-income families and individuals, gentrification has changed the demographic makeup (e.g., family income, ethnicity, and language) of the area in the last decade due to the high real estate prices in Vancouver (Kasman, 2015; Ley & Dobson, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2016).

During my first three months of fieldwork, I visited the Centre three times per week, each time in blocks of three to five hours. I participated in the Centre’s routines, which included circle time, free-play time, walks in the neighbourhoods, and lunchtime. I was an observer of classroom activities and I had conversations (also referred to as short interviews in the consent form used for participants in the study) with seven children (4 and 5 years old) regarding their learning experiences about social responsibility and diversity. I also interviewed three early childhood educators who work in the Centre about how social responsibility and diversity learning activities were included in their planning. From March to June, I visited the centre weekly and I wrapped up my fieldwork with a five-session photography workshop with the older
children (4-5 years old) which concluded with a photography exhibition curated by the children and myself and later opened to the children’s families. The names that I use throughout this dissertation to refer to children, educators, the Centre, the school, and the neighbourhood streets are all pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. I offer a detailed description of my methodology in Chapter 4.

**Significance of the Study**

Through this study I aim to contribute to the field of early childhood education by demonstrating that children’s relationships with place are key to our understanding of how children can learn and nurture a disposition to live well with difference, starting from the early years. This contribution requires me to offer a reconceptualized notion of diversity that helps educators to move away from multiculturalism and shift their everyday pedagogical practices. As a UBC Public Scholar (The University of British Columbia, n.d.), I believe that this study will make meaningful contributions to policy-making and engagement in early childhood education by offering insights that translate research into practice. While important critiques regarding assimilatory and liberal multicultural approaches to diversity have emanated from the field of early childhood education, they have continued to focus on the social relationships among children, educators, and families, and their social identities (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, social class). This study contributes to the literature by recentering the debate about diversity and social

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8 The Public Scholars Initiative (PSI) is a UBC program that support doctoral students who engage in public scholarship as part of their dissertation research. Public scholarship is broadly understood as mutually beneficial forms of collaborative research with partners from diverse sectors beyond the academy. The PSI supports doctoral students through funding, networking opportunities, and academic and professional development while preparing them for broader career opportunities. For more information, please refer to: [https://www.grad.ubc.ca/psi/about](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/psi/about)
responsibility in early childhood education to include Indigenous critiques of coloniality and the need to take into account place in order to work against the colonial legacy in early childhood education.

Attention to place in early childhood education pedagogies is particularly relevant in the context of the TRC’s calls for action. This study, while not claiming to decolonize place or pedagogies in early childhood education, does contribute to a broader effort of decolonizing early childhood education curriculum by analyzing the role that place plays in children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility as well as the barriers that children and educators face when engaging in such learning. This study seeks to contribute to place-based pedagogies by offering educators insights and possibilities for practice. Policy makers and administrators are not typically immersed in the everyday of childcare centres and a decolonizing call in early childhood education may seem to be an abstraction. This study offers a detailed account of what it means to engage with pedagogies of place and the barriers that prevent educators from fostering diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education. Also, educators could benefit by research situated in the BC context that informs and complements the 2019 BC ELF.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is comprised of an introductory chapter (Chapter 1), six subsequent chapters, and a conclusion. In Chapter 2, I trace how Canadian early childhood education has dealt with diversity by surveying historical scholarship from the 19th until the 20th century. This historical context supports the premise of this dissertation: the need to move away from a liberal multicultural approach to diversity in early childhood education and towards pedagogies of place. To make my claims, I elaborate on the Indigenous critique of liberal multiculturalism.
After presenting this critique, I present a second premise: the need to focus on children’s relationship with place. I build on the important work that early childhood education scholars have done on children’s relationships with place in settler colonial countries in order to move toward an understanding of children’s encounters with diversity through place.

In Chapter 3, I frame children’s relationships with place within the Indigenous critique of coloniality and settler colonialism. Using the context of early childhood education, I elaborate on what Battell and Barker (2015) call the three pillars of settler colonialism – spaces, systems, and narratives – to theorize how early childhood education as a settler colonial system may be contributing to the erasure of Indigenous people through its narratives and practices. Following Battell and Barker (2015), I argue that if early childhood education does not take into account place in a sustained engagement, it continues to contribute to the erasure of Indigeneity by ignoring its commitments toward decolonizing education. In the second section of Chapter 3, I introduce my methodology of witnessing as a strategic methodological orientation that allows me to testify to the inherited colonial legacy in the FRC as well as to be attentive to children’s, educators’ and my own ways of seeing. Overall, I argue that witnessing children’s relationships with place allows us to understand what knowledges about diversity and social responsibility become part of the everyday practices and narratives in early childhood education and what knowledges are less likely to be included.

In Chapter 4, I put “witnessing into action” by offering a detailed account of the research methodology, including the choices of research methods and analysis. I locate the study in the urban context of Vancouver, where I focus on the narratives and practices within the childcare centre as well those occurring in the neighbourhood as part of children’s neighbourhood walks. I discuss how witnessing as a methodological orientation challenges me to examine my role as a
researcher since it is both implicated in the legacy of colonization and accountable for how research contributes to confronting or reinforcing the legacy of colonization in educational contexts through knowledge production practices.

In Chapter 5, I seek to account for how children learn about diversity and social responsibility through the places that they have and do not have access to. I focus on children’s encounters with diversity through their neighbourhood walks in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Coast Salish people, in what is now known as East Vancouver, BC, Canada. Neighbourhood walks offer opportunities to examine the role that early childhood education, within a legacy of colonial narratives and practices, plays in supporting or blocking children’s relationships with particular places and encounters with difference. Children’s encounters with a mural that seemed to be primarily overlooked constitute the core of the chapter. I discuss why, despite the material presence of Indigeneity in the neighbourhood, it tends to be ignored in favour of privileging other forms of encounters with place. I draw on walks as place-making practices that have the potential to shift how children encounter Indigeneity as well as configure their neighbourhood. I conclude by highlighting the argument that educators need support to identify the barriers between children and Indigeneity. The necessary support comes from administrators, policymakers in the form of policies as well as academic institutions in the form of pre-service and in-service education.

In Chapter 6, I elaborate on some of the barriers that children and educators face in their attempts to engage with place by examining the concept of “children’s safety” as a collection or entanglement of narratives and practices that work together as a boundary marker. I account for how this boundary marker marginalizes some places that may lead children to relevant learning about diversity and social responsibility. I demonstrate that children’s safety as a principle –
while well-intended and needed to protect children from harm – reduces place, first and foremost, to a source of risk and hazard. More specifically, I show how place is reduced by the enactment of colonial practices of marking, defining, and controlling, which are profoundly implicated in safety practices. First, I contextualize the analysis of safety within the debate about how safe is too safe for children’s play. Then I turn to the safety narratives and practices I observed in the Fraser River Centre to illustrate how safety operates, and what it produces, through the microlevel of storytime to the macro level of policies and regulations. I conclude by positing that reducing place to a source of risk prevents imagining and practicing other forms of pedagogies about place.

In Chapter 7, I focus on social responsibility as an ethical practice toward diversity in early childhood education, taking as a starting point the 2019 BC ELF. I argue that the predominant conception of responsibility in the FRC is articulated around an understanding of children’s self-regulation. Children, in this conceptualization, are innocent yet responsible for their behaviours. I offer some stories – about books and artifacts that help educators to teach about social responsibility – to illustrate the tensions that emerge from a notion of social responsibility that is based on the individual child on the one hand and a notion based on the relationships that children have with place on the other. A self-regulatory understanding of responsibility not only reinforces the values of individualism often reified in neoliberal discourses in early childhood education but also impedes children from becoming aware of their connection to, and responsibility toward, place. Having shown these tensions, I analyze some pedagogical opportunities that expand our understanding of responsibility as collective and relational and challenge children’s and educators’ ways of seeing.
In conclusion, multicultural pedagogies continue to operate in early childhood education. I argue that this reality impedes the possibility of educators and children encountering Indigeneity and learn about the impact of colonialism in Canada. Early childhood policies, curriculum, and pedagogies contribute to limiting children’s access to certain places where they could engage in more productive encounters with diversity. Underestimating the results of adults’ concerns about children’s safety may reinforce the conceptualization of an innocent childhood that does not engage with the complexity that Indigeneity brings to multicultural pedagogies. Besides, pedagogies that foster responsibility as dependent on the self-regulation of the individual child not only limit access to certain places but also impede children’s engagement with more collective and relational forms of responsibility toward place. The understanding of children’s relationships with place allows researchers and educators to reconceptualize the notions of diversity and responsibility in early childhood education and support educators in fostering children’s encounters with diversity through place. This, in turn, enables educators to attend more fully to the national commitments toward truth-telling and reconciliation.
Chapter 2:

Tracing Back Diversity in Canadian Early Childhood Education

To situate this doctoral study in the Canadian context, I trace how Canadian early childhood education has made sense of, and responded to, social diversity over time. In this chapter, I offer a detailed account of how early childhood education has moved from an assimilatory approach to difference to multicultural approaches to diversity, which arguably continue to prevail as a pedagogical approach in the early childhood classroom (Ashton, 2015; Bear Nicholas, 2008). To examine the approaches to diversity in Canadian early childhood education, I consider, and briefly describe, some schools of thought that have influenced policies and pedagogical practices toward cultural and ethnic diversity in the field of early childhood education. I draw on these approaches as frameworks of reference to trace how early childhood education in Canada has dealt with cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. I will summarize a history that draws mainly, but not solely on the pioneering scholarship of Canadian historian, Larry Prochner, who has long studied the history of Canadian early childhood education. Based on his historical scholarship, I start with the assimilation of Indigenous and impoverished immigrant children in the 19th century in early childhood education settings. After the 1960s, the damaging consequences of assimilatory policies for Indigenous people and immigrants paved the road towards multiculturalism as a reform that sought to give recognition to minority identities in a number of realms including early childhood education.

Indigenous critiques of multiculturalism (Ahmed, 2007; Ashton, 2015; Bannerji, 2000; Bear Nicholas, 2008; Day, 2000; Day & Sadik, 2002; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Légaré, 1995; Short, 2005; St. Denis, 2011) have provided a solid argument for why early childhood educators should move away from practices that uncritically celebrate the gifts of a diverse society while ignoring
the inheritance of colonialism that shapes Indigenous people’s lives. Following these Indigenous critiques, I discuss why a liberal multicultural approach continues to assimilate Indigenous people into hegemonic Canadian principles and values. Considering relevant scholarship in early childhood education, I finish by outlining research about children’s relationships with place in settler colonial countries and what this literature has to offer to current understandings about diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education.

**Approaches to Diversity in Early Childhood Education**

MacNaughton (2006) has outlined five approaches to diversity in early childhood education that have characterized its history: the laissez-faire school, the special provisions school, the cultural understandings school, the equal opportunities school and the anti-discrimination school. These approaches offer conceptual tools to frame early childhood educational policies and pedagogical practices that deal with cultural and ethnic diversity in various geographical contexts. Harper (1997) has offered an historical overview of how Ontario schools have responded to human difference and diversity through school policy and practices. A revision of historical scholarship indicates that Canadian early childhood education has had a varied range of responses toward diversity overtime as MacNaughton (2006) identified in early childhood education and Harper (1997) did at the school level.

While the approaches described by MacNaughton (2006) and Harper (1997) have some similarities, they also have some differences. MacNaughton states that the assimilatory approach in early childhood education ignores cultural and ethnic differences among children and expects them to garner the same academic achievements regardless their cultural, ethnic, and class background. For Harper, the assimilatory approach goes further. It expects all children to be the
same and targets their cultural, racial, and class differences as attributes that need to be eliminated in order for them to be welcomed into the mainstream. According to Harper (1997), suppression of difference in Canada “has been the first and dominant response to First Nations People” (p. 193). In the case of children and older students, an assimilatory approach to diversity has been responsible for the loss of their dignity and identities (MacNaughton, 2006).

In an assimilatory approach to difference, children from minority backgrounds have been seen as deficient or at risk (Swadener, 2000) and thus they have been segregated in special schools for Indigenous peoples, immigrants, the disabled, or the impoverished (MacNaughton, 2006). Early childhood educators sought to help the “at-risk children” to be become “normal” privileging white middle class children as the ideal of normality (Gleason, 1999). These approaches have often blamed the child and their families for not providing the necessary conditions for their healthy development, thereby justifying institutional actions that take away the rights of families of making decisions regarding their upbringing of their children (Shulz, 1978). From the onset of Canadian early childhood education, it is possible to identify an assimilatory and normalizing approach to diversity as I further explain.

The multicultural approach to diversity is a well-known response to diversity in education, including early childhood education. It is an approach that aims to celebrate and invite diversity into the early childhood centres and schools. A multicultural approach attempts to move away from an assimilatory framework by acknowledging minority groups and attempts to redress the unjust treatment of their cultural and ethnic differences in the past. In the early childhood education classroom, a multicultural approach has aimed to create understanding among different groups of children by drawing on curriculum, pedagogies, and educational materials (e.g., toys, games, art supplies) that recognize varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Nonetheless,
multiculturalism in early childhood education has been criticized for treating diversity superficially. For example, multiculturalism can easily fall into a touristic approach to diversity in which children become mostly knowledgeable about different cultures in terms of their traditions, costumes, celebrations, dress, and traditional food (Derman-Sparks, 1989). These understandings of culture risk simplistic and stereotypical portrayal of diversity.

MacNaughton (2006) and Harper (1997) have identified an approach to diversity that interrogates the power relationships among different identities. For example, in early childhood education, Derman-Sparks (1989) and Red Ruby Scarlet (2016) critiqued tourist approaches to multiculturalism because they conceal forms of discrimination in early childhood education and the structural problems that underpin them. Derman-Sparks (1989) proposed that educators draw on an anti-bias pedagogy to prepare children from a very early age to examine the intricacies of racial, gender, and ethnic differences in their everyday life and stand up against it. Anti-bias approaches, referred to also as critical multicultural approaches, aim to problematize the power relationships that underpin the discriminatory practices in relation to children’s different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. The anti-bias approach has not been exempt from criticism because it continues to focus on child-centered pedagogies (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw & Bernhard, 2012). In the case of Canadian early childhood education, some scholars have interrogated the role of child-centered pedagogies to critique approaches to diversity that turn difference into sameness. These scholars have moved toward scholarship that is situated in place and time to offer a complex account of children’s lives and the multiple relationships that surround them as key insights for forging new pedagogies. An important part of this scholarship has informed the 2019 BC Early Learning Framework that I introduced in Chapter 1 (Introduction) and will continue to refer to throughout this dissertation.
Assimilation in Infant Schools for Indigenous and Impoverished Immigrant Children

As Harper (1997) reminds us in her study of responses to human difference in Ontario schools, the assimilation and suppression of non-dominant cultures has been a well-known response to difference in the Canadian education system since the 19th century. The most emblematic, but not the only example, is the Indian Residential School (IRS) system which operated across Canada for more than a century (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). In 1884, the Indian Act obliged First Nations families to send their children to day, industrial, or residential schools. The Federal Department of Indian Affairs provided the needed funding and established the boarding schools’ minimal standards of care (Milloy, 1999), while Canadian churches (e.g., Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches) ran the schools.

The Federal Government and the Canadian churches claimed that the residential schools would benefit Indigenous children by providing them with a civilizing education built on the Anglo-European culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Indigenous children would aspire to be at the level of White settler children by speaking English or French, adopting Western religion, principles and values. Under this so-called educational project of transformation, the education of Indigenous children had to start as young as possible (Haig-Brown, 1988). As survivors have testified, children as young as 5 years old were forcibly taken away from their families and sent to residential schools (Milloy, 1999). The long distance between First Nations communities’ homes and the IRS made visits and communication between children and their families extremely difficult, which harmed children’s bonds with their families and with the places where they grew up. The belief that the separation between children and their families would result in a faster assimilation of the Indigenous child into Eurocentric values,
language, and practices was the rational for government and IRS authorities to simply impede further communication between children and their families (Haig-Brown, 1988; Milloy, 1999).

The Federal Indian Policy of assimilation (Milloy, 1999, p. xv) set the scene for Indigenous children’s loss of traditional educational practices. In their homes, Indigenous parents and grandparents typically carried children with them as they were doing their daily chores. Children learnt the usage of medicinal plants, carving and hunting techniques, and listened to stories that taught them about moral and spiritual traditions. For children, attending IRS meant an irreparably break with their family ties, cultural traditions, and spirituality. As testimonies repeatedly show, survivors recalled being starved, forced to only speak English, and introduced to Christianity, thereby dismissing their existing spirituality learned through their elders, ceremonies, and storytelling (Haig-Brown, 1988).

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) has established in its final report, the creation of the IRS system was possible because of the positioning of Eurocentric racial and cultural systems as superior. The so-called “civilizing mission” through the residential school system has significantly harmed generations of Indigenous communities whose consequences of this cultural genocide continue and are carried forward into future generations. The disintegration of their families, through substance abuse, violence, incarceration, and suicide (Fournier & Crey, 1997) testify to the lasting generational damage of using the colonizing technique of cultural assimilation to respond to Indigenous difference.

Canadian early childhood education is not exempt from this history of assimilation. During the 19th and middle of the 20th, early childhood education, through infant schools, Kindergarten, and nursery schools, assimilated Indigenous and non-white immigrant young children by segregating them into spaces according to their social class, race, ethnicity, and
perceived intellectual ability. For instance, infant schools for Indigenous and impoverished immigrant young children were created to civilize the savage or impoverished child who supposedly lacked the conditions for a proper education in their homes. European programs like infant schools served as the inspiration for Canadian early childhood education that was first implemented as a social service for the poor. While the infant schools for Indigenous children were limited to the Bay of Quinte area in Upper Canada between 1820s and 1830s (Prochner, May, & Kaur, 2009), infant schools for the poor were more consistently implemented in Eastern Canada (i.e., Ontario and Quebec) during 19th and first half of the 20th century (Prochner, 2000). Although infant schools provided a social service for many families in need of paid jobs, the first well-intended initiatives led by Missionaries or Catholic affluent women targeted and segregated Indigenous and impoverished young children to assimilate them into the Euro-Canadian principles and values. In many cases, this project of transformation for poor young children meant the loss of their language, cultural traditions, and forms of spirituality.

Historians have noted evidence of an infant school for Indigenous children by American Methodists in the Bay of Quinte area in what is now known as Upper Canada between 1820s and 1830s (Prochner, May, & Kaur, 2009). Although the historical records indicate that this infant school was limited to this specific area with no more than 150 residents, the initiative was significant. It represented an experiment for the implementation of Indian Residential Schools. Since 1820, Methodist-run mission villages opened schools to teach Indigenous children and their families the precepts of Christianity, in turn converting them into Catholics and turning them into leaders of the teachings of Catholicism. In 1826, Grape Island Mission to the Mississauga (Ojibwa) Indians established an infant school in the so-called Nursery of Indian Mission considered a model settlement (Prochner et al., 2009). At the arrival of the missionaries,
Indigenous dwellings were demolished to make Euro-Canadian style housing. Missionaries and Indigenous people together built log residencies, a chapel, three stores, a hospital, and a schoolhouse with a separate room for the infant school, which opened in 1829. There is no record of the number of young children (from 4-7 years old) who were enrolled in the infant school, but the entire school enrolled 60 children. In the perspectives of Grape Island missionaries, the infant school was considered a suitable means to mold children’s minds at their earliest age: “native children were to be remade” (Prochner et al., 2009, p. 93).

A more established early childhood education program was represented by the infant schools for impoverished immigrant children. In the 19th century, affluent and mostly Catholic women were the first promoters of early childhood education for children from lower economic classes (Prochner, 2014). In 1828, a group of women dedicated to charity activities opened the Montreal Infant School Society, one of the first infant schools in Canada for immigrant children living in poverty (Prochner, 2000). Since then and through 19th century, non-profit groups organized early childhood centres for populations considered to be vulnerable. Although they provided custodial care, their main mission was to help parents join the workforce and support children’s learning and development when conditions at home were judged to be insufficient by middle class philanthropists. A number of infant schools were open in Eastern Canadian cities, including Charlottetown, Halifax, Quebec City, and Toronto. In this way, early childhood education emerged as a mechanism for Westernizing poor immigrants by assimilating them into the prototype of the Eurocentric middle-class family (Prochner, 2000) while instilling white middle-class Anglo-Celtic priorities as something for immigrants to aspire to.

The assimilation of young immigrant children into adopting Eurocentric principles and values was first addressed by segregating them into infant schools. While infant schools targeted
impoverished children, the members of the elite created private infant schools to send their children and get the benefits of early learning and healthy development in a separate space from impoverished children (Prochner, 2000). The practice of sending wealthy children to infant schools stopped after a few decades because of the belief that an early education could overwhelm the minds of these young children. Given their English-Christian traditions, most infant schools assimilated newcomer children into the Eurocentic values through Catholic teachings in ways similar to what happened to Indigenous children. In addition to infant schools’ aim of literacy and missionary work, they were also intended as a mechanism to address social problems in the lives of children such as poverty and crime, rationales for schooling impoverished children that remains until today, for instance, in international agencies statements such as OECD, the World Bank, and United Nations.

At the end of the 1870s kindergarten emerged as another form of early education (Dehli, 1993) while infant schools started to decrease in number. The first few private kindergartens opened in Eastern Canada’s larger towns and cities for the wealthiest families interested in bolstering their children’s development through early learning experiences. Later on, early childhood education advocates saw in kindergarten a suitable model for all children, especially impoverished and non-English speaking immigrants. Kindergartens free of charge served a similar population of infant schools at the beginning of the 19th century offering educational programs and custodial services (Prochner, 2000). Since early childhood education advocates thought that observation and imitation were critical in children’s learning, they justified keeping children away from their families a number of hours a day. They believed that children were exposed to inadequate role models and were poorly supervised at home or when they were playing on the street. As it happened in infant schools, free kindergarten aimed to immerse
newcomers into the Anglo-Canadian culture. As Prochner (2000) reminds us, the ideas that guided early childhood education non-profit organizations, like the Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association, assumed that these children were in need and at risk. Saving the children from the influences of their families and the places where they grew up induced many of the decisions on early childhood education curriculum and pedagogies in the 19th and early 20th century. Curriculum was limited to literacy skills and Christian teachings in the case of the mission kindergartens (run by religious congregations). Children’s home language and their culture were mostly ignored and instead became issues to be fixed.

Although infant schools, and then kindergartens, provided custodial care, it was not their mandate. While it is clear that assimilation was a central goal of all forms of early childhood education during the 19th century, it is important to consider that demands for working class women’s work outside their homes increased the demand for custodial care in the early 20th century. Some parents started to send their under-school-age children with their older siblings to school, which resulted in overcrowding (Prochner, 2000). The provinces of Quebec and Ontario created day nurseries to respond to the needs of parents. For example, the Associated Charities of Vancouver opened a day nursery in 1910 which was the result of a shortage of domestic labourers (British Columbia Preschool Teachers’ Association 1974 in Prochner, 2000, p. 49). The Medical Health Officer for Vancouver, Dr. Underhill, believed that this day nursery could play, not only a role in supporting mothers in joining the work force, but also in addressing the highest rate in Canada of infant mortality by offering health support to those families. For families with children with special needs, there were special schools for children with particular kinds of physical differences, such as schools for the deaf and mute. Private charities continued to be the central organizations that offered care services to the poorest families, but as
Comacchio (1993) demonstrated, Ontario provincial government appropriated the child nurturing and family health in the years 1900 to 1940 from voluntarist female-led charity organizations. A male-dominated professional body within the state became interested in the ‘child welfare problem’ and trusted to provide the appropriate solutions.

During wartime, the number of nursery schools increased, since wage-earning women were working in war-related industries, and thus, in demand of day care for their children (Prochner, 2000). Social welfare councils (Comacchio, 1993) and community groups demanded the government offer day nursery services to families in need. After the war, the demand of child care provisions decreased, among other things, for the prevalence of discourses coming from the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology that asserted that children were better off when cared for their mothers (Comacchio, 1993; Gleason, 1999). Child care services was reserved for children with disabilities or families in extreme economic need who needed to work (Prochner, 2000). The working-class mothers who were the primary targets of child welfare initiatives not only accepted this aid but expected it. But as Comacchio (1993) reminds us, the families did not simply accept what was available to them. Families took what they needed, opposed what they did not, and demanded what they needed when their needs were unmet. Despite their diligence, families and children’s needs many times were neglected, not because of their passivity, but because of larger forces of “medical politics and the unaccountability of the state” (Comacchio, 1993, p. 5) to lower-class children and families.

As this brief account of the treatment of different children in 19th and 20th century early childhood education in Canada demonstrates the political and social elite who advocated for early childhood education for Indigenous, immigrant, and impoverished children thought that infant schools, kindergartens, and nursery schools could be a suitable means for children to
achieve similar outcomes than “normal children”. These advocates saw and treated the child as
deficient and aimed to normalize them into colonial society, without altering existing structures
or attitudes that placed them in positions of disadvantage. In the case of free kindergarten, for
instance, the adoption of Froebel’s philosophy as a progressive perspective into the education of
young children, did not interrupted the assimilation and the expectations of impoverished
children’s obedience. Prochner (2000) argued that kindergartens for the poor were effective in
teaching children to accept the values of the political and social elite keeping the working class’s
discontent away. This paternalistic approach that characterized early childhood education during
the 19th and the middle of 20th century treated difference as a deficiency to be fixed. As
MacNaughton (2006) argues, an assimilatory disposition to difference promotes a culture of
silence around human difference which results in: “a loss of dignity and identity, a poor sense of
self-esteem and feeling of hopelessness among assimilated groups” (p. 31). The misrecognition
of children’s identities undermined their capacity to function and value their minority cultural
context.

Early childhood education’s long history of assimilation of human racial and ethnic
difference has given rise to a number of responses towards difference, among which (liberal)
multiculturalism prevails as the most prominent up to the present day in Canadian education
contexts. In the remainder of the chapter I will demonstrate why multiculturalism does not
interrupt the assimilation of Indigenous people and why early childhood education needs to
move away from a multicultural approach to difference and diversity.
Multiculturalism and Early Childhood Education in Canada

As the previous section demonstrates, assimilation in Canadian early childhood education was the prevalent approach to difference until the first half of the 20th century. The arrival of immigrants after WWII, along with growing Québec nationalism and Indigenous assertiveness, accounts for the consideration of bilingualism, biculturalism, and, eventually, multiculturalism by the federal government (Friendly & Prabhu, 2010). Nonetheless, as many Indigenous and early childhood scholars have argued, multiculturalism, as an approach to diversity in early childhood education, continues to assimilate, instead of acknowledging and respecting, difference.

The 1971 Multicultural Federal Policy (Abu-Laban, 1998) and the Canadian 1988 Multiculturalism Act (Lund, 2012) mark two consequential moments in the history of multiculturalism in Canada. During the 1960s, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism (Jackson, 2010) provided the framework for Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to establish the first federal policy for multiculturalism. Wood and Gilbert (2005) have suggested that the 1971 Multicultural Federal Policy was established to respond to the demands of French-language speakers, a growing and diverse citizenry who wanted to preserve their language. While Indigenous people were acknowledged in the 1971 Federal policy as a distinct ethnic group, their languages were not included as official languages of Canada. A decade later, the official approach to multiculturalism shifted its emphasis from cultural and language heritage to racial and ethnic identities to reject forms of discrimination and racism toward the growing number of visible minority immigrants. In 1988, Prime Minister Mulroney established the Multicultural Act to address the needs for recognition of the diverse ethnic groups’ contributions to Canada that had kept them at the margins of Canadian society through their misrecognition and diminished rights.
The Act also formalized the State’s responsibilities to confront any form of discrimination based on gender, culture, ethnicity, religion and race.

Federal multicultural policy has given rise to multicultural education that originally aimed to celebrate cultural heritage and identities to change discriminatory attitudes in students and teachers toward cultural and ethnic difference. These policy and legislative documents have informed curriculum and pedagogies that aim to assure equal learning opportunities and outcomes among students of visible minority groups by the recognition of their identities (Lund, 2012). In schools that have adopted a multicultural approach to education, students are given the opportunity to share their language, cultural traditions, forms of religiosity or spirituality within the school community in forms of festival, clubs, or public celebrations. In early childhood education, educators have used toys and materials like dolls with different skin colors or traditional garments/outfits from countries around the world to familiarize children with these cultural and ethnic realities (MacNaughton, 2006; Ramsey, 2012). Other examples include storybooks that portray the everyday life of children from countries around the world in which they speak different languages and live differently than the children belonging to the dominant culture. The hope is that children immersed in the Canadian culture, regardless of their cultural and ethnic background, feel represented and appreciated in their difference. The assumption behind these pedagogies is that by sharing different cultural manifestations, students would be able to acknowledge the existence of other cultures, understand the differences with the mainstream culture, and value the diversity of identities within school communities. Nonetheless, this approach to multiculturalism, also referred to the tourist approach, has been strongly criticized for assuming an essentialist and homogeneous notion of culture that’s fosters cultural
and ethnic stereotyping instead of addressing the working of privilege, power, and inequality among students from different backgrounds.

Simultaneously with the consolidation of multiculturalism as official policy in Canada, early childhood education provision started to grow for other reasons. The approval of the Canadian Assistance Plan Act in 1966\(^9\), a social policy for families in need of welfare assistance, helped to expand child care services as a social service (Prochner, 2000; 2014). Nonetheless, despite the renewed narratives of multiculturalism, early childhood education continued to be seen as a social service for families in need, rather than a right for all families. Despite the fact that the Federal government took a limited, but nonetheless more active role in ECE, Shulz (1978) argues that “day care never outgrew the stigma of its charitable origins or its reputation as a low status, inferior substitute for home care” (p. 157). As Schulz reminds us, the assimilatory nature of early education shifted in language, but it remained tied to the past. The ECE’s purpose continued to be instilling in children cultural capital by emphasizing English/French acquisition, and the reinforcement of middle-class Canadian values (Prochner, 2014).

As feminist historians such as Comacchio (1994) and Dehli (1993) argue, families of young children did not take a passive role in the state’s responsibilities of care and education of their young children. While in 1960s there was an expansion of child care services, Indigenous families received sporadic care and education programs on their reserves due inadequate funding (Greenwood, 2006). In the 1990s, in a context where multiculturalism had become law, the Native Women’s Association of Canada had to demand in the House of Commons (Greenwood, 2006) that they needed childcare services not only as a social service to help Indigenous women

\(^9\) See more details regarding this plan here: http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/allanm.htm]
to join the workforce, but most importantly, as a form of healing a generation through the strengthening of cultural heritage and inter-generational bonds. Indigenous women rejected child care services as a top-down strategy intended to assimilate them, making clear they demanded a say in the type of education their children would receive.

The creation of Indigenous-specific early childhood programs in the 1990s was possible because of a rhetoric at that moment that stated that childcare provision would offer equal opportunities to women’s employment and education. Nonetheless, this equalizing-opportunities narrative did not co-opt women’s demand to have access to their own culturally-appropriate child care services (Greenwood, 2006). Indigenous-specific early childhood education services started to open in the 1990s in the form of Aboriginal Head Start initiatives which have remained in place today across Canada and in British Columbia. Unlike the implementation of Head Start Programs in the U.S, the Aboriginal Head Start program in Canada, and in British Columbia, is implemented by the Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia (Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia, n.d.) assuring that Indigenous children receive an early childhood education and care based on their own principles of learning.

The creation of Indigenous-specific child care programs offers a story of self-determination in their children’s care and education. Children’s opportunities to learn in early childhood education environments matters not only in terms of equal access but more importantly as an educational project that refuses assimilation. As St. Denis (2011) has argued, Canadian multiculturalism has been ineffective both in erasing racism and mitigating damaging effects of colonialism that took land and rights of self-government away from Indigenous people. These scholars have exposed the fact that Indigenous’ sovereignty cannot exist under the premises of a multicultural framework since it continues to assimilate Indigenous people under
the premises of tolerance and recognition, situating them as one more ethnic group among many others.

Indigenous and antiracist educators contend that multicultural approaches in education have unsolvable limitations (Kumashiro, 2012). The celebration of diversity, a central aspect in multiculturalism, privileges social cohesion over educational equality and justice (Lund, 2012). As it has been stated in the Canadian constitution of 1867, social harmony is articulated as the desire to pursue “peace, order and good government” (Lund, 2012, p. 2). Attention to structural inequality and injustice reveals a tightly hierarchized society based on the principles of Euro-Canadian white superiority. The desire of social cohesion accounts for the long history of assimilation at the expense of Indigenous communities and non-white, and non-English speaking immigrants in Canada. In this regard, multiculturalism in Canada becomes what Povinelli (2002) refers as a form of domination: “an ideology and practice of governance, a form of everyday affective association and identification, and a specific discursive incitement across the variegated contexts of national and transnational life” (p. 6). Under these premises, national narratives of tolerance, inclusivity, and celebration of diversity must assure social cohesion. However, the language of recognition relies on the ultimate assumption that every cultural and ethnic minority ought to exist under the umbrella of Canada, a colonial state. Behind this recognition lies the assumption that it is possible to reconcile Indigenous claims to nationhood with the mandates of the Settler State. However, the politics of recognition can only reinforce the colonial power that Indigenous communities continue to resist.

As many have argued (Ahmed, 2007; Ashton, 2015; Bannerji, 2000; Bear Nicholas, 2008; Day, 2000: Day & Sadik, 2002; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Légaré, 1995; Short, 2005: St. Denis, 2011) multiculturalism persists as a colonial mechanism that not only assimilates cultural
and ethnic differences, but also precludes the restitution of Indigenous rights. In the context of multiculturalism, Indigenous peoples are simply portrayed as one of many other ethnic and cultural minorities in Canada, ignoring their status as First Nations on these lands. Narratives of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity divert attention from the fact that Indigenous people inhabited what today are considered Canadian lands before the arrival of settlers. They never voluntarily or otherwise ceded their territories or political autonomy. The colonial instruments of governance (e.g., constitution, law, policies, etc.) was imposed upon Indigenous communities and forced them to abandon their own forms of governance and comply with the rules of the colonial state (Paine, 1999).

The multicultural framework conceals Indigenous’ claims of sovereignty over their people and lands. Within a multicultural framework, their participation is limited to the cultural heritage while their political demands are overlooked especially when they clash with the premises of inclusion and social cohesion of the Canadian state. Bear Nicholas (2008) argues that inclusion and social cohesion have been used to justify the language of genocide of Indigenous communities through early childhood curriculum in New Brunswick. The province aims to educate all children under a common curriculum that acknowledges Indigenous’ history, culture, and traditions. However, New Brunswick’s early learning framework does not include the preservation of Indigenous languages as part of the curriculum, which is leading to their complete disappearance. While education is positioned as a mechanism of social cohesion, it ignores the fact that privileging colonial knowledges risks erasing Indigenous traditional knowledge and languages. As a number of scholars have suggested, despite the critiques of multiculturalism, it continues to be the main approach to difference in Canadian education (Lund, 2012) including early childhood education.
Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) have stated that early childhood educators in settler colonial states, like Canada, face the challenge of interrupting the colonial legacies present in its curriculum and pedagogies. As Ang (2010) argues, when educators rely on their own and children’s practices of tolerance of diversity, they may actually be assimilating difference into the celebratory multicultural pedagogies. These assimilatory multicultural pedagogies based on the principles of tolerance and recognition risks fixing children’s identities (Nxumalo, 2012) which in turn, delimits educators’ engagement with difference, reproducing lasting inequalities. As the literature has shown (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw & Berikoff, 2008), young children are not exempt from excluding other children labelled as racially and ethnically different from their games or conversations. Educators can easily fail in their intention of getting rid of discriminatory practices in their classrooms by emphasizing harmonic relationships among children over more careful examinations of complex interactions. In the example of racial conflict, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Bernhard (2012) argue that educators tend to privilege harmonic strategies of conflict resolution by quickly apologizing for their mistakes toward others, but without engaging the children into more complex analysis that involves enquiring into racism. Those kinds of interpersonal conflicts may also be powerful pedagogical opportunities for educators and children to get involved in responsible ways to understand the complexities of racism in everyday interactions and attempt to exercise new and more thoughtful responses toward it.

These critiques that privilege Indigenous insights about multiculturalism in Canada have important implications for this doctoral study concerned with diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education. As I have explained so far, the first implication points to the need to move away from a multicultural framework since it glosses over a critique of colonialism and
racism. A second implication is the need to draw attention to place. As I examine in subsequent chapters, many educators are concerned with keeping children safe from the complexities of the current world (e.g., racism, violence) by creating “impermeable” learning spaces that impede children from having experiences and lessons in a world that they are thought incapable of dealing with. In this sense, early learning places become places that are open only to lessons that conform with the hegemonic social order avoiding perspectives that might suggest and explore social divisions or inequalities. If early childhood education remains as an impermeable place for learning about diversity, pedagogical opportunities to address difficult and complex stories and conversations that exposes the legacies of colonialism will not surface.

Place has received scholarly attention in early childhood education through the study of the physical environment such as childcare centres’ furniture, materials, books, toys, physical buildings, and the interactions that those environments allow children and educators to experience. While these inquiries offer important knowledge about children’s everyday lives and interactions, they tend to overlook the historical and current contexts of colonization in education that are so radically important for understanding difference in early childhood education in settler countries like Canada. As Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy (2014) contend, ongoing colonization of land and people are in fact “embedded within educators and researchers’ practices and understandings of (environmental) education” (p. 1). In what follows, I outline research in the field of early childhood education that has focused on children’s relationships with place in settler colonial countries. A central lesson that surfaces within this body of scholarship is that different understandings of relationships with place and land may transcend colonial practices of labelling, delimiting, and dominating place.
Children’s Relationships with Place in Settler Colonial Countries

Histories of colonization are important for early childhood education in settler colonial countries like Canada because they often go unnoticed as part of everyday educational practices (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015) as I illustrate in the next chapters. The settler colonial project has been responsible for the exploitation and banishment of Indigenous people under the precepts of whiteness as a marker of superiority (Battell & Barker, 2015; Reagan, 2010; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) which has had consequences for the field of early childhood education as well. To contest these long-standing colonial discourses, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) claim that an unsettling agenda is needed, one that demands a willingness to confront early childhood education, research, and practice with challenging conversations: “It involves asking hard and provocative questions, disturbing complacency, troubling norms, and interrogating conventional truths. It involves interrupting the business-as-usual of everyday life and practice” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015, p. 1). An unsettling agenda works against the separation between nature and culture, subject and object, the alive and the not-alive by making visible the nonsensical divisions between and among them. As a whole, these studies point out how children’s subjectivities emerge from situated practices and particular places.

As part of an unsettling agenda in early childhood education, research concerned with the erasure of Indigenous communities from their lands, has focused on children’s relationships with place. Researchers concerned by the legacies of colonialism approach place and the land as situated in history. For example, Power and Somerville (2015) investigated the history of fences in formal and informal learning environments in an outer suburb of Melbourne, Australia called Franston North (FN). The authors argue that fences literally and symbolically regulate the self/other relationships in colonial and post-colonial spaces. They engaged with Indigenous
women’s stories to explore how fences around learning places like childcare centres have operated as a mechanism of exclusion and inclusion in the experience of children and families. Fences evoked in women a long history of dispossession and dispersal of Indigenous people because of the colonial project of appropriation of lands and cultural assimilation of their communities. In the past, colonizers in Australia used fences to take Indigenous people’s land away but also to incarcerate those who resisted the colonizers’ appropriation. Generations of stolen children were also marked by the imposition of fences which has remained in their traumatic memories of moments in which they were forcibly taken away from their families. Attention to fences allows researchers and educators to challenge the adequacy of dominant discourses in the field that reinforce the regulatory frameworks that colonized places impose on children’s subjectivities in post-colonial Australia.

In the Canadian context, Nxumalo (2015) described everyday children’s encounters with forests (i.e., tree stumps and tree hollows) by using as a methodology that allowed her to “reconfigure presence” of Indigenous people in so-called natural places. For Nxumalo, reconfiguring presence is a decolonial gesture that brings the history of Indigenous people into their colonized lands. Through this gesture, Nxumalo challenges innocent perspectives ascribed to natural places like forests that have come to reflect primarily the colonial desire for appropriation and demarcation of the land for esthetic as well as extractive purposes. Scholars also aim to restore Indigenous knowledge by working collaboratively with elders and Indigenous community members to create land pedagogies. For example, Rowan (2015) addressed colonial legacies by learning from an elder’s teaching regarding carving snow. Rowan learned that the snow, contrary to Western ideas of human domination over nature, is not under complete control of human beings. The snow determines its shape once it is carved and observations of that
process are of relevance to the learning of children and educators. Learning from the practice of carving snow constitutes what Rowan identifies as a land pedagogy (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015).

Attention to places in settler colonial societies such as Canada also helps to reveal how colonial discourses shape and inform early childhood narratives and practices. Ashton (2015) shows how discourses of inclusion and social cohesion have co-opted the possibilities for Indigenous communities in New Brunswick to preserve and truly value their First Nations languages. In the New Brunswick’s Early Learning Framework, Ashton (2015) argues that narratives of inclusion can, indeed, not only marginalize, but make Indigenous knowledges and languages disappear. The New Brunswick Early Learning Framework did not consider Indigenous language as one key learning area reinforcing the erasures of Indigenous languages from the early childhood education curriculum.

Nxumalo (2017) studied the encounters between young children attending a childcare centre nearby Burnaby mountain while the protests against the construction of Kinder Morgan’s pipeline in Vancouver took place. Her analysis challenges ideas of the innocent and apolitical child and asks whether children engage with environmental problems that are affecting their relationships with their everyday places. While Nxmal and the children walked along Burnaby mountain, she paid attention to the way children engaged with rocks. They observed them, collected them, sorted them out, and kept them in their pockets. Nxumalo (2017) argues that the ways children engaged with rocks shows the influences of colonization in early childhood settings. For example, educators privileged sorting out practices among children as evidence of their cognitive ability over other forms of relating to the rocks, for example, as if it is a living thing, as did one child. Moving away from developmentalist understanding of the child, Nxumalo observed that educators were troubled by the fact that children could see rocks as alive.
and tended to correct them by saying that rocks were inert matter. Nxumalo reminds us that considerations of rocks as alive is in tune with some Indigenous ontologies that give rocks a deep meaning and sacred significance for life. Her research exposes children's relationships with Burnaby mountain to trouble and shift colonial relationships in early childhood education places.

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) have stated that everyday practices, events and routines offer valuable place-related data for researchers because they can understand human experience beyond talk and text. In other words, practices create place (Deyle, 2009; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Rowan (2011) studied an everyday child care practice that has been largely overlooked despite its analytical value: the eating and feeding practices of young children attending an Inuit childcare centre in Nunavik, Canada. The authors argue that young children’s eating and feeding practices function as an assemblage, connecting multiple forces and events, like food regulations, the history of Canadian residential schools, Indigenous food-eating knowledge, and colonized places. In the case of the children attending this Inuit childcare centre, the authors conceptualized the eating practices as neoliberal assemblages in which governmental food regulations along with the Indigenous food practices reproduce a long history of assimilation, but most importantly, produce neoliberal subjectivities in the Inuit child care centre. By identifying food assemblages, the authors argue, it is possible to understand not only what colonial and neoliberal practices do in children’s lives, but also what possibilities for contestation are opened up as a result.

The scholarship presented in this section demonstrates that attention to children’s relationships with place makes a difference to the conceptualization of both diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education settings. The next chapters build on these studies and
theoretical orientations to propose a rethinking of childhood and difference through the lens of place.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I traced how Canadian early childhood education has made sense of and responded to diversity by examining historical scholarship from the 19th century when the first early childhood education programs were created. During the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, early childhood education was assimilatory in its approach to difference, expecting young children and their families to comply with the so-called standards of Canadian society based on the ideals of the white and Anglo-European middle class. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) sought to interrupt the assimilation, exclusion, and discriminatory treatment of visible minority identities and repair the lasting harm that such policies caused for Indigenous people and immigrants in the past. Nonetheless, as a number of Indigenous scholars and activists have pointed out, multiculturalism law and policy have been unable to interrupt the exclusion and discrimination of Indigenous people. These critiques also apply to the field of early childhood education in that multicultural discourses continue to prevent educators from approaching the topic of colonial racism with young children. Most importantly, a narrative of multiculturalism marginalizes or diminishes the demands of Indigenous communities for sovereignty and land which is at the core of their long history of assimilation of difference (St. Denis, 2011). In light of this long history of assimilation of children’s diversity in Canadian early childhood education, efforts to move away from a multicultural approach to diversity is much needed. As the literature about children’s relationships with place in early childhood education
suggests, one pathway to address this challenge is by focusing on children’s relationships with place.

In the next chapter, I situate children’s relationships with place in settler colonial contexts by bringing together understanding of place from critiques of settler colonialism. Then I introduce witnessing as a strategic methodological orientation that enables me to respond to the challenges of situating place within a critique of settler colonialism in early childhood education.
Chapter 3:

**Witnessing Children’s Relations with Place in a Diverse World**

Having contextualized this doctoral study in questions regarding how Canadian early childhood education has made sense of, and responded to diversity, I introduce understandings of place in a broader critique of settler colonialism. A number of scholars have influenced my understanding regarding the role that place plays in children’s understandings of diversity and social responsibility. These scholars – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – have emphasized that place needs to be examined always within a long history of settler colonialism to account for ongoing attempts at erasure and displacement of Indigenous people from their ancestral territories (Marker, 2018; Smith, 2012, Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). In this chapter, I first situate children’s relationships with place in the challenge of living well with difference in urban contexts, and then define place in contrast to social space. Then, I account for the settler colonial project of erasure and displacement of Indigenous people from their territories that takes place in educational systems like early childhood education through its everyday narratives and practices. I also briefly explain how neoliberal rationalities have played an important role in narrowing down the purpose of early childhood education as well as privileging settler colonial narratives that reduce place to an object to be controlled and delimited. I conclude by situating witnessing as a strategic methodological orientation within critical place inquiry that allows me to be mindful of my own ways of seeing as I engage with a critique of settler colonialism as well as the ways of seeing of children and educators.
Living Well with Difference

Cities have been considered places with the potential for “forging new hybrid cultures and ways of living together with difference” (Valentine, 2008, p. 324). As Valentine points out, Stuart Hall’s longstanding question of what it means to live well together with difference (Hall, 1993) continues to be at the core of scholars’ concerns about assimilatory responses to human difference.

In early childhood education, Taylor and Giugni (2012) extend Hall’s question beyond a social and cultural framework since the pressing challenges imposed by rapid global change involve more than human beings. The authors propose thinking about living well together as a practice of being with the world or being worldly. Being worldly involves many facets including extending our responsibility not only to other humans, but to all, living and non-living agents, that share the world with children. In other words, being worldly moves our attention from a focus on the social relationships that children have with other children and adults to the interdependence of children with their everyday worlds.

Following Haraway (2003; 2008) being worldly is grounded in the actual places where children grow up and live. These places are intimately entangled in children’s everyday lives. Places become a “pedagogical contact zone”, a term used originally by Pratt (1991) to refer to “the social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today” (p. 34). As Taylor and Giugni’s (2012) point out, place as a pedagogical contact zone offers the opportunity for children to establish relationships – open-minded and curious – that acknowledge the interdependence between humans and more-than humans and interrogate the ethical responsibility that such relationships entail. As I argued
in the introductory chapter, I believe that attention to children’s relationships with place allows us to understand why early childhood education might be more permeable to certain knowledges and practices toward diversity and difference while it might be less permeable to others.

Definitions of Place
In this dissertation, I mainly use the term place, instead of social space. As part of the spatial turn, place – as a conceptual referent or as a methodological focus – has attracted growing interest in educational research (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Nonetheless, Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that the spatial turn has not necessarily given place a central role in research. These scholars argue that despite intentions to make place a relevant piece of study, it continues to be a context rather than the focus of research, often identified as “the research site,” or “the research context” (p. 9). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) also point out that place has tended to be distinguished from social space in spatial scholarship in education. This distinction, however, has marginalized Indigenous understandings of place. Distinctions between place and social space have relegated place to its material and concrete dimensions, while situating social space as the realm where the power relationships and social formations occur (Massey, 1994). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) contend that place is not adequately defined in this binary because it negates its social and political nature. They explain that place is more than a fixed and concrete surface that can be easily named and located on a map with defined boundaries.

Unlike a number of philosophers who have described space as stable (Laclau, 1990) or as a pause in time (Tuan, 1997), Massey (1994; 2005) has argued that social space and the spatial play a key role in the production of history and politics. While Massey continues to use the word
‘social space’ instead of place, she does not draw on the division between place and space that others have. Moreover, she asserts that since place is political, researchers need to attend to the practices and power relationships that configure and are configured in those places. For instance, spatial representations such as the centre, the periphery, and the margin (Smith, 2012) embrace the politics of location, a powerful way to demonstrate that place contains social relationships imbued with power.

Indigenous thinkers, communities, and social movements have challenged and resisted the legacies of colonialism by voicing questions about relations between humans, place, and most importantly Indigenous traditional lands threatened by colonial practices of land and resource expropriation (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). While relational thinking varies across Indigenous groups based on their systems of knowledge and values, they share the premise that human existence is interdependent and intertwined with place and their land where everything exists in a state of emergence and relationality (Country, et al., 2016). At the core of relational thinking is the assumption that human and non-human, living and non-living, not only depend on each other, but are also constituted in diverse and emergent relationships with others.

The renewed interest in place in educational scholarship challenges researchers to examine the relationship between place, practices, and colonialism. As Marker (2018) reminds us, modern knowledge has usually followed a colonialist recipe that sees place as “an inanimate surface for extracting, shaping, and constructing the artifacts of progress” (p. 453). For example, the colonial practices of finding, naming, delimiting, and marking a place on a map have benefited, as Marker argues, colonial projects of resource extraction (some examples include extra oil extraction, mining, and massive hydroelectric dams). Acknowledging the role of colonialism on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Indigenous people is
important because it acknowledges the clash with, and subsequent imposition of, settlers’ understandings of place on Indigenous lands. For example, settler narratives of *terra nullius* and settler heroisms (stories that portray settler colonizers as heroes) have greatly contributed to maintaining colonial political systems of appropriation for settlers’ benefit (Regan, 2010).

As the result of settlers’ desire to control the physical landscape, the vocabulary of colonization, represented in words like the line, the centre, and the outside (Smith, 2012), organizes place into compartments with clear boundaries. Such boundary-making impedes opportunities for other, less colonizing, relationships with place, including those available to children. Marker (2018) reminds us that the process of colonization has deeply affected Indigenous experiences in Coast Salish Territories (where this study takes place) making it challenging, perhaps impossible, to understand the distinctive ways in which Indigenous people relate with the land without viewing it through what Linda Smith (2012) calls “imperial eyes”. Following Smith (2012), I explain in Chapter 6 (on safety practices) that colonial practices of marking, defining, and controlling place are profoundly implicated in the Fraser River Centre narratives and practices, which prevents children from imagining and practicing decolonizing relationships.

These settler colonial narratives, understandings, and practices affect educational contexts like early childhood education and are learned from an early age (Battell & Barker, 2015). In concrete terms, examining the relationships between children and place demands that researchers scrutinize their own relationships with colonized places, especially the influence that “history, empire, and culture” (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 1) have on understanding of place. I will come back to these implications in the methodological chapter. Now I turn to some of the
consequences of the ongoing settler colonial project: erasing Indigeneity through what Battell and Barker (2015) have identified as spaces, systems, and stories.

**Challenging Diversity: Erasing Indigeneity Through Place**

In settler colonial countries like Canada, the erasure of difference has been an ongoing strategy that has served to eliminate threats to the settler colonial project. Battell and Barker (2015) argue that “the political identity of Canadians – as citizens, as a nation – is necessarily bound up with the spaces, systems, and stories built on stolen land” (p. 24). One of the major successes of the settler colonial project has perhaps been what Battell and Barker call “transcending colonialism” or the ability of settlers to eliminate Indigenous peoples from their land so “this new people – the settler society – becomes so deeply established that it is naturalized, normalized, unquestioned and unchallenged” (p. 26). Through transcending colonialism, Indigenous people become the other, the different, and inferior while the settler becomes the model to be emulated. In the past, the places in which Indigenous communities inhabited their everyday life, including their system of education, work, leisure, and spirituality, were turned into settlements, and then cities, organized around the settlers’ life structures. Today, erasure attempts persist in public as well as educational spaces. In the case of education, as St. Denis (2011) has demonstrated, Indigenous knowledges and history are repeatedly considered as complementary, but rarely as a priority in Canadian curriculum because allegedly giving extra attention to Indigenous history forecloses other histories to be covered in schools.

Mawani (2004) also offers an account for the invisible presence of Indigenous materiality in public spaces. The public display of Indigenous art may serve as a nation-building strategy that portrays Canadians as respectful of their Indigenous peoples’ heritage giving a sense of unity
among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. However, the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples through public artifacts, street art, and monuments also erasures an unjust colonial past. Nonetheless, First Nations people’s cultural presence through monuments, Indigenous, or street art may also make visible a superficial engagement with Indigenous concerns about the impact of colonialism on their present and future. Despite these apparent practices of recognition, Mawani (2004) argues that settlers continue to relate with Indigenous experiences and concerns without feeling implicated since “spectatorship is comfortable while political reckoning is not” (Baloy, 2016, p. 219). Baloy (2016) argues that settlers have created a regime of (in)visibility that circumscribes Indigeneity in Vancouver as spectacular and spectral. While Indigenous totem poles welcome the visitor in places of public relevance as the Vancouver airport or Stanley Park, in portraying Indigenous art as spectacular removes the history of colonization from those pieces of art’s descriptions, rendering Indigeneity spectral.

Despite settler colonial attempts of banishment, Indigenous people and allies have not ceased to reclaim their lands, world views, and spirituality. In the public space, street art as a form of public pedagogy (Desai & Darts, 2016) is one among many other means that potentially works both toward and against the grain of Indigenous displacement, the dispossession of their lands, and the erasure of their land-based relationships as competing assertions of sovereignty to the settler-colonial project of invasion and extraction (Baloy, 2016). Nonetheless, as Baloy (2016) has also argued, non-Indigenous people may superficially engage with this form of street art in ways that is “cultural, not political, visual not otherwise sensorial, passively observed, not participatory (p. 209). This superficial engagement continues to reify Indigeneity as spectacular but ultimately spectral.
Erasure Indigeneity has become deeply engrained in our everyday practices, including the pedagogies and narratives in early childhood education in settler colonial society like in Canada (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). Early childhood education may reinforce a disregard of Indigenous identities, spirituality, and language (Nxumalo, 2016) if the colonial legacy remains underexamined in its pedagogical practices through what Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) have called the *curriculum of replacement*. An example of curriculum replacement is the case of the New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework to which I referred in Chapter 2. The working group responsible for elaborating such a framework commissioned Andrea Bear Nicholas (2007), a Maliseet scholar from Tobique Nation, to review it and offer recommendations. Bear Nicholas stated that the curriculum guidelines were reinforcing a monocultural ideology despite the narrative of respect and inclusion of cultural diversity of the framework. The framework omitted Indigenous language revitalization through early childhood education, which Bear Nicholas strongly critiqued as an attempt to welcoming Indigenous cultures in early childhood education without unsettling the established order of things.

The extinction of Indigenous languages continues to result in the assimilation of Indigenous knowledges and cultures into dominant settler narratives of diversity and inclusion (Ashton, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; St. Denis, 2011). While Canadian Early Learning Frameworks celebrate Indigenous communities as a fundamental part of cultural diversity, there are no substantive policies for Indigenous language revitalization through early childhood education (Ashton, 2015; Bear Nicholas, 2007). In this case, as in many others, the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion position settlers as innocents ignoring their complicity with an ongoing colonial project (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Indigenous-settler relationships have been
profoundly shaped through the specificity of time and place by grand narratives of scientific knowledge, progress and development, that positions settlers in a place of superiority over the underprivileged (Prochner, May, & Kaur, 2009). These grand narratives include discourses and practices of multiculturalism that silence Indigenous knowledges, history, and experiences in Canadian curriculum and pedagogical practices (St. Denis, 2011).

Early childhood education everyday narratives and practices offer significant insights into how children come to encounter diversity through their relationships with place. Since places are not neutral, but rather are situated in historical, social, and political contexts, children’s relationships with place cannot be separated from a history of colonization. Ignoring the spaces, systems, and narratives (Battell & Barker, 2015) reifies an ongoing settler-colonial project of erasure of Indigeneity. Having said that, I would like to emphasize that children’s everyday relationships with place do not start nor end at the micro-sphere of early childhood education settings. Continuities and discontinuities go beyond the immediate places that children occupy every day. Lefebvre’s (2002) notion of the “everyday” illustrates the significance of children’s everyday places, not only at a smaller, but at a larger scale as well. For Lefebvre’s everyday life is:

…a mixture of nature and culture, the historical and the lived, the individual and the social, the real and the unreal, a place of transitions, of meetings, interactions and conflicts, in short, a level of reality… It is existence and the ‘lived’, revealed as they are before speculative thought has transcribed them: what must be changed and what is the hardest of all to change. (p. 47)

Children’s everyday may be understood as a meeting point that embraces the complexity happening in place. As the notion of everyday life makes clearer, children’s relationships with
places are not limited to the immediate relationship with the built environment, but also embedded in the history of that place (Massey, 1992, 2005; Tuan, 1977; Ruitenberg, 2005; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). In other words, children’s places are more than a micro-sphere within larger structures.

**Neoliberal Rationalities and Place**

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) remind us that an obligation toward place must come with a robust analysis of how neoliberal rationalities are implicated in the ongoing appropriation of place and land. Their reminder is also important in the context of early childhood education. A neoliberal rationality proposes that human well-being can be achieved by implementing the principles of the market in the distribution of public services, including education. These principles involve deregulation, competition, privatization, and management of performance (Ball, 2012). The market is at its heart a principle that defines not only economic, but most importantly, political and social relationships. As economist Becker (1976) long ago stated, neoliberalism is a rationality or mindset that is not only limited to the goods and services in a market economy. Rather it is also a comprehensive approach in which all human actions and interactions are understood through the logic of the market. For instance, the neoliberal notion of human capital understood as the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population illustrates the extent to which human behavior can be seen and reduced in terms of economic value influencing a wide range of decisions beyond the economic realm.

The dominance of neoliberal rationalities in the decisions made in early childhood education contexts have been widely discussed in the literature (Ashton, 2015; Cannella, Pérez, & Lee, 2015; Moss, 2014; Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Rowan, 2011; Vintimilla, 2014).
Moss (2014) argued that neoliberalism has promoted two influential stories in early childhood education: the story of quality and high returns and the more recent story of markets. The story of quality has claimed that early childhood education and care provision world-wide justifies both the standardization of pedagogical practices and even the standardized testing of young children’s learning as quality measures (Diaz-Diaz, Semenec, & Moss, 2019). Similarly, the story of markets reduces early childhood education to a set of economic relationships and quantifiable measurable variables that assure commodification and competition in the name of parents’ choice. Both stories have gained traction in early childhood education because they appeal to parents’ concerns about the education and care of their young children. If parents can demand quality early childhood education and choose where to send their children to get a good education and care, then they feel that their needs are covered. Nonetheless, critics have demonstrated that these stories are flawed from their beginning since market competitions, standardization of pedagogical practices, and standardized testing of young children’s learning have actually increased educational inequalities by reinforcing the segregation of families who cannot afford the so called “high quality” early childhood education. What these stories successfully do is impose a dictatorship of no alternatives (Unger, 2005, p. 1). In other words, it is believed that quality of early childhood education and care can be achieved through the market and its principles of competition and individual choice worldwide (Penn, 2011).

These neoliberal rationalities that Moss speaks of are part of everyday narratives and practices in early childhood and might also have an impact on how adults, parents and educators, see children (Smith, 2014) and the purpose of early childhood education. It is important to emphasize that these neoliberal rationalities are situated in particular geopolitical contexts and as such they do not work as a totalizing discourse that governs, top-down only, early childhood
education in global and local spaces. Rather, Ball (2012) argues that neoliberalism works as “a
complex, often incoherent set of practices that are organised around a certain imagination of the
‘market’” (p. 3). While we cannot deny the existence of neoliberal rationalities that influence
how early childhood education organizes its practices, its influence does not mean absolute
control. In Chapter 7, I will return to neoliberal rationalities to discuss their role in privileging
some forms of social responsibility over others.

Critical Place Inquiry and Witnessing

Critical place inquiry pushes forward a decolonial research agenda against continual erasure of
Indigenous knowledge and demands of sovereignty over their ancestral lands (Tuck &
McKenzie, 2015). Since researchers may be complicit with the erasure of Indigenous’ peoples
demands of sovereignty and their land-based cosmovision, a central question for critical place
inquiry is: How do researchers remain accountable to the ongoing attempts to erase Indigenous
worldviews and sovereignty claims over their dispossession from, and exploitation of, their
ancestral lands? This question challenges scholars interested in place to consider how their
research commits to truth telling, validity, and accountability to Indigenous knowledges and
demands.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminds us that the word ‘research’ brings with it a long
history of pain and distrust among Indigenous people: “the ways in which research is implicated
in the worst excesses of colonialism10 remains a powerful remembered history from many of the
world’s colonized peoples” (p. 1). Through becoming and being a researcher, I am confronted

10 Colonialism: the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country,
occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Imperialism has a specifically expansionist connotation.
with the question of the colonial legacy in the production of knowledge, and the role that I play in the interruption or reinforcement of that legacy. I came to know the potential harm that research can do later on in my academic trajectory when I started to become more aware of the sorrow and pain of Indigenous people in these lands that we now call Vancouver. The University of British Columbia (UBC) is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam people. Among many examples, I recall that when I was a Master’s student in Early Childhood Education at UBC, an Indigenous scholar came to one of our seminars to talk about early childhood education programs in her community. She expressed skepticism about the positive impact that the work of non-Indigenous research groups could have on Indigenous communities. She gave us an example of research that did not benefit Indigenous peoples done by an early child development interdisciplinary research network. By that time, I was working as a research assistant for that network and while I had my reservations about approaches that primarily focused on child development, I had not been made aware of the tensions of doing research with Indigenous people by non-Indigenous researchers.

The guest speaker explained to us that Indigenous communities knew what they needed, and they wanted research on their needs to be done by their own people. Her community had attempted to work with non-Indigenous researchers who often times treated them as research subjects instead of research partners. She recalled one of her unfortunate experiences with researchers who, after doing their fieldwork, left, published their research, received credit for it, but never came back to her community to report back their findings. I remember clearly when she said: “This is another form of colonialism.” Research, as Smith (2012) insists, is a dirty word for Indigenous communities, because it has worked against them. While non-Indigenous researchers have argued for the need to improve the lives of Indigenous families, who often live
in poverty and are overrepresented in the child welfare system (Jacobs, 2014), among other systemic problems that affect them, their research practices maintain the perspective of the colonizer who believes they know what is the best for Indigenous communities.

As a researcher who learned to do research in Western academic institutions in my home country, Chile, and now in Canada, I have been trained in research methodologies under the precepts of what is considered scientifically valid research. I understand that I risk bringing the perspective of the colonizer into my research. Researchers cannot remove themselves from a system that, while intended to improve lives, still cannot escape from the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. By acknowledging the traces of the colonizer’s perspective in my own research practices, I do not attempt to escape from the uncomfortable position of complicity with the colonial project, nor do I reify my innocence. I situate my research project is these interrelated challenges: how can I engage in research that is ethically committed to moving away from Western notions of pedagogical practices in early childhood education? How can I do so while acknowledging the inherited and inevitable complicity of researchers whose knowledge production has excluded, marginalized, and assimilated Indigenous communities around the world?

As a recent settler immigrant, my knowledge about the territories of the Coast Salish People and their place-ontologies is limited. I have experienced their place as someone schooled in a Eurocentric Western education system. I carry on this limitation through this dissertation. I purposefully highlight this limitation because through my writing and research practices I have been continuously confronted by my choices regarding what I consider knowledge and evidence and how I conceptualize and represent that knowledge (Marker, 2017). I started my inquiry on children’s relationships with places by looking for the history of the particular area where the
place is located. But as Marker (2018) reminds us, Indigenous people’s landscape is more than a container for human history. History is certainly a key piece to disrupt the effects of the settler-colonial projects on Indigenous lands, but it is not the only piece. Among the other pieces is the acknowledgement, respect, and accounting for what Marker calls the sentient nature of topography that animates Indigenous ways of knowing. He invites scholars who do research in, and about, Indigenous places to engage with the landscape and its energies as a way to instill imagination and shift the course of inquiry for the purpose of uncovering the effects of Settler colonialism on Indigenous Land. As a researcher studying children’s relationships with place in Coast Salish Territories, I accepted his invitation by engaging on my own with the landscapes of the neighbourhood to sense what they had to offer. Since I am aware that my engagement does not free me from my colonizer perspective, I seek to remain open for the sentient nature of Indigenous knowledge through their lands. I do this by looking for not only what I see but also what I do not see – what it is absent or silenced.

As I argued earlier on in this dissertation, I do not endorse a notion of diversity that celebrates difference as desirable and representative of the Canadian multicultural identity. Such a notion ignores the fact that difference has been mostly categorized and hierarchized under White and middle-class identities, knowledges, and ways of being making possible the consolidation of systemic inequalities. In bringing to the fore the stories that are entangled throughout this dissertation, I seek to make visible that narratives and practices in early childhood education are far from neutral or innocuous practices, and rather full of opportunities to rethink what it means to relate responsibly with diversity.

Smith’s reminder about research as a dirty word constitutes an imperative for critical place inquiry and not only the research done with/in Indigenous communities. This doctoral
study is not about Indigenous children, but rather it is about the relationships that non-Indigenous children have with traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands. This relationship with the land has also been shaped by the “eyes of the colonizer” (Smith, 2012) especially in educational contexts where curriculum and pedagogies carry with them a colonial legacy. Being aware of this fact challenges me to scrutinize how my methodologies, on one hand, carry over the perspective of the colonizer in the production of knowledge, and on the other, resist and change the parameters of what constitutes knowledge. It is within this tension that I situate my methodology of witnessing.

During my fieldwork I commuted from the University of British Columbia, where I have studied, worked, and lived with my family, to the childcare centre located in East Vancouver. The one-hour commute showed me the city in ways I had not experienced before since I came to Vancouver in 2010. I further discuss my commuting experiences in Chapter 7. For now, I would like to highlight that I came to realize that these trips played an important role in my research. As the bus moved from West to the East side of Vancouver, the geography of the bus also changed affecting in turn how I engage in my fieldwork. I started to think of myself, rather than an observer, as a witness, who selectively pays attention to her surroundings. I experienced the encounters on the bus intensively as they made me wonder how my assumptions about what was important to observe interacted with what the bus had to offer. The researcher eye is able to pay attention to multiple scenarios, but always it picks a few to make sense of them.

Witnessing, as a disposition to engage with place, is in tune with critical place inquiry in its attempt to formulate critical questions and offer methodological approaches that respond to those questions (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). In this dissertation, critical questions aim to deepen understandings of, and revert, the role of settler colonialism and neoliberalism (Smith, 2012) in
early childhood education narratives and practices. Following Smith (2012), scholars need to unearth assumptions about the nature of knowledge, truth, and power in light of colonialism and imperialism by examining their own assumptions about place and research, and particularly their role in working against the legacy of settler colonialism. By using witnessing as a methodology, I examine not only the legacies of colonialism in children’s relationships with place but also in myself as a researcher.

Witnessing as a methodological orientation or sensitivity (Fenwick, Edwards, and Sawchuck, 2011) has already been used within feminist and decolonial as well as early childhood education scholarship (Bell, Instone, Mee, & Bell, 2018; Blaise, Hamm, & Marie Iorio, 2017; Haraway, 1997; Lugones, 2003; Smith, 2012; Tuana, 2008). Witnessing has been used to read decolonial imaginaries (Figueroa, 2015), to engage with the more-than-human world (Bell, Instone, & Mee, 2018), and to interrogate knowledge-making practices (Haraway, 1997). Through witnessing as a methodology, these scholars attempt to shift ethical practices of responsibility. As Haraway (1997) reminds us: “witnessing is seeing, attesting, standing publicly accountable for, and physically vulnerable to one’s visions and representations” (p. 267).

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) suggest that critical place inquiry should take a strategic methodology approach that informs the decision-making process in research. In proposing witnessing as a methodological orientation, I follow a number of scholars who have already argued that the current times marked by a global crisis of economic, social, and environmental nature need research that cannot be tidily explained in methodology handbooks (Koro-Ljungberg, Löytönen, Tesar, 2017; Lather, 2013; MacLure, 2010; 2013; St. Pierre, 2011), but that takes risk, is affirmative (Braidotti, 2013), creative (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; St. Pierre, 2013, 2018), ethical (Springgay & Truman, 2017; Ulmer, 2017), and strategic (Tuck & McKenzie,
Following them, I propose witnessing as a strategic methodology to look at issues of diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education through children’s relationships with place within a critique of settler colonialism.

**Witnessing as a Strategic Approach**

In this dissertation, witnessing is a strategic methodological approach for use in and for particular contexts and times (Fine & Barreras, 2001; McKenzie, 2009). Witnessing starts by acknowledging the colonial violence against children and places (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Taylor, Blaise, & de Finney, 2015) which has affected Indigenous and non-Indigenous children around the world. This acknowledgement is intended to pay attention to how early childhood education narratives and practices may work in favour of ongoing settler colonialism. Since the places where children are situated have been inscribed by colonial legacies, witnessing as a methodological sensitivity allows me to see not only what is present, but also what is absent or silent in children’s relationships with place. Being sensitive to absences and silences (Spyrou, 2015) will help me to identify how early childhood education narratives and practices privilege certain encounters with diversity and particular practices of social responsibility instead of others.

Lugones (2003) offers the notion of “faithful witnessing” as a methodology that allows researchers to recognize the effects of colonization and migration on the lived experiences of people. For Lugones, faithful witnessing is a political act of solidarity with women of colour and decolonial epistemologies. Through faithful witnessing, she argues, feminists can make visible the unseen consequences of colonial power in the configuration of knowledge and gender. Similarly, Smith (2012) has argued that through witnessing, claiming, and giving testimony,
Indigenous and colonized people can assert their rights and dues. In both accounts, witnessing means aligning oneself with people (especially Indigenous people, women, and children) whose experiences of colonialism remain unseen or marginalized from dominant historical accounts. In this dissertation, witnessing is never a neutral nor innocent practice. On the contrary, it is situated and aims to make visible the often-unseen traces of settler colonialism and neoliberal rationalities in early childhood education.

Haraway (1997) offers the figure of the “modest witness” to interrogate modern knowledge-making practices that have been depicted as objective. Haraway investigated scientific practices through the historical work of Shapin and Scheffer on Robert Boyle (1627-1691), a philosopher, chemist, physicist and investor who worked during the 17th century. According to Haraway, “the modest witness” back then was a wealthy, white, English man who devoted his time to science. A modest witness arguably was able to offer objective, clear, and pure observations of the reality to study without traces of his own opinions or experiences. Haraway (1997) also noticed that modesty has long been judged differently for women and men. While modesty was for men a virtue that made them visible and credible, for women, it was a virtue that took them out of place, marginalizing them from decision- and knowledge-making practices. This has also been true for early childhood education, as Blaise, Hamm, and Iorio (2017) have argued: “[t]he gendered history of modesty resonates with the historical traditions that the care and education of young children has always been considered ‘women’s work’ and carried out by ‘good’ and moral women” (p. 34).

What the figure of the modest witness suggests is that scientific practices lean toward the production of some worlds while leaving others behind. To represent other possible worlds in research Haraway reconfigures the practices of observation in tune with a feminist modesty
(Blaise, Hamm, & Marie Iorio, 2017). Contrary to the longstanding understanding of female modesty as keeping women in their place, Haraway is concerned with making a difference in the dominant narratives and practices that make the world. Following Haraway’s conception of feminist modesty, Fikile Nxumalo (2016) frames witnessing as an immersion in the everyday practices and narratives of early childhood education in which the researcher is not innocent in her observation practices but aims to remain accountable and vulnerable to the situated and partial knowledge produced by herself. This immersion is situated in the researcher’s own history and experiences. Nxumalo (2016) explains: “my particular perspectives, histories and experiences always already create a propensity towards particular ways of seeing, noticing and contesting colonialisms” (p. 649). Nxumalo’s understanding of witnessing brings in the ethical implications of witnessing in early childhood education. The act of witnessing, as part of the research process, need to be interrogated by the consequences that it brings into the world of human minorities and the challenges of living on a planet that suffers from human-induced endangerment (Blaise, Hamm, & Iorio, 2017). As Lugones (2003) reminds us, engaged, faithful, or feminist modest witnessing is a response-able practice because it is always in relation to an Other, either human or non-human, such as place.

I also proposed witnessing as an embodied methodology that is situated in place and time. While I accompanied children in their daily walks through the neighbourhood – which I explained in more detail in Chapter 4 – witnessing was not a static process, but rather one of sensorial engagement. Neighbourhood walks covered a small area that varied in some extent but not considerably. I was able to witness repeatedly children’s and my own encounters with places which made me think how places become inscribed in our bodies and minds (Ruitenberg, 2012). As I witness, I do not detach myself from what I observe, nor what I will attest to.
Legitimacy in research is often associated with assumptions about knowledge as objective and as the result of the application of the experimental method (Blaise, Hamm, & Marie Iorio, 2017) that accounts for the separability of the researcher from the object of study. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) contend that understandings of legitimacy in critical place inquiry should be assessed by its accountability to people, communities, and the workings of settler colonialism and neoliberalism. Remaining accountable to these matters is by no means to disregard validity (Lather, 2017), but rather to state the criteria that guides an inquiry and how the researcher is able to remain accountable to those criteria. In this context, witnessing is a gesture toward becoming accountable to uncover the working of settler colonialism and neoliberalism in early childhood.

As a researcher who witnesses, I take responsibility for the situated and partial knowledge-making practices (Haraway, 1988) that I produce in this research. Following Nxumalo (2018), I argue that my history and experiences accompany me in the act of witnessing. In this sense, witnessing continues to be a relational gesture. As a woman researcher, I have been raised within the scientific-experimental paradigm in which an embodied and relational approach to research belongs to the realm of the non-scientific world. I do not claim that my witnessing practices are exempt from Euro-Western perspectives on place. I have grown up and been schooled in a Euro-centric educational system and academic institutions whose precepts belong to a tradition of knowledge as objective and detached from the observer and most importantly that detach human from places. As Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue, Western theorization of place has prevailed in educational scholarship and I do not claim to be immune to this disposition. This acknowledgement challenges me to be aware and attentive to my own habits of
treating children and place as discrete entities and reproducing western notions of place through my research.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I situated children’s relationships with place within the critique of settler colonialism. In doing so, I followed a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who have argued that place embraces the realm of the socio-political and historical relationships. By situating children’s relationships with place within the legacies of settler colonialism, I take responsibility for bringing to the fore the spaces, systems, and narratives that enables the settler colonial project of erasure of Indigeneity to continue operating. Witnessing as a methodological orientation enables me to make strategic research choices considering the principles of critical place inquiry of accountability toward people and place. These principles confront researchers with tensions and challenges that I discussed throughout the notion of witnessing and that I put in action in the next chapter.
Chapter 4:

Witnessing in Action

In Chapter 3, I outlined this study’s theoretical and methodological framework about children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility. Having argued that attention to children’s relationships with place can add new knowledge to understandings of diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education, I defined place within the broader critiques of settler colonialism. As Battell and Barker (2015) suggest, attention to place offers important insights regarding the impact that the ongoing settler colonial project has on public spaces as well as educational systems through the stories and practices that erase and displace Indigeneity. Barker and Battell’s (2015) assertion is important for this study because children’s relationships with place do not occur in a vacuum but in a colonized context. Finally, I framed witnessing as a methodological orientation that allows me to observe and account for how children learn about diversity and social responsibility through their relationships with place in settler colonial contexts.

In this chapter, I will offer a detailed account of how witnessing as a methodological orientation has framed my choices of research methods and modes of analysis used in this dissertation. I approached my fieldwork as a witness to what is not apparent or obvious to imperial eyes (Smith, 2012) by paying close attention to what is absent and silenced. In this sense, witnessing means that I ask speculative questions in the form of “what if”? For example, what if children could be guided towards contemplating the presence of vibrant and contentious street art along with the more usual focus on blossoming trees or the train passing by? (I explored these types of questions more deeply in Chapter 5). Witnessing also entails that the witness-researcher testify in relation to something that has caused damage in someone’s life. In
this regard, I approach the fieldwork by asking questions regarding those places that have been less visible and are less familiar to children and educators, and how this absence speaks to children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility.

**Situating the Methodology in Place**

I audio recorded the conversation below as part of the first short interviews with children.

**Juniper:** Do you want to play with us, Claudia?

Sure, I replied. I sat by Juniper on a little piece of lumber used as a bench (see Figure 1) facing the shed’s orange wall. All the children were playing outside on a sunny and warm winter morning.

**Juniper:** I’m the captain and you need to follow my instructions, okay?

Pointing to the orange wall – the screen of our pirate ship – Juniper showed me the route we were going to take:

**Jupiter:** We’re going to fly up and fly down and then we’re going to start all the way back to the treasure and then we lead to the pet store again.

**Claudia:** I wonder if you have been there before?

**Jupiter:** No, I’m just pretending… (as if I was taking her too seriously) and then we’re going to fly all the way home.

**Claudia:** Are we going to fly?

**Jupiter:** Yes, because this is a flying pirate ship.

Flying pirate ship became our game.
From November of 2016 to June 2017, I carried out my fieldwork in a single, licensed group childcare centre – the Fraser River Centre (FRC). During this time, I participated in the childcare routines along with 25 children between 30 months to school age (under 6 years old). I sat with them in circle time, played with them, joined them in their neighbourhoods, and sometimes, I had lunch with them. I was an observer of classroom activities and I enjoyed spending time playing with them and listening to multiple stories about flying pirate ships, trips to outer space, and monsters in all colours and shapes. I also spent time supporting the educators in some of their routines, such as setting up the nap room or setting up the tables for lunch or
helping children to dress for the weather before going outside. I attended four educators’
meetings where I shared information about my research. During my first three months of
fieldwork, I visited the centre three times per week, each time in blocks of three to five hours.
From March to June, I visited the centre weekly and I wrapped up my fieldwork with a five-
session photography workshop with the older children (4-5 years old) who were attending
kindergarten in September 2017 as the centre director suggested.

To select the research site, I first focused on East Vancouver since it has a long history of
cultural and social diversity. As I mentioned in the introduction, the area has a large number of
low-income households and a higher percentage of the population identifies as Indigenous
(Statistics Canada, 2016\textsuperscript{11}). The neighbourhood where the FRC is located used to be an
affordable place to live. Current levels of gentrification, however, have removed the diversity
(e.g., family income, ethnicity, and language) of the area in the last decade (Kasman, 2015; Ley
& Dobson, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2016). Having selected the area, I then selected five centres
to contact. I sent a formal letter inviting them to participate in the study one by one. The first two
centres I contacted declined their participation. The first centre argued that educators did not
agree on having a graduate student doing research in the centre. The second centre said that they
had other post-secondary students already doing their practicums, and did not have capacity to
receive another graduate student. The FRC was the third centre I contacted, which accepted the
invitation to participate. I did not continue contacting the other two centres on my list, since I did
not plan to conduct a multiple case study.

In October 2016, I met with the FRC’s director to explain the details of my doctoral research project. In that first meeting, the director explained to me that the demographic makeup of the childcare centre had changed as the result of gentrification in the neighbourhood. She told me that ten years ago, about half of the children attending the centre received social assistance. By the time my fieldwork took place only four families were on social assistance and one family self-identified as Indigenous. In that meeting, I was also introduced to the senior educator on the floor. I was required to bring a criminal record check issued by the Vancouver police department before I could start visiting the centre and we scheduled a meeting with the four educators to introduce my study and my role as a researcher during my fieldwork to them.

During the first four weeks of my fieldwork I distributed the consent forms among families to obtain their permission for their children’s participation in this study. I also distributed consent forms to the educators. As a result of the recruitment process, 24 families out of 25 gave permission for their children to take part in this study. My study did not intend to gather detailed demographic information about each child since the focus of the study was on the role of children’s relationships with place in their learning about diversity and social responsibility. Of of the 24 children taking part in the study, 15 identified as boys and 9 identified as girls. All of them spoke and understood English at a level of proficiency according to their age. Two of them were receiving language support from a specialist who visited the centre from time to time. Many of them had families oversees and about one quarter spoke another language at home.

In 2017, I was granted the UBC Public Scholar Award, which supported me in carrying out a photography project with the children. I proposed the photography workshop to the centre director as a knowledge mobilization initiative to disseminate children’s encounters with places
through photography. The workshop focused on how children related with and learned from their everyday places, which had the potential to offer insights for enhancement of curriculum and pedagogical practices for diversity and social responsibility learning. The photography workshop was organized in five weekly sessions during May and June 2017. In the sixth meeting, the children, Andrea, an educator, and I curated the exhibit (as I mentioned in the introductory chapter, all proper names as well as the childcare, school, and street names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms). The sessions developed simultaneously with the visits to the school library as part of the activities that centre had planned to help children to their transition to Kindergarten. During the sessions, the children learned how to take pictures using digital cameras provided by me. They took countless photographs, excited by using digital cameras, tabloids, and even my iPhone. To help them to select the pictures, I presented to them a selection of 75 photographs from which they chose 17. Open to the children’s families, the final exhibition showcased their photographs along with short vignettes written by me. In these vignettes, I presented some children’s observations about the pictures they shot as well as my reflections.

All children attending kindergarten on September 2017 were invited to participate in the photography workshop. I distributed consent forms with information about this project among their parents. Participation was voluntary. Due to children’s privacy and photo release I was asked not to encourage children to take pictures of their friends or educators. Nonetheless, this rule was very difficult to reinforce since children were continuously driven to take pictures of important people in their lives. I asked children for their assent to participate in the workshop as well as in the exhibition upon their parents’ and guardians’ consent.
Placing that I Witness: The Child Care Centre and The Neighbourhood

Witnessing as a methodological orientation allows me to focus on the narratives and practices with which children engage through their everyday life. These practices take place in their childcare centre and the neighbourhood. The city has been regarded as a contact zone or potential zone of encounters (Valentine, 2008) that reminds us of Stuart Hall’s question regarding living well together and the tensions that arise from it. While physical proximity is important for learning to live well with difference (Allport, 1954) the mere exposure to differences in culture, ethnicity, race, class, gender, and abilities does not necessarily translate into connection among members belonging to different social groups (Amin, 2002). Amin (2002) suggests that it is necessary to create spaces of interdependence in the city where people from different backgrounds come together regularly to organize themselves around a shared activity. Places of interdependence might destabilize cultural barriers that distance people from meaningful contact with each other (Valentine, 2008).

The insights that Valentine (2008) and Amin (2002) bring to the conception of the city as a place of encounters with difference are especially relevant for early childhood education and this study in particular. The childcare centre is always situated in a larger geographical area that constitutes “the place, above all, of living with others” (Laurier & Philo, 2006, p. 196). As children move throughout the city to get to their childcare centre and back home, they encounter diversity in its multiple forms (racial, ethnic, class, gender, ability). In the case of the Fraser River Centre, children used different means of transport to commute from home to the childcare such as walking, being driven in a family car, and public transit which provided them with opportunities to be in the city and the neighbourhood where the childcare was located. Another key opportunity that children had to explore the diversity of the neighbourhood was participation
in the neighbourhood walks, one of their childcare routines. While I did not plan to follow
children during their daily commutes, I did focus on their walks which allowed children to
encounter the diversity of their neighbourhood. I elaborate on these walks in detail in Chapter 5.
I also asked children about their commuting experiences which I expand on in Chapter 7.

Every day when children walked in the childcare centre they brought with them stories
from their homes and the places they passed by on their way. It was typical to hear children,
while putting their belongings away in the cubby area at the entrance of the centre, telling their
educators some anecdote about what had just happened on their way to the childcare centre.
Parents usually confirmed their stories to the teachers who listened to children with enthusiasm.
After saying goodbye to their families, they walked in and started to find a place to play, read, or
be with someone. I followed children and observed how they occupied the space and engaged
with the wide range of objects and materials the centre offered, like books, toys, art supplies,
rocks, plants, cups, plates, clocks, drawings, blankets, mats, among many others. In addition, I
also followed educators and noted how they used and marked the space of the childcare centre,
sometimes engaging with different artefacts like policy and curriculum documents which were
used as reminders of their tasks and responsibilities as educators as I further explain in Chapter 6
and 7. As I followed children and educators, I witnessed the multiple boundaries – physical and
symbolic – that marked and sometimes crossed through during their routines. These boundaries
also stimulate questions regarding the places children can and cannot access. I also develop these
ideas in Chapter 6 and 7.

The materiality of these artefacts takes form in everyday early childhood education
routines and configures the place of the Fraser River Centre. In short, place arranges and
assembles routines through everyday material and discursive practices, such as story time, snack
and lunch time, outdoor play, neighbourhood walks in early childhood education. Either in the
neighbourhood or in the childcare centre, I focus on these everyday material and discursive
practices for my data collection and analysis which I detail in the sections that follow. Situated in
place, these practices include the material world in concert with human bodies, the bodies of
children and educators, parents, caregivers, and the body of myself as a researcher.

How I Witnessed: Research Phases and Methods

In Table 1, I offer a visual reference for understanding how my research methods enabled me to
explore answers to my research questions. As a reminder, my research questions in this study
are:

1) How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter and learn about diversity and
   social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to?

2) What barriers stand in the way of educators and children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre
   encountering diversity and social responsibility through place?

Table 1 Research Phases and Sequence of Research Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1:</strong> Researcher meets the children, educators, and families (4 weeks)</td>
<td>Meeting with the Centre’s Director</td>
<td>Centre’s Director, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 1:</strong> How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter diversity and social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with the educators</td>
<td>Director, educators, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Story Time with Children and Educators</td>
<td>Children, educators, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting research participants.</td>
<td>Distribution of Consent Forms to Families and Educators</td>
<td>Children and families, educators, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2: Mapping the routines and events that contribute to practices of diversity and social responsibility in the FRC (1-8 months)</strong></td>
<td>Ethnographic observations (fieldnotes, written and audio recordings, photographs, and drawings)</td>
<td>All children(^{12}) in the childcare centre, early childhood educators and “outside” instructors, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 1:</strong> How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter diversity and social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short interviews with children</td>
<td>Focal children(^{14})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with Educators(^{15})</td>
<td>Educator, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up interviews with educators and children (no audio-recording, only fieldnotes)</td>
<td>All children in the childcare centre, early childhood educators, “outside”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3: Identify the barriers that children and educators face to encounter diversity through place (1-8 month)</strong></td>
<td>Ethnographic Observations, fieldnotes</td>
<td>All children in the childcare centre, early childhood educators and “outside” instructors, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 2:</strong> What barriers stand in the way of educators and children encountering diversity and social responsibility through place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the barriers that children and educators face to encounter diversity through place</td>
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\(^{12}\) These routines and events include story time, indoor and outdoor free play, snack and lunch time, nap time, neighbourhood walks, and visits to the school library located in front of the childcare centre. The routines and events also include dance and art workshops given by instructors coming from Art Umbrella, a non-profit organization based on Vancouver. I also observed yoga classes facilitated by an independent yoga instructor.

\(^{13}\) Only one family did not give consent to the child to take part of the study. My observations include all children except the child from this family.

\(^{14}\) Seven children (4-5 years old) volunteered to be interviewed. Two girls and five boys.

\(^{15}\) Three out of four teachers agreed on being interviewed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Purpose</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Research Question</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of policy documents (e.g., safety regulations)</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up interviews with the educators and children (no audio-recording, only fieldnotes)</td>
<td>Focal children Educator Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnographic observations and fieldnotes Walking methods</td>
<td>Children, educators, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4: Knowledge mobilization and Photography Workshop</strong>&lt;sup&gt;16&lt;/sup&gt; (6 weeks)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminate observations gathered through the fieldwork</td>
<td>Children’s photograph workshop and library visits</td>
<td>Focal children, educator, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>: How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter diversity and social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting children’s insights about their relationships with place</td>
<td>Ethnographic observations</td>
<td>Focal children, educator, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong>: What barriers stand in the way of educators and children encountering diversity and social responsibility through place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fieldnotes from researcher in the form of vignettes that accompany children’s photographs</td>
<td>Focal children, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s photograph exhibition.</td>
<td>All children, educators, researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 5: Analysis (ongoing + end of the study)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand how these routines and events configure narratives and practices of diversity and responsibility in the FRC.</td>
<td>Reviewing all data (Ethnographic observations, interviews recordings, photographs, audio-recording, drawings) to look for routines and events that explain children’s learning about diversity</td>
<td>Educators, researcher, children, researcher</td>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>: How do children at the Fraser River Childcare Centre encounter diversity and social responsibility through the places they do and do not have access to?</td>
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<sup>16</sup> The photography workshop was plan as part of the UBC Public Scholar Initiative mainly as a strategy of knowledge mobilization months after the research proposal approval.
<table>
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<th>Participants</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and social responsibility through place.</td>
<td>Ongoing conversations with educators, children to interpret understandings and consider next steps.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question 2: What barriers stand in the way of educators and children encountering diversity and social responsibility through place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethnographic observations and fieldnotes.**

I observed childcare centre routines such as story time, transitions, free play, either indoor and outdoor, neighbourhood walks, snack and lunch time. I rarely stayed during nap time, but I visited the centre after nap time to conduct the photography workshop with 10 children (who I further introduce in the participant section) at the end of my fieldwork for the purpose of disseminating my research findings. I wrote extensively in my journal about what children and educators did and did not do and the questions that arose through my observations. Although I was able to take notes while staying in the childcare, an important part of my fieldnotes taking took place on the bus as I commuted from home to the centre and vice versa. As part of my fieldnotes, I used a number of methods of documentation and recording such as fieldnotes, audio recording using my iPhone, photographs, drawings, sketches, and diagrams. During my eight months of fieldwork, I completed six fieldnotes journals, took about 150 pictures, amassed three hours of recordings, and pulled together a folder of drawings.

Although I use ethnographic observations, I do not frame this study as an ethnography or critical ethnography. Ethnography aims to systematically study a group of people or a culture, that in the case of critical ethnography, serve the purpose of social transformation (e.g., Mills & Morton, 2013). While this study has important similarities with ethnography or critical ethnography, ethnographic literature did not inform my methodological choices regarding the
research methods I used, the time spent in the childcare, and the frequency of my visits. The amount of fieldnotes, audio-recording, photographs, drawings, and other means of documentation I have used have served the purpose of providing the elements for a fine-grained description and analysis, but I have not used them to reconstruct the FRC’s culture of diversity and social responsibility as a whole. Instead, I aligned this study with the aims of critical place inquiry (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Indigenous critiques of multiculturalism, decolonizing and disrupting research methodologies, settler colonial legacies in early childhood education have been critically influential in defining my methodological approach including the role as a researcher, the type of questions that guided my daily visits to the centre, and my attention to the absences and silences – what was not there, what I expected to see but did not. I have made strategic methodological decisions (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) to be able to expose, theorize, and account for what attention of children’s relationships with place has to offer to understandings of diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education, but that have remained underexamined. As I have stated earlier, witnessing as a strategic orientation allowed me to focus on the everyday narratives and practices through which children learn about diversity and social responsibility by paying close attention to silences and absences in their relationships with place.

In this dissertation, I present some conversations that I have either quoted verbatim or paraphrased. I was able to cite verbatim by audio-recording or taking verbatim notes. For example, in storytime, I was able to record literal short conversations. I wrote detailed notes of other valuable dialogues by memory right after they happened. I have paraphrased those exchanges in the text. I use quotation marks to indicate verbatim quotes. Where there are no quotation marks, I have paraphrased from detailed field notes.
Walking methods.

Walking as a research method is grounded in walking methodologies (Springgay & Truman, 2018) as a place-making practice that connects material aspects of place like birds, dogs, sounds, smells, with its abstract aspects like stories and memories. In the FRC, neighbourhood walks offered opportunities to use walking methods. Children and educators went on neighbourhood walks almost everyday day during the morning after free play and before lunch time. How long or how far the walks would go depended on the educators who made decisions based on varied reasons such as the weather, the day’s schedule, or how tired the children seemed to be. BC Child Care Licensing Regulations (Community Care and Assisted Living Act, 2018). 2018) recommend that children spend daily time outdoors, engaged in physical activities, and exploring the diversity of their neighbourhood. According to the educators, neighbourhood walks offer these benefits to children.

As Springgay and Truman (2018) remind me, I used walking methods as a knowledge-making practice. As I walked with the children and the educators, not only did we move from one place to another, but we also participated in the making of that place. As a knowledge-making practice, Springgay and Truman (2018) emphasize that walking enables the materiality of place and the narratives about place to be examined together. In this sense, neighbourhood walks also offered opportunities to engage more directly with the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territories of Coast Salish People through the materiality of the neighbourhood as, for example, represented in the street art. The materiality of the neighbourhood reminded me to ask questions about the history of colonization, where property, dispossession, and struggle over the land, knowledges, and Indigenous bodies have taken place over the centuries. Walking methods help me to be accountable to the principles of critical place inquiry of truth telling and validity.
by engaging with questions that are responsible not only to Indigenous people who have inhabited those places but also to their place and land itself (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Springgay and Truman (2018) have argued that walking methodologies must commit to land and its geography, moving away from settler colonial understandings of place. Walking has the potential to recenter Indigenous perspectives of place and disrupt anthropocentrism by bringing forward a different ethics to place and land.

Attention to children’s relationships with place by walking does not change the focus of this study on an ethical and political disposition to attend to human difference, but it situates questions always in the entanglement with place and justice as more than a human endeavor. Ulmer (2017) wrote: “justice is also material, ecological, geographical, geological, geopolitical, and geophilosophical” (p. 2). I will come back to discussions about ethics and responsibility in Chapter 7. Finally, walking allows me to focus on the early childhood narratives and practices that privilege or interrupt children’s encounters with diversity through their everyday relationships with place. In other words, walking helps me to illustrate my position as a researcher in this study, since my participation is never neutral or innocent but it is enmeshed with the narratives and practices that have brought that place to life through what I represent through my data collection methods and analysis.

**Short interviews with children.**

On a daily basis, I engaged in spontaneous conversations with children to listen to their stories, understand their perspectives, and build relationships of familiarity and trust. I also did some short interviews with seven children aged 4 and 5 years old. I initially proposed to interview the older children because I assumed they would be better able to speak to me and engage with my
questions. In these short interviews, I asked them to tell me what they did during a typical day in their childcare centre, what their routines were, the activities they liked and did not like to do, the events that they considered important, or simply things that drew their attention. I also asked them to talk about each of the childcare rooms and what they were used for. To ease the conversation, I let them take pictures of their childcare spaces with a camera or tablet that I provided to them. Some questions I asked were: Can you take a picture of one of your favourite places in your childcare? Can you tell me more about why this is your favourite place? What kind of things you do in this room? I continuously reminded children that there was no obligation for them to participate in the study by talking, drawing, or taking pictures for me. I also reminded them that if they did not want to participate then, they could participate anytime later if they wished. These short interviews lasted no more than 15 minutes each and usually less than that. I noted that, while the children seemed to enjoy talking to me, they also were interested in playing with their friends during free play, which was the time I was able to have these short conversations. As I explain later, I conducted the short interviews right before lunch-time and when children started to walk into the lunch area, I had no choice but to stop the interviews when the children walked into the lunch area. I audio recorded those short conversations.

There were some limitations to my short interviews with children. While I held these short interviews, I was required to always have a educator next to me. The staff explained to me that the regulations established that children must always be under the supervision of a certificated educator, and since I was not one, a staff member had to be with me as I talked to the

17 I used photography as photo-elicitation technique to facilitate conversations with children rather than as part of a photovoice participatory project (Mitchell, 2011). Photo voice is a participatory action technique in which research participants take an active role in the analysis and delivery of research findings (Latz, 2017). Photo-elicitation techniques help the researcher to extend her observations and understand children’s perspectives (Glesne, 2011).
children and recorded their conversations. To find a educator who was available to be with me was not an easy task because educators were busy most of the time looking after the whole group. To sort out these constrains I had a meeting with the director of the program, and then a meeting with the staff, to agree on the best way to help me to carry out my research activities. Despite the fact that I had the director’s support to conduct these short interviews with the children, the only time I had to arrange a conversation with them was between 11:30 and noon when one of the educators’ assistants was preparing lunch. Since she was busy in meal prep in the kitchen, I had to remain close by although the children often wanted me to go far from the kitchen to show me the places they enjoyed the most and the least. These constraints made it difficult to fully follow children in their stories and doings.

**Interviews with educators.**

I conducted individual interviews with the three educators (out of four) who agreed to participate in the interviews. My questions focused on how they planned and delivered activities to promote social responsibility and diversity learning in the centre. I reminded them at the beginning of the interview that the purpose was not to assess their pedagogical practices, but rather to better understand their perspectives as educators about how children learn about diversity and social responsibility in this particular childcare centre. Some sample questions I asked the educators were: What do you think are the things that help children to learn to respect diversity and become more socially responsible towards others? Can you recall some events or activities that from your perspective have helped children to become more respectful of diversity? In the consent form for the educators, I explained that the interviews would last up to 90 minutes, but the educators could determine if they would prefer longer or shorter interviews.
depending on their convenience. The interviews were always planned as part of their shifts in the centre. While I planned to have interviews with them up to 90 minutes, none of them lasted more than 30 minutes for reasons similar to those that resulted in short interviews with children. Educators were constantly busy supervising the children, helping them to go through transitions, and setting up the space for lunch, nap time, and other activities throughout the day.

Some early childhood education scholars (Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Rowan, 2011; Rose & Witty, 2010) have referred to the restraining role of time in early childhood settings. During my fieldwork, and especially as I conducted interviews with educators and the short interviews with children, I noticed the demands that the educators in the centre faced on a daily basis. The interviews were held in the same room where children were playing. Amid our conversation, educators had to attend to children’s observations, answer the door or the phone, and I accepted the interruptions as part of the process. I do consider these moments as important pieces of data generation. They offered me embodied understandings of how educators performed their day-to-day responsibilities. I could feel the multitasking nature of their jobs, or in other words, the “juggling nature of the profession.” As I further comment, I worked as a manager of educational and poverty-reduction programs previously in Chile which gave me the experience of building relationships with educators. The educators who I worked with then faced many demands aside their jobs as educators. That experience made me realize that the interviews of the educators in the FRC were rather inconvenient for them, since they did not actually have the time to be interviewed during their shifts. In half an hour, it was difficult to get the educators to talk about the challenges that they experienced while supporting children in respecting diversity and becoming socially responsible. However, I did have plenty of opportunities to talk to them as part of our daily interactions. While those conversations were relatively short, they
provided me with valuable insights about how children encounter diversity through their relationships with place. I was able to engage in informal or follow-up conversations with them after story time, during free play, lunch time, and neighbourhood walks. I approached these informal or follow-up conversation as driven by my curiosity about some activity or their thoughts about something that happened. I took my time to ask some questions to avoid being perceived as an intrusive or judgmental researcher. I was sensitive to their reservations about being evaluated by me in their pedagogical practices. While I audio-recorded their formal interviews, I did not record the follow-up conversations. I took as detailed fieldnotes as I could of each informal conversation. Consent forms for children’s families and educators can be found in Appendices A and B.

**Reciprocity**

My experience as an educator and a manager of an educational and poverty-reduction program offered me critical lessons about building relationships and reciprocity in the research relationship. I am aware of the differences between working as a manager in an educational program and as a researcher in a single childcare centre. As a program manager, I had the opportunity to build relationships with school communities over almost ten years. In my role, I was able to make decisions that ultimately aimed at enhancing children's educational opportunities. As part of a team, we supported schools and children through individual and group tutoring, professional development for teachers, connect families with social services and benefits and support community projects. The time spent building relationships as well as what we had to offer to their school communities helped families and teachers learned trust my team and me.
When I walked in the FRC for the first time, a few children were getting ready for an afternoon walk. On the entrance, I read on a sign: "Please, don't ring the bell during nap time (1:00 pm - 3:00 pm)". I knocked softly. One of the educators, Tricia, answered the door and let me in the cubby area, right at the entrance. I could see that some children were waking up from their naps. I talked to her briefly and let her know that I wanted to drop off a letter to the centre director. Children were curious about me and asked me who I was and what I was doing there. Tricia introduced herself and the children, which made me feel I was walking in a home rather than a childcare centre. I had a similar feeling when I used to drop my daughter off in her daycare. It was like leaving my daughter in the home of a large and caring family.

The intimate space I perceived in my first visit lasted through my fieldwork. The educators were on task every minute – reading stories, assisting children in the washroom, comforting them after a tantrum, preparing and serving food, among many other routines I describe in this dissertation. Comparing with my work experience back in Chile, I realized that building relationships and reciprocating educators' and children's time and participation was going to be different in the childcare. In Chile, I built relationships with a myriad of participants, including children, teachers, volunteers, practitioners, and administrators. I often visited schools as well as children's homes to talk to their families. I had countless opportunities to get to know them, and for them to get to know me. In those visits, I enjoyed spending time walking their neighbourhood. In the first few years, I felt a sense of gratitude and indebtedness to them for sharing share part of their lives, joys and struggles with me. We also hung out together during meetings and educational events in which we enjoyed food and company and became mutually supportive, sharing our visions about education.
Childcare centres run in a very different way. As I explain in Chapter 6, educators work under a tight schedule. Many of their tasks are in place to respond to the BC Child Care licensing regulations. As I started my fieldwork, I quickly realized that time was precious for the educators. Their tasks were precisely defined according to their shifts. On the wall, some handouts with each shift and their tasks was displayed (see Figure 2). Childcare regulations also imposed some restrictions about what to do and bring in the childcare. For example, bringing food was not allowed due to the food restrictions that some children had. I offered my help to educators and they were receptive to it. However, since I was not a certified early childhood educator, I was not able to help educators, for instance, in assisting children in the toilet, looking after them during nap time while they had their weekly meetings, or supervising children by myself. Unlike my role as a program manager, possibilities to contribute were more limited in time and scope. I further develop some of these limitations throughout Chapters 5, 6, 7, and in the conclusion.

![Figure 2 Educator's shift tasks](image-url)
Despite these limitations, I figured out some ways to express how grateful I was to be able to conduct my research project in the centre. Since time was precious, I made sure to find a balance between my requests and what they actually were able to accommodate for my research. I sought to reciprocate children and educators’ time and willingness to share aspects of their everyday life with me by doing a number of things, in addition to offering my help in daily activities as much as I could, I was, for example, able to assist the director in a grant application for a playground. I also put together a list of books about children’s diversity that the educators could borrow from any branch from the Vancouver Public Library.

Unlike schools, childcare centres have a high children’s turnover. The photography workshop gave me opportunity to communicate with children, educators, and families about my fieldwork as well as showing my appreciation for them at the end of my fieldwork. The children who participated in the workshop were leaving the childcare centre in six weeks. By the time I was finishing my dissertation, all twenty-five children in the daycare would have transitioned to school. The Public Scholar Award provided me with the funds to purchase two cameras, art supplies, photo printing, and books which I donated to the childcare centre once I finished the project. The last day I visited the centre, I left some thank you cards for the educators, some brand-new children’s books, and the photography exhibition installed on their walls. I also gave Tricia, one the educators, a book that I read for a book review about transitions in early childhood education. The day after, I received a call from her to say thank you for having thought of her and sent me good wishes. I was touched by her gesture which reaffirmed that relationships can be built despite tight schedules and over short period of time.
A Method of Analysis

In this study, the practice of witnessing draws attention to narratives and practices in early childhood education that are not limited to the indoor and outdoor places within the Fraser River childcare centre, but that include the neighbourhood where the centre is located. I conceptualize these narratives and practices as material-discursive entanglements that function as a whole. A number of early childhood education scholars (e.g., Davies, 2014; Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Rowan, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, & Rowan, 2014; Stratigos, 2015) have used the notion of assemblage proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to describe how narratives and practices in early childhood education work together, not randomly, but in an organization that produces meaning and is continuously open to change. For example, Davies (2018) explains that the concept of assemblage allows researchers to engage with the complexity of the connections and interdependencies within and through narratives and practices in which the research participants and the researcher take part. These interconnections extend to the bodies’ relations with other forms of life, through historical events and emotional commitments, and the repetitions that hold these entanglements together.

While I do not claim to be using Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of assemblage throughout this study, their definition of assemblage allows me to illustrate my method of analysis. As I approach my fieldwork by witnessing children’s relationships with place, I focused on what Coole and Frost (2010) call research assemblages. Coole and Frost explain that in research assemblages, the events that capture the attention of a researcher “aim to produce simplicity where there was complexity, definition in place of indeterminacy, and evenness where there was variability” (p. 406). This is not surprising, Coole and Frost argue, considering that assemblages, as is the case with any other research “machine,” have been created to enable the researcher to do
research. When Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described assemblages as machines, they wanted to emphasize their ability to explain the functioning of its dynamics, and not as a machine that functions entirely mechanistically. Assemblages exists independently of humans’ willingness to act upon them (Coole & Frost, 2010) which account for their indomitable and unruly nature (Davies, 2018). In my analysis, I focused on the everyday narratives and practices in the FRC as discursive and material assemblages or entanglements that work together as a machine in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari refer.

As I have explained earlier, this study aims to understand how children encounter and learn about diversity and social responsibility through their relationships with place. Attention to the FRC’s routines, narratives and practices allows me to understand how early childhood education may be privileging certain encounters with difference while interrupting others. In this study, I approach routines and events as research assemblages or entanglements for two reasons. First, it helps me to move away from methods that focus on the individual child. As Coole and Frost (2010) remind us, the shift from the individual to the assemblage moves attention away from concerns about what bodies or social institutions are, or how they are affected, to what they can do, or how they can be affected. In this sense, I am interested in what early childhood education narratives and practices do and how they affect children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility. My assumption is that these narratives and practices affect children’s learning by privileging children’s encounters with particular kinds of diversity through some places and not others. Second, focusing on routines and events as an entanglement allows me to bring together different levels of analysis which enable realms traditionally considered separate to be connected. This observation is especially relevant since it supports the analysis in
subsequent chapters regarding particularly safety and responsibility articulated around mundane events operating at different levels, from policy to everyday practices.

Witnessing children’s relationships with place for eight months brings an abundant amount of data into the research focus. In the following chapters, I chose to present my data in the form of vignettes. Through my fieldwork, these vignettes rose to the surface, first, as intriguing in terms of my interest in exploring children’s relationships with place, and then, as productive sites for further analysis. I conceptualize them as entanglements of narratives and practices that speak to a broader picture of the everyday life of the children in the Fraser River Centre. More specifically, these vignettes were key pieces with which I was able to answer my research questions and build an argument about how children learn and encounter diversity and social responsibility through their relationships with place.

I chose these vignettes based on four criteria. First, they were chosen for their suitability to speak to my research topic, or how well these vignettes illustrated children’s relationships with place and their encounters with diversity and responsibility. Second, they were chosen based on their repetition, or how frequently a particular event occurred during my fieldwork. Third, I chose them for their ability to provide possible answers to my research questions. The selected vignettes show not only those relationships with place that children encountered and the encounters with diversity that were possible but also those places overlooked or ignored. Those latter vignettes allowed me to point out to the silences, absences, and barriers that I witnessed through my fieldwork. Finally, they offered me questions to speculate upon, such as: what would have occurred if a particular event had unfolded differently? What would have been possible if a different encounter had taken place or another story had been told? While speculative thinking does not account for what I witnessed, it offers a perspective into the silences, absences, and
barriers that children face as they relate to particular places. Most importantly, speculative thinking provides me with opportunities to shift the types of stories I could tell from this research. In other words, speculation makes possible witnessing as a strategic methodological approach to children’s relationships with place.

I acknowledge my role and responsibility as an important part of the entanglement of narratives and practices that I mapped out. As I have mentioned earlier, Indigenous critiques of multiculturalism and settler colonialism have been key in the types of questions I brought to the fieldwork. In this sense, I do not claim to have mapped out all the narratives and practices that account for how children learning about diversity and social responsibility through place, but rather, I aimed to trace those narratives and practices that reinforce the erasure of Indigeneity, the uncritical celebration of multiculturalism, and the marginalization of other ways of learning to practice social responsibility.

My interest in children’s relationships with place as my option of moving away from a child-centered perspective does not free me from my ethical responsibility toward my research participants, children and educators. I took into account their perspectives as much as my role as researcher allowed me to do. I recorded their stories and came back to them continuously during my analysis. I see them as key elements of the research assemblage or entanglement that I analyzed, but not the only one to take into account. My aim is to produce research that is meaningful and useful for children and educators by offering a different perspective on their practices and narratives. This different perspective seeks to contribute to an early childhood education ready to tackle the challenges that a long history of the assimilation of difference continues to present today in educational settings.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I elaborated how witnessing as a methodological orientation is practiced in this doctoral study. Through this methodology, I aim to address questions posited by a critical place inquiry. The articulation of research methods enables me to account for my analytical approach to early childhood education narratives and practices and their role in privileging certain encounters with diversity through children’s relationships with place. To respond to questions posited by critical place inquiry, my analytical approach takes into account critiques of settler colonialism and tensions that my role of researcher brings in the production of knowledge.

Having discussed children’s relationships with place and witnessing in the previous chapters, now I turn to the data chapters.
Chapter 5:

Silenced Places Through Children’s Encounters with Indigeneity

Children and their educators are getting ready to go for their daily walk. Once they cross the back gate, they start to walk slowly through the neighbourhood. The group follows Lonsdale Street, turns up E 4th avenue, left onto Denman Street,\(^{18}\) to then come back to the centre. The square-shaped walk follows the structure of the streets and roads built as a means for settlers to circulate and carry out their social and economic life. This settlement, what is now known as East Vancouver, displaced Salish Coast people in the area before 1850 (Walker, 1999). The names of these streets represent one small piece of the settler-colonial project of appropriation of Indigenous lands where settlers drew boundaries, changed the use of the land, and honored settlers’ stories by naming the streets after them. Children walk down streets long colonized by settlers and now turned into an industrial and commercial area, treating the land first as an empty place, and then as source of economic value to be privately owned and exploited for their own benefit. These uses of the land co-exist with the materiality of the neighbourhood that reminds the pedestrians of an Indigenous presence through street art, social housing, and a school whose population has largely been Indigenous. These are not only stories of the past, but most importantly of the present.

This chapter focuses on children’s encounters with diversity through their neighbourhood walks in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Coast Salish people, in what is now known as East Vancouver, Canada. Daily walks offer children opportunities to observe and interact with people of diverse backgrounds through the neighbourhood. I situate children’s

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\(^{18}\) Street names are pseudonymous.
walks as a place-making practice that produces particular understandings of place by favouring certain relationships with it. I examine the role that early childhood education plays in facilitating and/or interrupting children’s encounters with diversity to understand whether and how settler colonial narratives and practices privilege some encounters with place while marginalize others. While children’s walks are a common practice in North American including Canadian early childhood education, they have not received substantive attention despite their potential as a decolonizing pedagogy practice. An exception to this assertion is the work of Nxumalo (2015) who has examined children’s forest walks in Vancouver. In this chapter I ask: How do children learn about diversity and social responsibility through their daily walks? Do these walks offer some lessons regarding the settler colonial project of erasing Indigeneity through place?

Drawing on walking as methodology and research method helps me stay attached to the visual as well as the sensorial aspect of neighbourhood walks. Considerations about the built environment – how it looks and how it feels – shape the paths that educators and children take through the walks. I take inspiration from Indigenous knowledges that offer early childhood education other ways of understanding children’s relationships with place as mutually constitutive of who humans are and what place does to humans (Tuana, 2008). As I further develop in this chapter, neighbourhood walks also offer the possibility to interrogate why some places captured more of children and educators’ attention, while there were others that remained unnoticed or silent. This uneven attention given to place resonates with my central argument. Early childhood education plays an important role in supporting, or interrupting, children’s encounters with diversity inside as well as outside the early childhood classroom. As children’s walks suggest, early childhood education that ignores the Indigenous presence may continue to
enact settler colonial narratives and practices that impede or interrupt children’s encounters with diversity and in particular with Indigeneity.

Doubtlessly, the settler-colonial project of erasure of Indigenous knowledges and ways of being (Barman, 2007) confronts early childhood education with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) in troubling times. A number of early childhood education scholars have been pushing the field toward the acknowledgment of the damaging consequences that the legacies of colonialism have left in early childhood education (Nxumalo, 2015; 2016a, b; 2017; 2018; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). To do so, these scholars have been working in collaboration with Indigenous communities and elders to decolonize their research methodologies and pedagogical practices. This chapter builds on this work because, despite growing efforts to decolonize early childhood education, there is still much work to do. Challenging the settler-colonial project demands examining the narratives and practices that sustain an uncritical engagement with place based on the assumption that children need to grow and learn in a harmonious environment far from complicated knowledges. By bringing children’s neighbourhood walks in conversation with settler colonial narratives, I aim to trouble the subtle but long-standing separation between young children and settler-colonialism.

I now turn to children’s walks in the neighbourhood and their encounters with diversity. I focus on children’s encounters with a wall-size mural in front of their childcare centre to reflect on the role of early childhood pedagogies in privileging some relationships with place over others and the questions that arise in the light of decolonising pedagogies. The chapter finishes by speculating about what other understandings of responsibility are needed to engage with the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Coast Salish People, questions I return to in Chapter 7.
Neighbourhood Walks in the Fraser River Centre

In the FRC, educators take children for daily walks as an opportunity for meeting the minimum requirement of outdoor time stipulated in the BC regulations for licensed childcare centres. Educators also consider the walks as a means for children to get acquainted with the everyday life in their neighbourhood and learn about the cultural diversity surrounding the centre, as one of the educators told me. After story time, children go to the washroom, dress for the weather, and go outside. Around 10:30am, educators and children start to get ready for a morning walk. In preparation for it, educators help children to put on the same coloured t-shirts over their jackets, so that they are easy to keep track of outside. While children wait on the deck to be paired with another child and be assigned a spot in the line, one educator counts them to make sure no one is left behind. Another educator starts calling out the children: “Emi and Santi, please go together with Miss Tricia... Tricia, can you go in the front?” Another educator carries a big safety backpack that contains the supplies needed in case of an accident or emergency as established in the BC regulations. Once the children and educators head out, time settles down, and with no rush, they start walking through the neighbourhood (see Figure 3). From time to time, educators check in that everyone is safely walking in line, next to an adult. Then children and educators walk, chat, and observe what is going on around them.
Children and educators go down the street at slow pace greeting those grownups who stare and smile at them waving or saying “hi.” Sometimes children head inside a store, where they are allowed to look at the products and objects displayed on the counter and shelves. Each time I joined educators and children I followed the instructions of the educator in charge. Sometimes, I was asked to be in the middle of the line either on my own or hand in hand with one or two children. On some occasions, I had random chats with the children, but I mostly stayed quiet, observing how children engaged with our surroundings. Educators took the time to talk to them, and from time to time, point out a blossoming tree, a garbage truck, or a particular building. A highlight of their neighbourhood walks was catching a glimpse of what children and educators called the *choo choo* train. One of the educators had a specially trained ear to know when the train was coming. In those circumstances, the educators encouraged the children to rush toward the bridge under which the train passed by. Together, we quietly waited
until the train finally passed by underneath. They watched and waved to the train until it disappeared on the horizon.

The educators also drew attention away from other events that seemed to be perhaps inappropriate for young children or more difficult to talk about with them. One day we were walking by a man who was lying down on the ground and shouting very agitatedly at somebody. The children who were at the beginning of the line were the first to notice, judging by their faces, that something unusual was happening. One of the boys seemed to be puzzled by what was going on and asked Tricia. In a calm and friendly voice she told him that she was not sure, but she believed that somebody would help the man. While stopping the walk, the educator at the front of the line consulted with the other teachers about whether to continue or not since walking closer to this man was thought to be potentially unsafe for the children. While the teachers were deciding whether or not to continue, the children were staring at him. The teachers decided to go on since they had just started the walk a few minutes ago and it was even less safe to cross the street without an intersection. Another girl asked the teacher, “Is he drunk Miss Tricia?” The teacher just said she did not know shifting the children’s attention away from the event.

Sometimes children recalled the events from their daily walks as they were playing and talking to the teachers. A few days after they saw the man who looked mentally perturbed on the street, children recalled the event at lunch time. They seemed to be puzzled about what really had happened to him and constructed some theories about whether he was mad or drunk or maybe on drugs. As the children were talking, the teacher told me that they were confused after the event of the man on the street. I said to the teacher that it may be the case that the children just wanted to understand why he was behaving in that way. Tricia seemed to agree and explained to me that they would rather avoid exposing the children to situations like this one because it leaves a
lasting impression on some of them. She also said that once they came across people seemingly smoking marijuana and children started to ask questions about that smell. For her it was tricky to try to explain everything to the children.

As these vignettes suggest, the decisions that teachers make about neighbourhood walks – where they go and which paths to take, who children could potentially talk to, and how long they would stay in certain places – constitute place-making practices. As such, place-making practices produce particular knowledge about the place children encounter and specific forms of relationships with those places. The principles that guided teachers in many circumstances, as I elaborate in Chapter 6, are based on the safety and the wellbeing of children under their care.

While teachers’ well-intended actions toward protecting children during neighbourhood walks were effective, these same practices posit questions regarding the unintended effects of overlooking or actively ignoring some places and certain stories in the neighbourhood.

**A Silent Mural**

On one winter morning while the children were coming inside for lunch, I recorded a voice message on my iPhone with some rambling thoughts about a group of 4 to 5-year-old children who were playing outside the centre. In the background, painted on the school wall right in front of the childcare was a colourful mural. I recorded:

I’m at the childcare fence looking at a group of about ten children and three adults. These children are of a similar age to the children in this childcare. They are probably from the Aboriginal Head Start preschool program a few meters away from here. They are outside playing by a colourful mural that portrays animals, bears, sun, butterflies, birds, sea … I
wonder whether the children or the teachers in this childcare know something about it.

(audio recording, November 1, 2017)

Children can easily see this mural displayed on the Kensington school’s wall from the centre’s backyard while they are playing or when they pass by it during their daily walks or their visits to the school library. My own background has influenced my interest in this mural. Before immigrating to Canada, I lived and worked in Valparaiso, Chile, a city that displays murals everywhere. I worked in educational and poverty-reduction programs in inner-city schools with a diverse range of stakeholders, but the part that I enjoyed the most was the community-building aspect that allowed me to support community projects led by children, volunteers, and popular educators. In my position as advisor, I supported them to identify some needs or projects they could implement for their communities. I walked with children and educators through their neighbourhoods to get inspired by what their places had to offer. I recall that, in one of our meetings, the children expressed confusion about the task ahead. They did not know how they — children — could contribute to their school communities. One of them said that the only thing he knew how to do was drawing and another girl immediately replied, “so let’s draw something together!” Everybody laughed, but interestingly they ended up painting a mural for their school. The group spent the entire year figuring out how to do it. During this time, they experienced the challenges of working together, especially because for many of them it was the first time they were involved in such a project. While this story illustrates the learning behind a mural, I was also able to observe the pedagogical potential that painting a mural offers to a community. Many of the adults who supported this project, including some mural artists, referred to the political and social legacy of street art in Chile as the reason to get involved.
Since I noted the mural in front of the Fraser River Centre, I looked for opportunities to talk to the teachers and the children about it. I was particularly interested in knowing whether the teachers and the children knew about the history of the mural. One teacher said that the mural had been there for a long time even before she started to work in the centre. The colourful drawing and overall visibility made me wonder why the mural seemed not to capture children’s and teachers’ attention. Over my eight months of field work, neighbourhood walks opened opportunities for children to encounter blossoming trees, garbage trucks, and the children’s favourite choo choo train. Unlike the train and other objects that were regularly brought to the children’s attention, the mural mostly remained as the backdrop to the children’s neighbourhood walks during my fieldwork. Although many children’s encounters in the neighbourhood offered opportunities to unpack their pedagogical value, I focused on the mural for reasons I develop throughout the chapter.

As part of my inquiry, I met with the school principal to learn more about the mural. He gave me the name of the artist who painted it, a Canadian visual artist and muralist who has painted other murals on Vancouver East side streets. I contacted the artist, who offered me a document about the project; I do not cite it here to maintain the anonymity of the childcare centre. The school mural was painted by a group of students, teachers, and community members as the result of a long-term cultural revitalization project that started in 1996. The staff wanted to recover the school as a safe space for students and the wider community after a student’s family quarrel ended up with one of the family members involved making a serious threat of blowing up the school building (Mackhoul, 2003). The revitalization project began with two large-scale murals inside the school along with both a garden and a Coast Salish Longhouse in the central
area where the school and the childcare centre are located. The continuation of this revitalization project provided the funds to later paint the mural on the outside of the school.

The large-scale school mural represents the river that once flowed through the area where the school and the Fraser River Centre are now located. On the right side, a canoe symbolizes the passages of communities through nature with its animal inhabitants, such as herons, frogs, river otters, a bear, and crows. The river extends from the right to the left until it flows off the mural through the ground reaching the Longhouse located in front of the school. The mural suggests that, for the Coast Salish people who inhabited the land long before it was colonized and called Vancouver, the river represents a source of life for the natural world as well as for themselves. Since the mural was painted, many have passed by it and stepped on the painting of the river, its colour having faded over time. In spite of that, the river continues to be the main character of the mural (Figure 4).

The school where the mural was painted is known for having a higher population of self-identified Indigenous and Métis students in Vancouver. On February 2014, the Vancouver School Board released a report titled *Revisioning Inner City and Community LINK Resources in Vancouver Schools*. This comprehensive examination of then current services and programs for students in inner city schools responded to stakeholders’ perceptions of the increasing complexity that schools in Vancouver were facing as a consequence of the levels of poverty in BC and Vancouver – the highest in Canada that affects children under 6 years old (First Call, 2018). In this report, Kensington Elementary School ranked 3rd out of 15 schools with the major concentration of poverty among schools within the Vancouver School Board District based on their Provincial Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
The high levels of poverty among Kensington Elementary School students in the last decade stands in contrast with the increasing gentrification in the neighbourhood that has pushed low-income families, including those with Indigenous backgrounds, out of area (Kasman, 2015; Ley & Dobson, 2008). According to the 2016 Census, the neighbourhood has become less diverse (Statistics Canada, 2016). As a result, the demographic of the childcare centre has also changed. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, the centre director told me at that the socio-economic status of the families of the Fraser River Centre has also changed over the years. Many families who sent their children to the childcare centre had to move out of the area primarily because of the higher rents.

![Figure 4 Representation of the mural. Illustrated by Rosario Oyadenel](image)

After learning more about the mural, I thought it would be beneficial to share this knowledge with the teachers and consider some further activities with the children. I briefly talked to the FRC’s director to give her an update about my research and to ask her to meet with
the teachers. They usually met once a week for an hour or so. In their meetings, they coordinated teachers’ shifts or the implementation of workshops like art or yoga to be offered in the Centre and discussed other matters affecting the children. For example, they discussed food allergies, specialists’ feedback about the progress of a couple of children who were receiving language support or some new safety concerns. Each meeting required that a substitute teacher be hired for the time of the meeting to supervise the children while they were napping. While most meetings started around 1:15 pm, it varied depending on the day. Some days children were ready for nap time a little bit later, so the teachers had to proceed accordingly. The end time also varied. There were days when some of the children started to wake up earlier which required the staff to quickly wrap up their meetings. I was aware of the constraints of time that teachers faced every day in their routines, especially in their meetings. Despite time restrictions, the director considered my request to meet, looked at her calendar, and invited me to come to their meeting the following week.

I had prepared a handout with a brief update of my research for the meeting. I was prompted to follow up with my observations about the mural and discuss the possibilities of neighbourhood walks with the teachers. I had in mind to ask them whether they were interested in using the daily walks to explore the neighbourhood with the children, work they were already doing, but perhaps it could be done more intentionally. Half an hour before the meeting, I reminded the teacher on the floor (not the director) that I was looking forward to their meeting. She told me that, unfortunately, the meeting had just been cancelled because they did not have a substitute teacher to supervise the children during nap time. To continue with the meeting, the director proposed we meet in the same room where the children were napping, instead of their meeting room, so the children would be supervised during the meeting. She had a list of points to
discuss with the staff so postponing the meeting the following week would have been inconvenient.

I went first. I distributed my handouts and I shared with the teachers my observations about the neighbourhood walks. As I was whispering to not disturb the children’s naptime, I realized that the setting was not conducive to the conversation I had envisioned having with the teachers. I had to repeat what I was saying several times because they were not able to hear me, affecting the flow of the conversation. They seemed to be receptive, but they did not engage in further conversation about the mural because they had to continue with their meeting. I wrapped up and left the possibility open to continue the conversation about their neighbourhood walks for another time. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, teachers worked on a tight schedule. The items on their weekly agenda often exceeded the meeting time. As much as they and I tried to find time for a follow-up meeting, this did not happen until two months had passed which I prioritized talking about the photography workshop I was to carry out with the older children.

Between these meetings I did one-to-one follow-up with the teachers about the possibilities that neighbourhood walks offered to the children. I told them that children may benefit from learning, for example, from the mural in front of the Centre’s backyard since it portrayed a piece of the history of the place where the childcare was situated. These one-to-one conversations were not easy to follow up on collectively, but one teacher responded positively to using the mural as a pedagogical resource.

During one of the morning walks, one teacher stopped in front of the mural, drawing children’s attention to it. Tricia asked some questions to the children such as whether they had ever paid attention to the mural? What did they see? Had they ever noticed that the water is coming out of the wall? Some children started to name the animals they identified on the mural,
for example, the eagle and the bear. While the children and the teachers engaged in a conversation about the animals, the teacher told me what she recalled about when the mural was painted. According to her, a group of people, including students, gathered to paint together. The principal at that moment invited the teachers and children from the childcare to the launch. She learned that the mural represented the story of the area (referring to the school, the childcare, the garden) before it was urbanized where it seems to have a swamp running by.

In listening to the teacher’s story, I realized that there was more knowledge about the mural than I thought. The teacher recalled that the mural was the result of a community project in which students and community members outside the school participated. She even remembered having been invited to join its launch ceremony. I wondered why none of this knowledge had come up before as I was looking for information about the mural which made me think about how the teachers perceived my role in the Centre. While they were receptive to my presence in a general sense, the fact that I was not an early childhood educator influenced both how I was perceived and treated as well as how I behaved. While I cannot speak on behalf the teachers, I can provide information about how my role during my fieldwork was framed. I was introduced to the FRC staff as a UBC graduate student doing doctoral research aimed at understanding how children learn about diversity and social responsibility through their everyday places. While the Centre constantly received pre-service early childhood educators, they had not had a doctoral student before. The senior teacher had meetings with the pre-service educators who were doing their practicum. They were also assigned certain responsibilities like story time, assisting children in the washroom or in nap time. Although I helped them as much as I could, I was not assigned any major responsibility. As I mentioned in chapter 4, since I was not a certified educator nor an early childhood pre-service educator during practicum, I was not allowed to stay
alone with the children, which imposed important limitations how I could support them in their routines.

**Spectacles and Spectrality Through Children’s Walks**

I would like to return and delve into the question about why the teacher’s knowledge of the mural, and more generally about Indigeneity, had not come up before during my fieldwork. The conversation with the teacher reminded me of the intricate role that art has played both in erasing and protecting Indigenous history. On one hand, street art has been one among others forms that Indigenous people and allies have used to represent the damaging consequences of institutionalized assimilation and cultural genocide. The mural was arguably an attempt to revitalize the school community, confirmed by a large population of Indigenous students, and responding to widespread and damaging stereotypes about Indigenous youth. On the other hand, the sole representation of Indigeneity through street art does not guarantee the reaffirmation of Indigenous presence in the public space. Mawani (2004) demonstrates that Indigenous art has also played a role in giving credibility to settler colonial states by portraying government authorities as respectful and acknowledging of their Indigenous people. While the mural may represent the acknowledgement of Indigenous presence in the neighbourhood, it is important to draw attention to the tensions that arise from engagement with public art.

As I mentioned earlier, Baloy (2016) argues that non-Indigenous people experience the homeland, performances, art, and other forms of representations of the Coast Salish people as either *spectacles and/or spectral*, rendering Indigeneity as visible in certain circumstances while invisible in others. As Baloy demonstrates, when a group of Indigenous people organized
themselves to demand that the iconic Stanley Park\footnote{For more details on the Coast Salish communities’ demands of renaming Stanley Park, see Baloy (2016) page 215.} be renamed to acknowledge the story of colonialism and suffering in that place, political authorities and citizens did not support their demands. This is what Baloy identifies as an engagement with Indigeneity as spectacle: “cultural not political, visual not otherwise sensorial, passively observed not participatory” (p. 209). In line with Baloy, Wolfe (2006) argues that Indigenous art has been used for two opposite purposes: preservation and elimination. On one hand, Indigenous art is preserved as a Canadian cultural heritage, but simultaneously, their demands of sovereignty are eliminated.

It is arguable that some teachers believe that pre-school-age children too young to learn about social justice issues (Kelly & Brooks, 2009) including Indigenous political demands. In that case, exposing children to stories of Indigeneity as cultural, but not political, may be considered perfectly reasonable. Liberal multicultural education, as I argued in Chapter 2, approaches cultural and ethnic diversity mainly through knowledge and experiences of different cultural background. Under these premises, educators may use the mural as a pedagogical tool to teach children about Indigenous culture, but not necessarily as the type of engagement that Baloy and Wolfe suggest is necessary to interrupt the elimination of Indigenous people and their cultures. Mere cultural acknowledgement does not assure a further engagement with Indigenous stories of cultural assimilation, appropriation, and marginalization of their sovereignty.

Baloy’s and Wolfe’s critique about non-Indigenous people’s engagement with Indigeneity raises questions about how educators can teach to 3- to 5-year-old children about the effects of colonization on Indigenous people lives or the history of Indian Residential schools. Some BC early childhood educators have already taken up the challenge of exposing young
children to difficult knowledge. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, the 2019 BC ELF has aligned with the TRC’s calls for action in both decolonizing early childhood education curriculum and pedagogies and exposing the effects of colonization and the Indian Residential School System. In 2015, BC early childhood education Kristin Webster had already started to teach young children in Salal, a UBC childcare centre, about residential schools. In an interview broadcasted by The National (CBC news, 2015), Dr. Jan Hare, UBC professor in Indigenous Education explains that young children can manage to learn about residential schools by offering it in ways that does not frighten them or disturb their emotions.

The children’s encounter with the mural suggests that the teacher had kept thinking about our discussion in the meeting. The teacher has been working in the Centre for more than twenty years. Her knowledge about the changes that the neighbourhood has gone through in the last decades was invaluable as I noticed through our conversations. She usually brought up interesting stories about other places and cultural traditions in story time in ways that were meaningful for the children and other teachers. For instance, one of the weeks in which she was leading story time, she brought in a map of Vancouver (Figure 5), which she used to figuratively travel with the children to other neighbourhoods. She showed some neighbourhoods on the map to the children and told them about how those places look like and a bit of their history every day of the week. Children drew their own map of Vancouver (Figure 6) to represent the routes they moved through with their parents or caregivers every day to go to their childcare or other places. On one of those days, she explained to the children she knew that that neighbourhood had a large population coming from China. From her stories I could imagine Vancouver as a place of people

20 For further details on how Kristin Webster teaches young children about residential schools here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dEwkUCFQI8
from different continents who came together on a rather small piece of land. Her stories and the places she brought into story time were relatable to the other teachers’ stories as immigrants who came to Canada in search of new opportunities for themselves and their families sharing a bit of themselves and their knowledge about different neighbourhoods. Her stories about other neighbourhoods were not only stories about places but also about belonging which may have made them meaningful for children and teachers since everyone could relate in one way or another.

*Figure 5 Map of Vancouver used by the teacher in story time*
From the many conversations we had, I remember the conversation about the mural as one of only a few stories about Indigenous presence in that place during my fieldwork. While the teacher introduced the mural to the children, the knowledge about that place in the past and present did not come from Indigenous testimonies themselves. Indigenous teachings have been rooted in storytelling, ceremony, and rituals that form the core of their pedagogy (Archibald, 2008; Archibald, Lee-Morgan, De Santolo, & Smith, 2019; Regan, 2010). I wonder: How can educators and children engage with the mural in ways that do not reproduce the preservation/elimination logic that Wolfe referred to? While I do not have an answer, I was able to witness the limitations that teachers experienced in relation to such work. These limitations include the constrained time that they had to meet and reflect on their pedagogical practices, or as I elaborate on in the next chapter, the safety regulations that they have to follow as educators.
of a licenced childcare centre in BC. In order for non-Indigenous educators to come to understand the power of an embodied pedagogy that connects head, heart, and spirit (Archibald, 2008) teachers and children need not only to connect with the visual representation of the mural, but also through other senses. For example, what does it mean for children to imagine that a river was running long ago in the exact place where they often walk by? What lessons do the animals represented in the mural offer to children and teachers? What does it mean for children to learn from stories about the water, the sun, the animals, and human relationships with place?

The mural can be seen as a story waiting to be told about the past and present of Coast Salish people who lived long ago and continue to live in the place that is now called Vancouver. While children expressed excitement about the mural, and the teachers facilitated their curiosity, their encounters were rather more passive than participatory. They imagined what the mural was representing without a more sensorial engagement with that place, the history of that swamp, its animals, and the meaning given by the Coast Salish People living there long ago. Baloy (2016) challenges us to think about public art not as a cultural manifestation, but rather a political one that changes the framework for Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships.

Baloy’s contention is important for early childhood education. Although, children have long been represented as vulnerable and incapable of encountering difficult knowledge (Burman, 2007; Cannella, 1997; Garlen, 2018; Jenks, 2005; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Smith, 2014), early childhood scholars have advocated turning early childhood into places of political practice (Millei & Kallio, 2018; Moss, 2007). I will return on the point regarding children’s innocence in Chapter 7. Millei and Kallio (2018) propose to differentiate between two types of politics: the official politics that represent the institutional ideals and the everyday politics. The everyday or “mundane politics” involves people as political subjects from birth on. Following Millei and
Kallio, early childhood education pedagogies enact mundane politics by default. When educators leave unattended the politics in their pedagogies, we risk repeating inherited colonial narratives and practices. Baloy’s call for engaging with Indigenous in ways that is political, invites us to think what kind of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, educators are passing on to children through the mundane politics in early childhood education. This is a question worth asking and one that I continue examining through the subsequent chapters.

**Decolonizing Pedagogies: A Long Way Away?**

As Smith (2012) reminds us, decolonizing pedagogies in early childhood education are a long way away. Children’s encounters with the mural help to focus on how neighbourhood walks can contribute to decolonizing efforts in early childhood education through engagement with Indigeneity in ways that are political, sensorial, and participatory. It first requires understanding that decolonizing should never be used as a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012) but rather used to think deeply about how pedagogies will contribute to “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). For Indigenous people, the land encompasses not only what settlers call natural environments – the earth and its resources – but also urban settings, in which the materiality of the land is just one aspect along with its spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Styres and Zinga (2013) have chosen to capitalize Land to distinguish it from land when referring to the fixed landscape. They say:

> For us, land (the more general term) refers to landscapes as a fixed geographical and physical space that includes earth, rocks, and waterways; whereas, ‘Land’ (the proper name) extends beyond a material fixed space. Land is a spiritually infused place.
grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, cultural positioning, and is highly contextualized. (pp. 300 -301)

To move toward how pedagogies can serve decolonizing purposes toward place and Land, it is important to forge true collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Smith, 2012). Because of the long story of assimilation of educational spaces, true collaborations demand time, patience, and energy. However, fear among educators regarding the introduction of Indigenous teaching in their pedagogies may be an obstacle to engage in such relationships. I have repeatedly heard among educators outside and within the FRC that since they know so little, they are afraid to make mistakes that offend Indigenous people. Mary, who was a substitute teacher in the FRC, told me that in her practicum she was reading a story to the children about a dog, Clifford, who had a Native American costume for Halloween. The book seemed good to her, but one of the educators pointed out the book was stereotyping and a little bit racist. Since then, she told me, she does not read any book that contain any reference to Indigenous people because she does not want to repeat the same mistake.21

These are some of the complexities that educators encounter when they come across stories that portray Indigenous people and their knowledges. Indigenous stories require educators and children to engage with the complexity of their past and present. This entails addressing the legacy of the settler-colonial project. It is not the responsibility of Indigenous teachers to educate

21 In the province of British Columbia, early childhood educators must complete at least a basic early childhood education training program from a recognized institution (BC government, n.d.). Once they have graduated, they apply for a certificate by demonstrating their successful program completion along with 500 hours of work experience under the supervision of a Canadian-certified early childhood educator. Mary, the substitute teacher, completed her training program at Douglas College with 46 credits. In 2015, she had to complete 30.5 credits while in the second year she completed 15.50 which included 6.5 credits for her practicum. Douglas College website indicates that students in the Aboriginal stream have different requirements. They need to complete 29 credits from the regular program, 12 credits of special courses, and 4.5 credits for their practicum. Students like Mary do not have to take any course from the “Aboriginal stream,” which limited the knowledge that she had to include Indigenous knowledges in her pedagogies.
non-Indigenous teachers about their past, but rather it is responsibility of the educational system to offer to all teachers the knowledge and tools to change the curriculum and pedagogies that continue to reinforce settler colonial narratives and practices towards the erasure of Indigeneity. In a context where the protection of the young is valued through the promotion of harmonious relationships, stories about colonized places can become complicated affairs. Indigenous-settler relations are far from harmonious and as such stories of places that expose those relationships can be constantly avoided in early childhood education, a point I will return to in Chapter 7. The children’s encounters with the mural through their neighbourhood walks illustrate some of these tensions and the discomfort that comes from witnessing how Indigeneity is erased through early childhood education narratives and practices.

**Conclusion**

As Battell and Barker (2015) argue, the erasure of Indigeneity is not only the symbolic but also the material result of an ongoing process of colonization. Although the mere exposure to places that portray Indigeneity does not solve the problem, looking at the barriers that interrupt those relationships is important. This chapter has focused on both which children’s relationships with place that are more or less privileged and some of the challenges that educators face when they attempt to bring Indigeneity into their pedagogical practices. Examining which relationships with place are privileged, and which ones are not, opens up possibilities to pedagogies that re-center Indigenous presence in the neighbourhood. While children and adults alike have not typically heard these stories from the perspectives of Indigenous people about their Land and place where the FRC is located today, other narratives have become much more relevant in early childhood education. One of these is safety, on which I elaborate in the next chapter.
Some of the limitations that teachers face include, most importantly, scarce time to sit and talk about what the neighbourhood has to offer to them. Second, the teachers faced the limitation of knowledge to develop certain sensibilities toward what the place had to offer to their pedagogies. Decolonizing work does not and should not rely on teachers’ intentions to bring up or notice how stories about Indigenous presence in the neighbourhood have been absent in the conversations with children in story time and their neighbourhood walks. Limited pre-service education that affected Mary’s confidence to read stories that portray Indigenous inheritances illustrates this point. Instead she avoided referring to these stories because of her fear of making mistakes. Working toward decolonizing efforts demands knowledge and an emotional commitment to sit with discomfort that comes from the realization of our own implication and complicity in settler colonial narratives and practices. As Baloy (2016) encourages us, it is important that early childhood education communities face that discomfort. In doing so, early childhood education needs to engage with Indigenous knowledges actively through to rethink other forms of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Just as walks cannot be separated from settler colonial practices, young children should not be separated from the stories of settler colonialism.

What would happen if neighbourhood walks were filled with stories of the Coast Salish People, who inhabited these areas before colonization and still inhabit them today? This is a difficult question that should never be taken lightly. It requires delving into what early childhood educators know and understand about history. An uncritical celebration of Indigenous places and stories within a multicultural framework has reinforced beliefs that young children can only handle uncomplicated learning (Cannella, 1997). Children’s neighbourhood walks can uncover the multiple ways that settler colonialism operates through a preservation/elimination logic
(Wolfe, 2006) of Indigenous presence in this neighbourhood, despite its reputation of a historically, culturally, and ethnically diverse area. Nonetheless, while a growing number of early childhood education scholars are putting forward decolonizing pedagogies and collaborating with Indigenous communities, each effort of decolonizing early childhood education is situated in a particular place and time. Populating neighbourhood walks with stories of Coast Salish People should never be solely at the service of our intellectual curiosity. The opportunity that decolonizing pedagogies offer to early childhood education is precisely that of shifting persistent frameworks of reference that preclude deeper engagement with Indigenous knowledges. Children’s walks as a place-making practice have the potential to reconfigure place in ways that respond to the silencing of Indigenous stories and materiality.

These children’s encounters with place remind us of the need to rethink other forms of responsibility in early childhood education situated in the paramount recognition that our lives are situated in traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Coast Salish people that comprise in Vancouver the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories. Since a notion of responsibility within a multicultural framework falls short in putting forward non-assimilatory practices of conviviality, rethinking a relational conception of responsibility toward place is needed. In the context of children’s encounters during their neighbourhood walks, responsibility is entangled with and seeks to interrupt the silence of a colonized place. That engagement, I argue, requires a notion of responsibility beyond the individuals on this land and toward the Land itself. As Tuck and McKenzie (2015) have argued, attention to the Land is at the core of any possible process of establishing a more honest and less complicit relationships with colonialism and advancing truth-telling. I focus on questions regarding social responsibility in Chapter 7. Rather than situating social responsibility as a learning outcome that might be achieved by the
child with the proper guidelines and exposition to the adequate experiences, I ask what would happen if we take seriously the possibility to become responsible, not only toward other humans, but to the places where we live.

In the next chapter I turn to children’s safety as a boundary-maker between children and certain places. While safety is important for keeping children safe from harm, it is important to examine the place-making practices implicated in safety discourses and practices and particularly those that limit children’s encounters with diversity.
Chapter 6:

Impermeable Walls for Keeping Children Safe from Harm

In September 2018, Cambridge daycare, located in Edmonton, created a policy that established that parents are responsible for providing a helmet to their children to safely play in the daycare playground. In a television interview, Mircea Bailesteanu, the Centre’s owner, said that safety is a top priority, so they were doing everything at their disposal to make sure that children were safe at all times (Global News, 2018). Bailesteanu also said that, during the twenty years his daycare has been in business, things have changed, and children are less aware of their environments. This means that they can easily trip and fall while playing in the playground. Whereas the “helmet policy” is not mandatory, and it does not represent Edmonton’s wide range of policies about safety in early childhood education, it does posit a very relevant dilemma for parents and educators regarding the safety of young children. Researchers who have been studying the benefits of risky play have found that children need to fall down, experience risk and get to know their own limits (Brussoni et al., 2015; Coe, 2017; Gillis & Jupp, 2016).

Following Brussoni and colleagues, a helmet policy may indeed do a disservice to the healthy development of children.

In this chapter, I examine the everyday safety routines in the Fraser River Centre aimed at protecting children from harm. In the previous chapter, I offered a detailed account of children’s relationships with place through their neighbourhood walks. While children had the opportunity to walk through the varied places in their neighbourhood, their engagement differed from one place to another. Encounters with Indigeneity were less prominent despite the opportunities that the neighbourhood offered. I propose to understand safety as an entanglement of narratives and practices that works as a whole to protect children from risk and also, paradoxically, from some
kinds of learning. The narratives and practices I refer include the BC safety regulations for licensed childcare centres, artifacts displayed in the Centre, FRC’s daily routines (i.e., transitions, story time, free play, daily walks, lunch time, nap time), children’s and teachers’ bodies and their understandings of safety. All these aspects have an impact on children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility. In this chapter, I focus on the practices themselves rather than centering only on children’s or teachers’ perspectives. I followed events or routines that I found provocative, insightful, and productive and identified the elements that were part of that practice.

I examine whether, and under what conditions, safety might work as a boundary marker that regulates, standardizes, and interferes in children’s relationships with certain places. While the BC Child Care Licensing regulations (CCLR) assure that licensed childcare centres in British Columbia meet the necessary safety standards to properly look after the children in their care, safety narratives and practices also impose an important dilemma to educators: how safe is too safe? While well intended and needed in early childhood environments, adults’ concerns about children’s safety may also result in perceiving place, first and foremost, as a source of risk and hazard. This understanding of place justifies narratives and practices that create an impermeable boundary between children and certain places. By doing so, meaningful engagement with diversity and other forms of responsibility is impeded. In early childhood education, those boundaries can manifest themselves materially, for instance, in doors, gates, and fences. The boundaries can also be “discursive,” contained in narratives that keep children away from what are labelled as unsafe places. When those boundaries work as an impermeable barrier, the unfortunate result is that children are also excluded from learning to engage with diversity in ways that are needed to interrupt settler colonial narratives and practices in early childhood.
education. My concerns with safety practices do not negate the need to protect children from harm. On the contrary, I am interested in understanding whether harm can be done in the name of children’s safety by limiting children’s and teachers’ engagement with pedagogies that may offer other forms of conviviality in early childhood education.

In the sections to follow, I offer a brief context to better understand the place of safety concerns in early childhood education and build on the question: when is safety harmful for children’s learning? Then I turn to the safety narratives and practices I observed in the FRC to illustrate how discourses about safety and safety practices operate at both the microlevel of story time and at the more macrolevel of policies and regulations. I then account for how safety narratives and practices produce impermeable boundaries between children and places through early childhood education routines.

**Safety as a Boundary Marker in Early Childhood Education**

As the introductory vignette illustrates, the importance of safety in early childhood education is not surprising. Many parents who use child care services arguably put the safety of their children well above any other consideration – including considerations about pedagogies that decolonize place. For parents, it is crucial to know that their children spend their day in a safe space free of hazards where they can thrive and be happy. For educators, it is also important to safeguard children’s wellbeing. The history of modern childhood has documented the rise in efforts to protect children as a matter of, not only modern parenting norms, but also institutional involvement through welfare and education (Jenks, 2005; Smith, 2014). Policies in early childhood care and education regulate educators’ and children’s understanding and relationships with place as primarily centered in concerns about risk and safety. Safety concerns might play a
role in framing place, first and foremost, as a source of risk and hazard that need to be delimited and controlled to assure children’s safety. If that is the case, safety becomes a regulatory practice that has an effect on how children relate to place and the stories they engage with through these places. Assuring safety through impermeable boundaries between children and some places may also impede the transit of some stories in and out of early childhood education settings. The questions that remain are: Does early childhood education recognize this tension as a problem? How is early childhood education to balance this tension? How does safety policy contribute to or interfere with the creation of pedagogies to allow children’s relationships with place to emerge?

**Safety Narratives and Practices in Early Childhood Education**

Concerns about the focus on children’s safety in early childhood education are situated in a larger discussion regarding how safety may be constraining the opportunities for children to engage with risky play understood as a “thrilling and exciting play that can include the possibility of physical injury” (Brussoni et al., 2015, p. 6425). Based on their studies in British Columbia, Brussoni and colleagues have argued that risky play has become more restricted in the last decades due to adults’ safety concerns (Brussoni et al., 2015). For these researchers, it is important to distinguish between risk and hazards. While risk alludes to the possibility of harm in doing something, hazards allude to the foreseen danger of doing it. For example, climbing up a slide in a playground area may be risky since a child can fall down as they are doing it, but climbing up a slide that is not stable and well secured on the floor can be hazardous. In this sense, the role of adults in monitoring or supervising children’s play is to ensure that children take reasonable risk as they play without being exposed to hazards. Rather than managing and
controlling risk at the expense of children’s independence, Brussoni and colleagues argue that adults should focus on managing hazards and encouraging children to continue playing and exploring.

Brussoni and colleagues (2015) argue that parents’ and teachers’ concerns about safety can impose important limitations on children’s healthy development, overshadowing the benefits that risky play offers. Children who climb trees, jump from heights, or hang upside down experience feelings of happiness and a sense of accomplishment that other more structured and limited forms of play do not offer (Brussoni et al., 2015; Coe, 2017; Gillis & Jupp, 2016). These researchers have also pointed out that parents’ safety concerns rest on perceptions of children as precious and vulnerable. Brussoni and colleagues (2012) found that parents who are currently concerned about their children’s safety recall their own childhood experiences as more independent, with more opportunities to play free of adult supervision and explore their natural or urban surroundings. Parents stated though that times had changed and that it was currently more justified to protect children in ways that it was not needed in the past.

Growing safety concerns in early childhood education are reflected in policy documents that emphasize the need for preventive policies and procedures, as is the case with the B.C. Child Care Licensing Regulation (B.C. Reg. 332/2007) (British Columbia, 2007). Reinforced by the BC Ministry of Health, this set of regulations establishes the health and safety standards for license application requirements, staffing qualifications, staff to child ratio, space and equipment, and program standards for licensed childcare centres in the province of British Columbia. As a BC licensed group childcare centre, the FRC complies with the BC childcare regulations.

Another source of safety practices guiding how childcare centres design spaces and engage with children is the handbook titled “Preventing Injury in Child Care Settings” published
by the BC Ministry of Health Planning Community Care Facilities Branch. The handbook offers an injury prevention approach with policies and procedures to assist educators to efficiently ensure that centres have child-proofed indoor and outdoor settings. The handbook also offers an injury prevention checklist to assist staff working in child care setting to implement this injury prevention approach. Both documents - the BC CCLR and the handbook regarding the prevention of injuries in childcare settings – exemplify a consistent approach to children’s safety and situate the childcare settings as places for potential injuries if they are not carefully prevented. As I further illustrate in the next section, the educators in the FRC consistently used policies and procedures to assure children’s safety according to the BC CCLR and the handbook for injury prevention.

**Keeping Children Safe from Harm**

On a cold winter morning, half of the children were getting ready to go outside, while the other half was already playing in the backyard. Matias and his dad rang the bell, but nobody answered. They went around the building to ask someone to let them in. One of the teachers asked me to tell the teacher inside to open the door to Matias and his dad. When I went inside, I noticed that the teacher was busy assisting the rest of the children to get dressed for the weather. While I was saying to the teacher, “Matias and his dad are at the door,” I opened the door for them. Right away, the teacher told me that I was not allowed to open the door to anyone since I was not a staff member. Then, the teacher in charge of the shift called my attention again to reinforce the same rule: I was not allowed to let anyone in or out in the Centre.

During my fieldwork I noticed that the educators reinforce the regulations regarding children’s safety and injury prevention through the physical environment. For example,
educators spent important time in arranging the childcare space. As the regulations suggest, educators avoided creating long corridors or large open spaces by arranging the furniture in ways that impeded children from running when they got excited. Teachers also reinforced this procedure by reminding children to “walk, never run.” Tasks regarding cleaning table surfaces, washing beddings, cleaning food utensils, assisting children in keeping their hands clean assured that the environment remained as sanitized and healthy as possible for children to enjoy a safe environment. From the moment I entered the childcare centre, it became clear that safety had a central place in the FRC routines.

On the FRC’s walls, the director had displayed information handouts to remind educators about the policies, procedures, and routines that teachers are expected to adhere to. One of the handouts outlined the different shifts and each of the tasks to be performed. For example, these tasks included: opening the gates in the backyard and opening the backdoor and doing the yard check for hazardous materials (including raking the sandbox). Next to the shift handout was displayed a poster titled *Meaningful Supervision of Children* (see Figure 7). As its title suggests, this handout outlines teachers’ responsibilities in the FRC regarding the supervision of children according to the BC government policy document. As it is stated, teachers must ensure a nurturing environment by practicing meaningful supervision of all children at all times, not only regarding their physical safety, but also their emotional wellbeing as I will explain in more detail in the sections to follow. The policy about meaningful supervision offered an injury prevention approach by standardizing the everyday practices in the FRC. For example, teachers had to do head checks (i.e., counting children) every 10-15 minutes especially before, during, and after neighbourhood walks. Every morning during story time, one of the teachers went outside and scanned the play area in search of any sort of hazards that may have been thrown out there
during the night, which is a legitimate concern. Also, in the morning, the teachers wrote children’s names on a board in three different colours. Every time a group went for a neighbourhood walk or for lunch, the teachers would check every name on the board. While they were doing each of these practices, they communicated with each other to make sure everybody was on board.

![Image of Meaningful Supervision of Children Guidelines]

Figure 7 Meaningful Supervision of Children Guidelines
In accordance to the BC CCLR, the policy on meaningful supervision promotes the development of significant relationships between educators and children to make sure that the children understand the rules for their own safety. The assumption is that children’s safety is better assured in a nurturing environment and that their safety also depends on their opportunities for social, emotional, and intellectual growth. Another handout titled “Anchoring” (see Figure 8) was displayed next to the Meaningful Supervision Handout. This document describes anchoring as a strategy for teachers to build a meaningful relationship with each child. Teachers who anchor play with children, help them in conflict resolution as well as in finding words or translating what they find difficult to express. As I was reading this handout, I asked some questions to the teacher who was preparing snacks in the kitchen. “Do you know what anchoring
means?” I said. It was the first time I had heard that word. The teacher told me it was about building relationships with the children. She gave the example that sometimes children get mad at each other because somebody doesn’t want to play with them or they don’t want to share a toy. In those situations, the teachers helped them to sort things out especially when they are hungry or tired. I was struck by the reference to the teachers’ role as “police officers,” but when I asked her about that, she answered that she saw herself more than as a peacekeeper than a police officer.

As this conversation illustrates, safety narratives and practices shaped the places and many of the interactions in the FRC. The handouts reminded educators of the policies and the procedures necessary to be carried out on a daily basis in order to keep children safe from harm. Furthermore, these handouts made clear who was liable if safety was not maintained, how this maintenance had to be done, when and where. Each room had some particular set of practices to prevent children’s injuries as well. For example, story time was held every morning in one of the rooms used for nap time. While story time was underway, the mats and the bedding were piled up in a corner and children were constantly reminded that they were not allowed to climb on them. After the children headed out of the room, one of the teachers would set up the space for nap time, putting the mats and the bedding in place. The room could not be used until nap time, except when there was an art workshop or yoga lessons scheduled. Changes in the arrangement of each room had to respond to safety requirements, for example, by removing or placing furniture in particular ways. Through these practices, teachers were able to satisfy the requirement for ensuring children’s safety.

Outside the Centre, teachers faced distinctive challenges. For neighbourhood walks, they carried with them a safety backpack, as stipulated in the regulations, that contained a first aid kit,
a cellphone, and an address notebook with children’s contacts in case of an emergency. Right outside the FRC, for example, there was a playground that the children passed by every day. In one of the neighbourhood walks, I had a brief exchange with one of the children and the teacher. Chris said that he wished they were allowed to play in that big playground. He did not know why they were not allowed. One of the teachers who overheard my exchange with the child told me that it was not safe to let the children play there because they cannot make sure the place is free of hazards. Sometimes older kids come from the school and it seems that children can find pieces of broken glasses or cigarette butts. As I was wrapping up my fieldwork, the director happily told me that they had finally raised the monies to build a playground in their backyard, so the children could enjoy using a playground of their own.

On one of the long and very relaxed neighbourhood walks, the children had walked for about one hour through different streets. We were approaching the Skytrain station when some children insistently asked the teachers if they could have a short visit to the station. One of the teachers got enthusiastic about the idea and tried to persuade the senior teacher to give permission. The senior teacher preferred to go back to the childcare because it was too busy, and seemingly not very safe for the children. She reminded us that they also needed to take their nap. For her, the children were already tired and hungry.

This event made me wonder about how safety becomes a boundary maker between the places that children can and cannot access. Through my observations, I could see that safety functioned as an overarching principle in the decisions that teachers made on a daily basis. This was especially true in circumstances when the teachers did not have control over the place where they were at. Some of the children had told me that they were used to taking the Skytrain, something that they loved to do. Considering the distinction between risk and hazard explained
at the beginning of this chapter, these events arguably may have posed some risks, but were not evidently hazardous to the children. Nonetheless, these events also confronted teachers with decisions regarding ensuring children’s routines and safety or improvising to feed their curiosity. As the vignettes suggest, safety works as an entanglement, not only driven by these teachers’ willingness, but also by the co-functioning components that participate in it. Keeping children away from physical harm was put in practice through the repetition of these routines over time. In this particular case, safety practices were influenced by educators’ work conditions that make them the primary liable subjects of failure to ensure children’s safety. In this context, it is not surprising that teachers closely followed safety regulations that are imposed on their practice in order to ensure children’s safety.

**What Safety Does**

In the case of the FRC, the practice of keeping children safe and protected tended to configure place in ways that delimited boundaries between safe and unsafe places. While these practices aim to protect children from harm by avoiding risks, they also prevent children from encountering different places and relating differently with place. Through safety practices, place is treated as a potential source of risk that needs to be delimited, marked, and controlled to assure children’s wellbeing. Treating place as a potential source of risk configures patterns that make it difficult to see place otherwise. For example, this can result in treating place as a source of exploration and learning, not only about what that particular place has to teach children and educators, but also how they can relate differently with that place. The question that remains is: what are the barriers that educators encounter in engaging with other pedagogies that make possible different forms of relationalities through their places? In this section, I offer an account
of what safety narratives and practices produce in the FRC in order to uncover some of those barriers.

Early one morning, about 9:00 am, the children were playing in the main room before circle time. Sara, one of the teachers, was talking to Fernanda, one of the 4-year-old girls. The teacher handed her a piece of paper and some crayons to draw at one of the farthest tables from the nap room where story time was held every morning. The teacher explained to me that Fernanda had just thrown up and that she had to stay away from the children until somebody from her family could come to pick her up. Fernanda did not quite understand that she had to stay away from the rest of the children, so when story time was about to start, she lined up with the group to come into the room. When the teacher noticed she was coming in, she took her away and led her to the corner again. The teacher explained Fernanda that her mom or dad was coming to pick her up soon. Fernanda insisted she wanted to join story time, but the teacher repeated that she did not want any other child to get sick. I was aware that the regulations indicate that sick children must stay at home, especially when their symptoms seem to be contagious. I experienced a similar situation myself when my daughter got sick in her childcare. She had no fever, nor felt sick at all, but her teacher said she was likely contagious, and she had to be taken home. Events like these illustrate how safety practices regarding hygiene and health delimit access to places in the Centre.

As the episode about opening the door to Matias and his dad illustrates, children’s safety also constitutes a source of anxiety for educators. This fear of making mistakes and of being easily fired or replaced can be traced back to the history of early childhood education as a profession that has been undervalued as care work done by women (Holton & Pyer, 2017; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). The patriarchal assumption has been that women are naturally equipped
for care work and as such its societal recognition has been minimal and quite invisible. In BC, the undervaluing of the profession has been reflected in the low wages for early childhood educators, who are in the great majority, women. And while the racial and ethnic makeup of early childhood educators currently practicing in BC is not known, it is feasible to ask how many educators belong to visible minorities. In 2016 the BC Early Childhood Educators (BC ECE), a non-profit organization that represents educators in the province, launched the $25 an Hour Strategy Campaign. In 2008, the BC ECE had launched the $20 an Hour Strategy Campaign. For educators, they argued, it was impossible even then to live on those wages, especially, with the high cost of living in Vancouver. In 2016, the BC ECE conducted a survey among educators that revealed that 60% of qualified early childhood educators earn only $21/hour or less which is considered quite low for college or university educated professionals. The low-wage reality explains why qualified educators are likely to leave the profession in search of work with better compensation.

The BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, cognizant of these problems, elaborated the *Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (British Columbia, n.d.) to enhance the front-line early childhood educators’ wages. To be eligible, educators need to be working in eligible licensed childcare facilities that receive child care operating funding (CCOF). The wage enhancement represented a raise of $1 per hour by 2019 and another $1 per hour is scheduled for April 1, 2020 increasing the total wage enhancement to $2 per hour as part of Government’s Childcare BC plan. The strategy also considers additional funding for statutory benefits (e.g., Canada Pension Plan (CPP), employment insurance, vacation pay, statutory holiday pay). Despite the wage enhancement implemented by the BC government, the $25 an hour wage goal will not be met in the near future.
In addition to issues associated with the low status of the profession, early childhood educators are afraid to face a situation in which a child is seriously injured (Canadian Health Association, 2019) for fear of losing their job and costing the daycare its license. But most importantly, they fear being sued as individual teachers. I observed this fear among educators during my time in the FRC. In one of my conversations with the staff regarding the safety procedures they had in place, I asked one of the teachers what would happen if a child was seriously injured at the Centre. She had no experience of such an event so the teacher I spoke to was unsure about the exact consequences. She said though that she was uncertain about the consequences for the teacher responsible for the child’s injury and she was afraid that the policy would not protect her in case it was an accident out of her control. She also added that is why teachers take the safety of children very seriously. As a mother herself, she would like to have the guarantee that her son was safe at school. She thought that if a child was injured, she may lose her job, and then it would be very difficult to find another one.

As the Preventing Injury in Child Care Settings handbook and the handouts in the Centre’s walls show, safety guidelines are standardized practices to be easily implemented in childcare settings. Childcare staff need to know how to prevent injuries, what to do in case they happen, and how to proceed quickly to mitigate any serious incidents. As part of the early childhood education certificate in British Columbia, pre-service educators learn these regulations and the procedures to implement them. They also attend professional development workshops that assist them in learning about changes to the regulations and its implementation. In addition, educators spend time in most weekly meetings reviewing the implementation of safety practices and whether there is the need to make changes to their procedures to respond more quickly to any unexpected circumstance.
For teachers at the FRC, following safety practices takes a significant amount of their time. This overarching concern with safety may account for some of the missed opportunities to engage with pedagogies that work against the grain, such as pedagogies that decolonize place. When place is mainly seen as a source of risk, it is challenging to shift towards other understandings of place. This posits a challenge for educators in British Columbia. When teachers are positioned, and see themselves, primarily as liable individuals rather than educators, it is extremely difficult for them to engage with pedagogies that unsettle fixed and ahistorical understanding of place. While some educators in the province of BC already are engaging in innovative pedagogies, the case of the FRC indicates that there is still work to do to offer all educators the possibilities and conditions to engage with such a project.

**Impermeable Walls, Endangered Difference**

In ensuring the preservation of children’s safety, early childhood education risks becoming impermeable to narratives and practices that are fundamental to fostering diversity and respect difference. For instance, as I elaborated in the previous chapter, neighbourhood walks offer opportunities for children to encounter diversity and difference in ways that are not possible within the boundaries of the Centre. Nonetheless, educators may miss those opportunities for a number of reasons, including concern for children’s safety. While children engage in multiple encounters in a neighbourhood with great cultural and social diversity, educators continue to reinforce safety practices while walking outside. In one of the daily walks that I witnessed, one of the teachers spotted a cute dog across the street. The surroundings were not busy at all, so the teacher crossed the street with the children to take a closer look at the dog. Children, teachers, and the dog’s owner engaged in a friendly conversation about her pet (see Figure 9). When the
dog’s owner said to the children that it was safe to pet the dog since she enjoyed it, the teacher quickly responded that “it may be unsafe now since the dog may be a little bit scared with all of us looking at her.” While petting or not petting the dog may not seem a decision that seriously affects children’s encounters with difference, it reflects the prevalence of safety as a standardized practice outside the Centre as well. Moreover, it illustrates that safety practices can delimitate a physical space by drawing an invisible boundary between the children and the dog, or the children and the train station, and the children and street art.

Figure 9 Children's encounter with a dog
It is important to make clear that safety practices are not only constituted by the BC Child Care Licensing regulations (CCLR). Time is one element that I observed playing an important role at the FRC. A number of early childhood scholars (see e.g., Kummen, 2010; Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Rowan, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; 2013; Rose & Witty, 2010) have examined the role that clock time has had in governing teacher-child relationships, curriculum planning, and children’s and teachers’ subjectivities in childcare settings. For example, time-transitions such as going from story time to outdoor time or going from outdoor time to lunch time might limit or even exclude pedagogical responses toward learning about diversity because they do not fit the scheduled time for a particular activity. Rose and Witty (2010) found in a study about curriculum planning in a centre in New Brunswick that teachers struggled to find time to engage with pedagogical innovations. The tensions between teachers’ intentions to spend more time in curriculum planning and reflective practices have been also found in other studies in early childhood education in Canada (Kummen, 2010; Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Rowan, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; 2013). As I have already elaborated, the FRC is not exempt from the constraints of time. Time limited the possibilities for educators to reconcile safety practices to pedagogies that open up opportunities for children to encounter difference within the childcare or outside of it.

In story time, the children and I were listening to a book titled *What Do You Do With An Orange?* This is a picture book that introduces simple objects like a bowl, a cardboard box, and a saucepan to young children. The teacher was reading the page that portrayed a tube of lipstick and she asked the children:

**Teacher:** What is this?

**Children:** a lipstick!
Teacher: so what do we use it for?

Children: to paint our lips

Boy 1: My mom says that boys can also wear lipsticks!

Boy 2: (across the semi-circle) Oh yes, my mom says that too, boys can also wear lipsticks.

Girl: No, they don’t…

Teacher: (passing to the next page) What do you do with a shopping bag?

I found pedagogical value in what the boys had said during this story time. Since one girl disagreed with the statement, “boys can use lipstick,” I expected the teacher to continue the conversation about gender stereotypes affirming, perhaps, less limiting perspectives about boys and girls. Children’s comments, however, seemed either not to have captured the teacher’s attention or have been deliberately ignored to avoid entering a “risky” conversation. She continued reading the story until she finished the book and then the children started to go to transition time – going to the washroom, dressing for the weather, and going to play outside. As I pondered why the teacher had not given attention to the boys’ comments, I recalled that the FRC’s director was very keen to welcome same-sex families. The educator who was reading the story had told me before that Alicia, the director, was very excited because a couple of months ago a transgender couple was interested in registering their son in the Centre. Given our exchange, I assumed that neither the director nor the teacher had any reservation about openly talking to the children about gender stereotypes.

While the teacher was reading the story, the time for doing transition was approaching. The other teacher who was in charge of taking the children to the washroom started to call out the children in groups of four starting with the youngest and finishing with the oldest ones.
Transitioning to the washroom is an event composed of a number of practices: going to the washroom, dressing for the weather, and going to play outside. In turn, teachers have to manage a number of other small tasks while assisting children with transitions to toileting and dressing. Once they have gone to the washroom, they go to their cubby and dress for the weather, which is quite challenging in wintertime. Jackets, mittens, and rain pants do not always cooperate. Children struggle with their clothes because they often are difficult to pull on and make them feel uncomfortable. Children often complain about leaving story time which makes the transition slower and some days more challenging. The teacher leading the transition communicated with the teacher in the nap room: “please, don’t send me any other child yet. “M” (referring to a specific child) is having a hard time this morning.” Once the group of children is ready to go outside, the next group continue with the transition process. The transition process is not something that children enjoy. To make transitions easier, teachers bring some materials that children can hold, like a special toy or stuffy, before they leave the room. They would rather stay listening to stories and playing with some of the materials the teacher brings for story time.

When the episode of the lipstick happened, transition was about to start and the first child was about to leave the room. Children get annoyed sometimes when they are not able to finish the book or the game with which they were engaged. One teacher told me that when children are frustrated or overexcited it is more difficult to supervise them and more likely for an accident to occur. Teachers avoid those situations by making the transitions smooth and safe. However, sometimes time rules and the teacher who is leading transitions outside cannot wait for the second group to come because they will be too late for the rest of the morning routines such as walking through the neighbourhoods or special workshops such as yoga, dance, or art. That day seemed to be one of those days. Time ruled and the teacher had to rush to the end of the book.
This vignette, while not conclusive, offers interesting insights with which to speculate on how safety practices in conjunction with time can limit children’s encounters with diversity. While the episode of the lipstick can arguably be a missed pedagogical opportunity to open up a conversation with the whole group about gender norms more broadly, I would like to draw attention to the role of time in preventing those opportunities. The question is perhaps not why the teacher did not take the opportunity to open up a conversation with the children, but what prevented her from following up to follow up such a conversation. My previous exchanges with the teachers and the director would indicate they were not opposed to such conversations, especially if they were excited about having a same-sex family in their Centre. In this case, it cannot be assumed that the teacher did not give attention to the children’s comments simply based on a moral predicament about, for example, children’s innocence. It may be the case that the teacher took for granted children’s understanding of gender stereotypes and assumed that most children agreed that boys and girls were able to wear lipstick. While I acknowledge that the event of the lipstick can be interrogated from multiple perspectives that go beyond of the scope of this chapter, I would like to highlight this: safety practices in conjunction with scheduled time can have the unintentional effect of limiting children’s access to certain stories – like the potential ones contained in the lipstick event. Some of these places and the stories attached to them play an important role in children’s encounters with difference, so their marginalization risks moving children away from crucial learning experiences.

**Conclusion**

This chapter offered a critique of how safety narratives and practices in early childhood education settings worked to reduce place to primarily a source of risk and hazard. In doing so, I
map out narratives and practices that seem ostensibly unrelated to children’s learning about diversity and social responsibility to argue that safety may be impeding the relationships between certain places and children. An understanding of place as a source of risk privileges protectionist narratives and practices around young children. In turn this informs decisions about the types of encounters that young children are supported to have on a daily basis. When children encounter difference and are driven away from the complexity of it in an effort to protect them, we are taking from them learning experiences of relating responsibly with others. Narratives and practices around safety and safe relations may build a sort of impermeable boundary that limits children’s engagement with more complex worlds.

The impermeability of early childhood education may be very convenient, and very dangerous, for ignoring or treating difference as a threat. It risks the possibility of meaningful connection among people from diverse cultural, ethnic, class, racial backgrounds and of different ages, abilities, and gender identity (Valentine, 2008). Far from benefiting all children, an impermeable boundary between children and their places may perpetuate silence and blindness about social injustices by simply keeping them out of children’s scope. While the 2019 BC Early Learning Framework sets the expectations for early childhood education to be a place where children learn about diversity, difference, and social responsibility, safety narratives and practices can sometimes work against these expectations configuring an impermeable layer between the childcare and the neighbourhood. Practices of marking, defining, and controlling place allow safety practices in the FRC to work in ways that prevent imagining and practicing other forms of responsibility toward place. In other words, the FRC became impermeable to some places of the neighbourhoods that offered opportunities for learning about diversity. As I
explain in the next chapter, this relationship of impermeability works by default to benefit neoliberal approaches to early childhood education.

In the next chapter I examine how children learn to become socially responsible in the FRC which is particularly important in the context of the 2019 BC ELF. The framework puts forward a decolonizing approach to place in early childhood education which demands educators and children to become responsible not only to other humans but also to their places. This means to become more knowledgeable and sensitive to what places have to teach them.
Chapter 7:

Social Responsibility

In the previous chapter, I traced how safety narratives and practices worked as boundary-makers between children and places. To protect children, teachers are compelled to control place, which results, intentionally or unintentionally, in rendering places, mainly, as a source of risk and narrowing the opportunities for children to encounter diversity. Moreover, places that convey social difference or deeper inequalities, such as a homeless person on the street in Chapter 5, were often considered unsafe. In this chapter I focus on social responsibility to understand how teachers and children practice responsibility towards others. I also examine to what extent their prevalent responses to others have the potential to encompass responsibility toward place allowing children and teachers to encounter diversity and Indigeneity.

Attending to the practices of social responsibility is particularly important for a number of reasons. While the first British Columbia Early Learning Framework (2008) introduced a notion of social responsibility and diversity as one out of four learning areas, the 2019 revised version moved a step forward and proposed to understand responsibility as collective and relational. This means that children are not only responsible for their attitudes toward human others, but also to place and land. The framework proposes a number of principles inspired by the First Peoples Principles of Learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2019) to offer a vision of pedagogies for living respectfully together. The Principles seek to nurture children’s relationships with “the land, culture, community, and place” (BC Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 15). Following these principles, pedagogies that are local and meaningful can support children’s learning about diversity by engaging with local stories and perspectives that otherwise they would not be aware of.
In the 2019 BC ELF, the ethical aspiration of connection and reconnection with place is paired with an image of the child who is “strong and capable in their uniqueness and full of potential” (p. 15) and who is “living and growing in complex interdependence with humans and all world relations.” (p. 15). The phrase “all world relations” is borrowed from the Indigenous principle of “all my relations” (King, 1990) and refers to the idea that individuals are intimately interconnected with animals, plants, trees, and places and everything is part of our ecosystems (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). This vision of the child in interdependence with place sets forth new understandings of pedagogies for diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education:

Education is among many disciplines faced with the question of how to respond to the environmental crisis, to consider our interdependence with the natural world, and to generate dialogue on our collective responsibility. Educators can reflect on practices that enrich and deepen children’s relationships with place, land, and community. (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 21)

The framework situates responsibility as a relational and collective practice and raises questions such as

How might children become involved in community or global projects related to social justice? In what ways do children have opportunities to discuss real life issues such as poverty, race, war, gender, discrimination, and inequity? How can children become aware of diverse worldviews and perspectives? How can children begin to recognize and respond to discrimination and inequity? […] How do I create a culture where disagreement is a positive force? (p. 54)
In addition to these questions, the framework proposes to foster learning about social responsibility and diversity by 1) engaging with children’s family stories and backgrounds to bring in their diverse identities; 2) fostering democratic practices allowing children to become part of the creation of rules and agreements of conviviality; 3) respecting individual differences; and 4) acknowledging the commitment to truth-telling and reconciliation with Indigenous people (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Barad’s (2007) understanding of responsibility helps us to further the definition put forward by the 2019 BC ELF

Responsibility—the ability to respond to the other—cannot be restricted to human-human encounters when the very boundaries and constitutions of the “human” are continually being reconfigured and “our” role in these and other reconfigurings is precisely what “we” have to face. (p. 392)

A relational notion of responsibility acknowledges humans’ intimate relations with the places we inhabit, our immediate neighbourhood as well as the places we visit through our life. Expanding children’s relationships with place matters because it creates opportunities to respond to the ongoing invitation of Indigenous people to engage with the land where children and adults live. Attending a relational perspective means to be open to a dialogue about our collective responsibility about the current state of things. For children it means to have opportunities to explore the places where they live through their senses as well as through their curiosity. Encounters with places provide children with opportunities to contemplate places’ aesthetics, learn about their history, and even grapple with their politics (Ruitenber, 2005). A relational approach to responsibility may challenge educators and children to stay with the trouble
(Haraway, 2016) by committing to work with difficult knowledge of pain and suffering, and to avoid easy solutions.

In this chapter, I examine how children and teachers engage in narratives and practices of responsibility. I do so by observing, and asking questions about, the role that routines (e.g., story time, transitions, free outdoor play time) and pedagogical artifacts (e.g., books, flashcards) play in privileging certain forms of responsibility over others. I also consider how these routines and artefacts produce particular understandings of children regarding their abilities and limitations to become socially responsible. While I acknowledge that educators and children engage in multiple forms of responsibility in the FRC, I focus particularly on those practices that reveal tensions with forms of collective or relational practice of responsibility. I ask: What do children learn about responsibility in the FRC? How do they engage in responsible practices toward others? What are the opportunities that children’s relationships with place offer to pedagogies toward responsibility? For the analysis, I trace whether and, if so, how, neoliberal rationalities are implicated in the understanding of social responsibility in the FRC. I pay particular attention to the influences that a neoliberal rationality may have on the image of the child, the desired relationships among children, and the pedagogies that emerge from those practices of responsibility. I start by focusing on childcare routines and some of the artifacts that teachers use to help children to become kinder and more respectful toward their peers and teachers. Then I engage in a discussion of the challenges and missed opportunities of responsibilities practices in the FRC. I conclude by speculating what possibilities would emerge from a collective and relational notion of responsibility in the FRC that moves away from neoliberal rationalities and toward responsibilities for place.
Kindness Toward Others: Artifacts for Social Harmony

Just before 9:00 am, while the children are playing, one of the teachers starts singing in a soft voice: “five more minutes…” She and the other teachers remind and help the children to put the blocks, Lego, books and magazines away. Story time is about to start as it does every weekday morning in the nap room where cloud-shaped pillows hang from the ceiling like clouds in the sky. One by one children walk slowly in the nap room and sit on colourful round mats set up in a semi-circle and wait until the teacher sits in front of them with a bag of materials and books, to start the day. When all the children are seated on their mats, the teacher greets each of them by their names: “Good morning my friends, good morning Mike, good morning Zoe.” “Good morning miss Tam,” the children reply. Inside her old-fashioned leather bag, she carries books, felt stories, little yellow boots, tiny bells, finger puppets, and many other objects that seem to come alive as she starts off story time (see Figure 10).
I remember vividly that on my first day of fieldwork in the FRC it was declared “Cultural Day.” Children were asked to bring an object from home that represented a piece of their or their family’s culture. Tiffany brought a little Venezuelan bag knitted in brilliant colours. “Who wants to show and tell what you brought for cultural day my friends?” asked the teacher. Tiffany raised her hand and, while waiting for her turn, she jumped in the semi-circle with her tiny bag to show it to Miss Tam. “That is very nice! please show it to your friends.” While Tiffany was slowly walking and showing her bag closely to the other children, the teacher asked her where the bag comes from, whether it was from Venezuela and if she spoke Spanish at home. While she was showing her bag, she tried to answer her teacher’s questions, nodding to some of them. After Tiffany, other children had their turn to show and tell about their cultural objects. Around 10:00 am, the children started slowly transitioning to outside time.

Story time occupies an important part of early childhood education routines. In the FRC, it was the time in which teachers started the day by greeting children, listening to their stories, and gathering around a book. Story time was also a moment in which I could witness how teachers enacted their pedagogies. As the vignette about cultural day shows, teachers were aware and committed to create a space where all children could share their family stories, languages, traditions, and food. Many of the day-to-day conversations I casually had with the teachers were about the children’s diverse backgrounds. For example, I learned that Tiffany’s parents were from Venezuela and although she did not speak Spanish, she could understand the language. Activities such as cultural day certainly contribute to children’s learning about others’ family and cultural backgrounds as suggested by the 2019 BC ELF. Teachers were proud that the Centre receives children from different cultural backgrounds and places of origin and that families were diverse in their composition. They also had a wide range of materials and “so called culturally
sensitive” toys, such as baby dolls with different skin colour as well as a board game called “My Family Builders” that allowed children to form multiple types of families (see Figure 11). As I argued in Chapter 2, teachers’ attention to cultural diversity may arguably respond to the value of multiculturalism in Canadian society. During my fieldwork, I heard all the teachers proudly refer to children’s diverse backgrounds when talking with me or with the children. Teachers were consistent in their approach to a harmonious conviviality in the Centre by treating children kindly and respectfully and reminding them to treat other children in the same way.

Figure 11 Family Builders
It was during story time that the children and I learned that a new boy was coming to the Centre: “Everyone, please pay attention to me. I have something to tell you. A new boy is joining us in a couple of weeks,” said Tricia the teacher leading story time. For that day, Tricia brought books and a field story to talk with the children about the new boy. She started with a book entitled *I Can Be a Super Friend and Work with my Friends* by Tab Lisa Grant and Rochelle Lentini (2002). The teacher continued: “If you were going to a daycare for the first time, how would you like to be welcomed? How would you feel the first day? What do you think it is important to do when this new friend comes to the daycare?” The book read as follows:

I like talking and playing with my friends at school. Sometimes, I want to play with what my friends are playing with. When I play, I sometimes feel like taking toys, using mean words, or hitting and kicking. My friends get sad or mad when I hit, kick, use mean words, or take toys. If I want to join in play, I need to join nicely or ask to play with my friends’ toys. Can I play with you? I can say, “Can I play with that toy?” or “Can I play with you?” First, I stop, then I think about what a Super Friend would do. Super Friends use: nice talking, gentle hands and feet, look with their eyes, listen with their ears, and take turns with toys. I can try to be a SUPER FRIEND and work with my friends” (pp. 1-6).

The book uses plain and concise language along with illustrations to show how a “super friend” (like a superhero) behaves. The child narrator of the book, a boy, continues by saying that working together with friends is fun. The child also acknowledges that sometimes waiting for turns may be frustrating and, in those cases, the child says that taking three deep breaths may help him to listen to his friends. The teacher points out one of the walls where there was a poster titled “Action Breaks” (see Figure 12). She asked the children: “What do you do when you feel
really, really frustrated?” The children start raising their hands and saying “stomping, stretching, breathing deeply”! As the teacher continued reading, she encouraged the children: “If you are listening, you can be a super friend! Please, can you sit nicely? Remember super friends are good listeners.” As the teacher read the book to the children, she was asking some questions throughout the book: What can you do if you get frustrated and do not want to wait for your turn? Some of the children repeated after her: “Stop, think, and cooperate”.

![Action Break Handout](image)

Figure 12 Action break handout on one of the childcare walls

In the FRC, story time welcomed a myriad of tales about monsters, dragons, children from around the world, monkeys, and many other animals whose adventures triggered children’s
curiosity and imagination. Teachers also brought in stories like *How to be a Super Friend and Work with my Friend*. This particular story, unlike the ones of fantasy, was used to help children with conflict-resolution and conflict-avoidance skills in the childcare setting. I talked to the teacher about the materials she used to talk about the new boy, and she said that she found it useful to help the children to be kind to each other and set basic rules of conviviality by reading stories or using some visual prompts. She explained to me that she had found the book (*How to Be a Super Friend*) in the library and thought that it was good material to prepare the children for the arrival of the new boy. On the nap room there were also some illustrations hung up on the walls with some actions to follow when children become upset or frustrated. The actions include taking a deep breath, counting to 10, or squeezing your hands (see figure 13).

Figure 13 Flashcards
During story time, one of the teachers brought a wooden box with colourful flashcards inside and, one by one, she started to ask children some questions: “what do you do if a friend is using the slide?” As the teacher was showing one flashcard, the children answered: “Wait for my turn.” Then the teacher asked them: “what do you do if a child is teasing you?” as she was showing them the flashcard with the message: Ignore. “What do you do if you are really frustrated and your friend keeps teasing you?” Then, she showed them another card and the children responded loudly: “Get a teacher!”

While children were listening to the story, one of the teachers was sitting in a corner with Lucas, a four-year-old boy who had a language delay. The teacher had another set of flashcards which was kept together by a key chain with a necklace. This set of flashcards was often used by the teacher who was accompanying Lucas or any other child who needed special assistance with routines. These flashcards display specific actions like sitting down, keeping quiet, silence, going to the washroom, getting dressed, eating, snack time, among others, and were used more outside of story time to provide children with guidance on how to interact with other children and teachers. In the FRC, children knew that the set of flashcards were used with the younger ones, who were not able to speak well or were new to the childcare routine. Teachers used the flashcards daily and they explained to me that they were helpful to teach the children to share, to respond calmly to frustration, to peacefully solve problems and as a whole to help to make the environment in the classroom more peaceful through a consistent routine.

Teachers also used flashcards to explore children’s feelings and help them to become more literate about their emotions. One morning, one of the girls had had a hard time saying goodbye to her mom. During story time, the girl started to quietly sob, apparently because she recalled she missed her mom. In a soothing voice, Andrea, the teacher, asked her how she felt
that morning when she said bye to her mom. The teacher also showed the girls the “Feeling Wheel” (see Figure 14) and asked her to pick up an emotion that represented how she was feeling. The girl refused to pick any emotion. It seemed that she simply did not want to, so the teacher asked the other children to pick an emotion that would show how she felt. Some children said: “sad” and others said “lonely.” Andrea continued asking children to pick out emotions that represented how they feel in various situations, such as “how do you feel if your friends are playing together and then they start fighting for a toy,” or “how do you feel if nobody wants to play with you?” After story time, the teacher told me that she had recently attended a professional-development day workshop in which she had learned some strategies to help children to self-regulate their emotions. She said that when children learn to name their feelings, they are more likely able to manage their frustration. By using the feeling wheel, she said, she intended to help children to know themselves better.

Figure 14 Feeling wheel
“He Is Learning”

A language therapist visited the Centre from time to time to assist Lucas, the boy who had a language delay, in developing his communication skills in collaboration with his teachers. The therapist said that she was glad to be observing some positive changes in him. For example, he seemed to be more communicative and starting to express interest in playing with other children rather than staying on his own as he used to do some months ago. I had also seen Lucas becoming keener to find opportunities to play or carry out some tasks with other children such as cleaning up or putting toys away. Body language was part of his communication skills. I observed that when he became excited about something, he pointed it out with his finger, laughed, or expressed surprise.

Two art teachers visited the Centre every Wednesday morning. They started their art activity in the nap room and gathered the children to listen to what they were going to do for the day. One of the art teachers showed the materials to the children and ask them to listen carefully to her instructions: “Stop and listen” she reminded them. One of the boys was giggling with his friend in one of the corners and Lucas was sitting next to them. Lucas pushed them in what I interpreted to be an attempt to reinforce the rule of “stop and listen.” The girl who was next to me told me: “He is a slow child; he can’t use his words.”

The teacher accompanying Lucas said to him: “no hitting please” and showed him the flash card, “sit quietly.” The children who Lucas pushed complained to the teacher about his behaviour, so the teacher explained to them concisely: “He is learning.” This was a common response that the children heard from the teachers when Lucas did not behave as expected. I heard some of the children repeating “he is learning” when the teacher was not there and Lucas
was upset about something, hit other children, or grabbed a toy from them. Nonetheless, for some of them, it was not easy to understand what the teachers meant by “he is learning.”

In late December, Lucas stopped coming regularly to the childcare. One day, when the children were having lunch, somebody rang the bell. It was Lucas’s dad. While one of the teachers answered the door, had a short chat, and gave him some papers to fill out, the kids started to speculate why Lucas’s dad came to the childcare.

**Child 1:** “I think Lucas is not coming back anymore.”

**Child 2:** “Why?”

**Child 1:** “Because he is bothering us; he is mean to us.”

**Teacher:** (who overheard the short exchange repeated) “He is just learning.”

This conversation among the children was one of many I heard about Lucas. It was not unusual to hear a few children talk and complain about the fights they had with him. The teachers came up with a concise explanation for Lucas’s behaviour – “he is learning” – to prevent them from describing him as a child with deficits. While most children understood that Lucas needed extra support, they were curious, as one of the girls asked the teacher, “why is Lucas not like us?” For some children, the common answer “he is learning” was not enough to help them understand his behaviours, and as one child pointed out, some of them believed that he was simply mean and liked bothering them. I return to the story of Lucas later on in this chapter.

Andrea, one of the teachers, wanted me to see some material from a workshop she had recently attended about bullying prevention with young children. The workshop was called *Safe Spaces* and it was offered by the Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre\(^2\) for early childhood

\(^2\)Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre is an organization that provides information, referrals, training and resources to families, individuals and organizations who are seeking information about child care and early learning.
education service providers. According to its website and the handout displayed on one of the walls in the FRC, its purpose is to foster pro-social skills like empathy, emotional literacy, and problem solving to prevent bullying behaviours that may appear when children become older.

Andrea explained that one of the things she had learned in the workshop was that children as young as three years old can start showing some ways of interacting with others that may further develop into bullying behaviours. To prevent bulling behaviours among children, the Safe Spaces program takes an anti-bias and anti-racist education approach and is aimed at developing a sense of self-esteem, critical thinking, empathy, and a sensitivity to act against unfairness and bias when children witness an unjust situation. Andrea showed me one of the books that were recommended in the workshop which was written by someone who was a counsellor. The book was titled Stop Picking on Me: A first look at bullying by Pat Thomas. I opened it and I read it through. Rather than a story, the book talks about bullies, who they are, what they do, and what children can do to stop them. I asked Andrea what she liked about this book. She said that the book helped children to understand very early what it is not okay to do to others.

Flashcards, feeling wheels, and books work not only as pedagogical artifacts alone, but they also work together to produce certain understandings of responsibility in the FRC. Cultural day, story time, and other routines throughout the day fostered a sense of responsibility toward the acknowledgement of children’s diverse family backgrounds. These artifacts also worked together as strategies for children to self-regulate their emotions and behave kindly toward others. Through books and flashcards, children were exposed to situations that would likely trigger in them responses considered inappropriate, such as hitting or using mean words. More specifically, flashcards introduced pre-defined actions for children to follow either in conflict.
resolution situations or simply to behave according to expectations. The feeling wheel was also a means that worked under the assumption that children’s emotional literacy – or the ability to understand and talk about their emotional states – is conducive to emotional self-regulation and social responsibility. Children who are able to identify their own as well as others’ emotions seem more likely to understand when their own actions provided comfort to or hurt someone else.

As a whole, these artifacts contribute to narratives and practices of social harmony in the FRC. Social harmony is usually recognized as a value of a multicultural society that when achieved allows people from different cultural and social backgrounds to get along despite their differences. In the Centre, educators help children to get along with others by using stories and signs (i.e., flashcards or the feeling wheel) they could refer back to as reminders for the children. Likewise, children learned to behave and self-regulate when needed to avoid or solve conflicts by learning to listen, taking turns, ignoring when other children tease them, or getting a teacher when they needed help with a difficult situation. In other words, these artifacts for social harmony worked under the assumption that living well together can be achieved by following a pre-defined set of rules.

Teaching toward social harmony resembles what Vintimilla (2014) described as a pedagogy of happiness in early childhood education. In a pedagogy of happiness, the unity of the community is the key goal. In the FRC, educators seem to seek unity by encouraging children, for example, to be super friends. The assumption is that children’s ability to self-regulate their emotions will result in conflict avoidance. In this sense, the unity of their community depends on the absence of conflict. A pedagogy of happiness as well as a pedagogy toward social harmony
avoid conflict may also preclude a meaningful engagement with the complexities that emerge from differences.

While these lessons and set of rules are useful to support children to become independent in everyday situations, it is critical to note what else these practices produce. Responsibility understood as self-regulation, or as the act of managing thoughts and feelings, posit important restrictions to the idea of relational and collective responsibility. The prevalent use of pedagogical tools such as the feeling wheel or the flashcards narrows down social responsibility to children’s abilities to self-regulate. Likewise, becoming responsible involves, first and foremost, focuses attention on children themselves, to then attend to their relationships with other children. Children’s relationships with their places remain outside of this formula. Place becomes a mere backdrop, rather than an entity to be responsible toward.

When pedagogies for social harmony focus primarily on children’s self-regulation, it also has the effect of marginalizing other forms of communication and responsibility. For example, Lucas’s ways of expressing his interest in participating in group routines by using his body language, instead of his words, was an impediment. Advised by the language therapist, teachers mediated Lucas’s relationships with other children by using, for example, the set of flashcards. The children were expected to be patient toward Lucas while “he was learning.” Nonetheless, an attention to children’s ability to self-regulate did not offer tools to teachers and children to address the conflicts that emerge from children’s misunderstanding of Lucas’s difference. Certainly, as I explain in the sections to follow, I witnessed missed opportunities to expand children’s understanding of responsibility by engaging with Lucas’s unique abilities and interests.
The question that remains is what other forms of responsibility are possible in the FRC that are not yet practiced or continually encouraged. The strategies that are conducive to social harmony seem to be effective for supporting peaceful forms of conviviality, but less conducive to go deeper toward conversations about realities such as poverty, inequality, or even climate change. When educators avoid broaching these topics in the early childhood education classroom, they are doing children a disservice. In other words, social responsibility as primarily the ability to self-regulate constitutes a key barrier to children’s learning about diversity through their relationships with place. In the next section, I examine what image of the child emerges from the practices of educating for social harmony based on understanding of responsibility as self-regulation.

**Pillars in the Understanding of Responsibility: The Responsible Child**

Narratives and practices of responsibility portray particular images of the child. In this section, I demonstrate that these pedagogical artefacts reinforce an image of the child that is mainly premised on their individuality. In this new understanding, the child is, on one hand, still too innocent (Burman, 1994, 2007; Cannella, 1997; Garlen, 2018; Jenks, 2005; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Smith, 2014) to engage with difficult knowledge around some of the complexities that emerge from social inequalities or the erasure of Indigeneity in the public space. On the other, the child is mature enough to be responsible for their own self-regulation. I also offer examples about how hyper attention to the individual child’s responsibility co-opts engagement with more collective and relational practices.

Along with self-regulation strategies, boundary-making practices, such as keeping children away from others’ personal space or from those places that are rendered risky, reinforce
the image of the individual child. For instance, colourful sitting mats were used for children to mark their own place during story time. They worked as bounded spaces intended to keep children attentive to the stories and prevent them trespassing into others’ personal spaces. Teachers reminded them: “Mats are for sitting on, not for playing with.” Teachers explained to children they could perhaps play with them but not during story time. This rule was also reinforced by the children themselves who drew teachers’ attention when someone was not on their mats. The mat is only one example that illustrates how boundaries were constantly created and reinforced among children. The demarcation of these repeated boundaries also framed a notion of responsibility in the Centre as an individual affair.

The reliance of the teachers on these artefacts promoted an image of an autonomous child who is capable of making rational decisions when they are provided with a logical set of actions. The image of an autonomous child resembles what Smith (2014) has called the Athenian child which adds a new figure to the childhood models proposed by Jenks (2005): the Dionysian and Apollonian child. While the Dyonysian child had to be disciplined because of his wild and unruly nature, the Apollonian child was regulated under the assumption that they were innocent and in need of protection. Instead, Smith (2014) reinvented the Athenian child who represents a sense of responsibility for self-governance which in Gallagher’s (2016) words speaks directly to the “inner working of neoliberalism” (p. 491). He said: “We are all constantly encouraged to become responsible, rational individuals, to make sensible choices regulating our own existence within the accepted parameters of economic and political structure” (p. 491). Smith’s image of the Athenian child speaks to the inner working of neoliberalism in that children become governed by strategies of participation and responsibility. Both strategies combined, Smith
argue, teach children first and foremost, lessons regarding their individual traits and responsibility for their future success.

As Smith (2014) pointed out, the Athenian child as well as the models proposed by Jenks do not emerge in isolation as they usually overlap. Teachers in the FRC spoke about children as both responsible for their own behaviours as well as innocent or unprepared to deal with more difficult conversations, as one of the teachers believed regarding addressing racism at the FRC. We were discussing the ability of children to identify racial difference among their peers when Deb said that children do not discriminate based on skin colour. In her understanding, children may become racist later in their lives as they start hearing comments from their parents. The teacher also believed that talking about who is darker or lighter than someone else may make children start teasing others about their skin colour. Deb thought it was unnecessary to talk about racism so early simply because children did not need it.

The habit of keeping children away from difficult conversations has been widely discussed in the childhood studies literature. Jenks (2005) reminds us that the image of children as innocent and in need of protection has prevailed in educational contexts and has influenced teachers’ pedagogical choices, despite the risk that this does children a disservice. For instance, Garlen (2018) demonstrated that in the US, narratives of childhood innocence have justified the removal of Native American children from their homes supposedly to be provided with appropriate conditions of childhood. Garlen also reminds us that, in the name of children’s innocence, stereotypes about Black and poor White mothers as morally deficient have been spread and perpetuated. While teachers encourage children to become responsible and self-regulated, they still make pedagogical decisions based on children’s innocence. The teacher’s
beliefs about keeping children away from discussions about racism or about Lucas as a “different child” served as a barrier to involving children in those types of difficult conversations.

Narratives and practices toward the responsible child contribute to what Moss (2014) has described as neoliberal narratives in early childhood education. They are intertwined with some of the principles that put self-regulation over collectivity, choice as an individual enterprise, and locate responsibility always within the individual who is ultimately responsible for their own behaviours and fate. These narratives and practices also put human exceptionality at the centre of responsibility as highlighted in the book, *How to be a Super Friend*, setting specific standards of friendship that emanate from a pre-defined set of behaviours. Although these are not the only arrangements around practices of conviviality and responsibility in the FRC, they are important to be examined because of their prevalent role in keeping children away from engaging in uncertain and unplanned situations. These arrangements interfere with the aspiration of supporting children in engaging in the complexities that the 21st century brings to them and particularly to develop a sense of collective and relational sense of responsibility toward place.

While these events are helpful to guide children to peacefully resolve conflict on a daily basis, they also have some unintended effects of reducing the complexity surrounding conflict into simply a matter of a few standardized steps. For example, consider the case of Lucas and the response offered by teachers: “He is learning”. While the teacher had good reasons to remind the other children that Lucas was adapting to the childcare’s routines, some children did not actually understand what it meant for Lucas to be learning. As the teachers made clear, framing Lucas’s behaviours as part of a learning process was a strategy to move away from a language of deficit that situated Lucas as a “slow” child. However, some children insisted that he was simply mean. The children arguably needed more time and more discussion to make sense what teachers meant
by “he is learning.” The standardized response given by the teachers about Lucas was not enough to shift the negative attitudes that some children harboured towards him.

This situation arguably represents a missed opportunity to shift pedagogies about diversity and responsibility from the individual to the collective. Lucas’s behaviours labelled as “attempts to learn” were part of a larger series of events. For example, Lucas did not follow the pre-agreed set of rules of story time (i.e., communicate using his words, sit relatively still on his mat, waiting for his turn to ask a question or tell a story). For Lucas it was more difficult to be acknowledged as an equal in story time because he did not perform some of the practices that other children of their age did. While he demonstrated other forms of care toward children, some of his behaviours had a greater negative impact on his peers. In the next section I explore an event which involved Lucas caring about worms. I include this event as it illustrates that certain types of care were valued over others at the FRC.

Caring about Worms: Unattended Responsibility

On a cold morning at the FRC, Lucas found a worm on the ground and put it on his hand (see Figure 14). He looked very excited. I showed him that he could find some more worms in a wet place in the backyard, so we went on a mission with a couple of other children in search of those wet places. Underneath an empty pot in the yard, we found many worms (see Figure 15). He carefully took them in his hand and started to examine them. After a moment, the children got interested in something else, but Lucas continued to observe the worms and his wiggling hand made me think that he was perhaps feeling how the worms were moving. The question that emerged for me – and remained unanswered – was what needed to happen to recognize Lucas’s encounter with the worm as an opportunity to learn about responsibility for this non-human
others? A number of early childhood scholars (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2018; Nxumalo, 2019) have traced children’s encounters with insects to examine the ethical dilemmas that a damaged world brings into education. This scholarship would centre Lucas’s encounters with the worms as well as with other encounters that include sand, water, and snow to mention a few, as productive events for thinking about the kind of relationships educators need to foster in current times.

Figure 15 Lucas finds a worm on the ground
While this chapter does not focus on Lucas’s or other children’s encounters with insects, I would like to superimpose the image of these artifacts (i.e., flashcards, feelings wheels, and books like *How to be a Super Friend*) and the forms of responsibility they produced, in contrast to other forms of responsibility that seemed to be overlooked. I propose thinking with the worms event as a form of responsibility for similar reasons as it has been argued elsewhere (Nxumalo, 2019). The need for shifting our frameworks of references of what it means to foster meaningful relationships with the world surrounding children has become imperative in the context of a global social, economic, and environmental crisis. In early childhood education, those frameworks have challenged us to think about our relationships with the more-than-human world.
in ways that unsettle long-standing assumptions about what it means to be human and our responsibility to others. The artifacts for social harmony offered particular possibilities to practice a form of individual responsibility toward other children by being kind and knowing how to prevent and solve conflicts. In this context, responsibility is practiced as a form of self-regulation rather than a relational responsibility that allows children to understand their interconnection with others, either human or more than human. As this brief vignette suggests, Lucas expressed continuous interest in worms as well as sand, snow, and water. Most of the time, Lucas was praised for waiting his turn, using his few words, being kind to others, but he was not especially praised or paid attention to in his engagement with worms, sand, water, or snow. Lucas was situated as praiseworthy within the frame of being a slow child who was learning to interact with other children and adults. This meant that the opportunity to be acknowledged in his unique forms of responsibility was missed.

Other Forms of Responsibility

As part of my Public Scholar Award project, I carried out a photography workshop with the children at the end of my fieldwork. During five weeks in May and June, we met weekly on Fridays after nap time. As I mentioned before, the director had arranged visits to the nearby school library for the children going to kindergarten that September. The idea was to facilitate their transition from the childcare centre to the school setting. When I proposed to offer a photography workshop for the children, the director liked the idea, and we agreed that combining the library visits with the photography workshop would work well. My project aimed to communicate with educators and families about my research. More specifically, I sought to offer a space for children to show their perspectives about diversity and responsibility through their
photographs. In the first session, children were excited to know they were going to use the cameras, tablet, and iPhone I brought. Each session, we gathered around books, materials, and devices. Rather than learning to compose and take pictures, children used the cameras to engage with their surroundings. In this last section, I will focus on responsibility beyond self-regulation through the lens of witnessing by paying attention to our ways of seeing. I draw on the photography workshop events as they provide insights about ways of seeing that children and myself as a researcher practice.

Our first session started with a visit to the school library (see Figure 16). Walking in a line, the children, Tricia, and I entered the school building. The principal welcomed us and led us to the librarian who was waiting for us. After she read two stories, the children were able to borrow one or two books of their choice. With books in their hands, we walked back to the Centre. I was aware that photography always offers a partial view (Kind, 2013; Mitchell, 2011, 2012), so I wondered what ways of seeing are privileged as the children visit the school library and what other ways of seeing would be explored through children's use of the cameras.

![Figure 17 School library visit](image-url)
The children's first encounter with the cameras and devices was one of joy and excitement, and they were particularly keen to take pictures of their friends. They were making silly and funny faces and drawing each other's attention in order to be photographed. I stayed away from interpretations of their intentions in taking such pictures. Instead, I was compelled to see what other forms of children's sensorial engagement were possible beyond their anthropocentric curiosity (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

In a subsequent session, we gathered around the garden area on an enjoyable afternoon. Tricia suggested closing our eyes to listen to the sound of the leaves' movements at the rhythm of the breeze. I had brought some materials to offer to the children before they went to take photographs. After opening our eyes, I asked them to interact with those materials. They started to touch the surface of their borrowed books, look at themselves in the mirror, and touch the ground around us (see Figure 18). After putting their senses to work, they went to take photographs in the backyard. Unlike the first session, they were most attracted to things instead of their peers. Tricia and I moved around and started to get involved in their pictures. I asked them if I could I see their pictures and what their pictures were about. Thomas told me: "Today I'm shooting plants" as he was showing me a picture of bamboo. Bamboo, Tricia told us, was a species introduced to British Columbia, but typically found also in East and South Asia (see Figure 19).
Figure 18 Children touching their books

Figure 19 Bamboo. Photo by Thomas
I wondered how Tricia knew about bamboos, so I asked her. She told us she loved plants and liked talking to people about them. She had learned about bamboo some time ago from a neighbour who had given her away one of her pots. While Tricia and I were talking about the plants, a couple of children started to jump into the conversation, saying they also had some bamboo in their homes. Tricia continued looking at some of the pictures that Thomas had shot and talking to the children about the different plants in the backyard. While Thomas was talking with Tricia, the other kids were taking pictures of other objects such as the fence, the ground, and a little wooden house hanging out from the shed's roof.

After five sessions, the children had taken almost 200 photographs. I chose 75 pictures to have a more manageable amount so the children could make a selection for the exhibition. The selection included children's and teachers' portraits, objects like toys, pieces of furniture, and our surroundings, including the ground and the sky. I presented the selection on the tablet to the children, and as we were looking at them, I took notes about what we discussed. It was not surprising that they were prone to include their portraits, but what I found interesting from the perspective of children’s relationships with place, was their responses to those photographs that seemingly did not have a clear focus or “intention.” For example, pictures of the sky, a shadow on the ground, or the bamboo plant inspired the children to ask questions, to remember, and to make connections. I noticed that children had vivid memories of the day they were taking pictures in the backyard. When we got to the bamboo plant, children recalled that Thomas had taken that picture and that Tricia knew "a lot" of plants. The children were also curious about the shadow on the ground – what is that? They went to the backyard and figured out where part of the ground was photographed.
As a group, the children selected seventeen final pictures. For each photograph I wrote a short vignette, giving some background story. For example, for the image of a shadow on the ground, I wrote:

The children took many pictures of the ground. They always look at it to find little things such as rocks, feathers, petals, or pebbles which they keep in their pockets as their treasures. When I saw this picture, I wondered whether the children were shooting something valuable I was not able to see. The shadow in the ground makes me think about the history of this place. We learnt that before this Centre was even built, a river run through these lands. What else can children’s pictures evoke?

On the day of the exhibit, I brought the photographs and the vignettes I wrote. Along with the children and Andrea, one of the teachers, we put them on white display boards. The exhibit, which was initially intended to communicate my research with teachers and families, became an display mainly for the children. We organized the display boards on the floor instead of the wall for children to look closely at their work. They sat or laid down to contemplate their photographs (see Figure 20).

These events made me think about how practices of social responsibility become part of children’s every day. As children engaged in the photography workshop, they were experiencing a particular way of seeing their surroundings. I encouraged the children to focus some attention away from their peers’ faces. I offered them materials to engage sensorially with objects instead of their peers, and I asked them to take photographs of the childcare backyard. Having already had the opportunity to take pictures of their friends and teachers, they captured their surroundings and shared them with others through the multiple conversations we had during the workshops.
Children's photo-taking was an embodied engagement similar to the way for them, just as witnessing was embodied for me. By taking pictures, children engaged not only in a visual, but also in an embodied, form of seeing. They actively observed using their senses what was in front of their eyes, but they also brought what they experienced outside the Centre. Here I am referring to those children's stories about their homes, pets, friends, and family. Their anecdotes took up space in the photography workshop as a form of inviting other ways of seeing. In one of our sessions, I asked the children to think about the places they observed daily as they commuted to the childcare. I became curious about children's mobility from home to their childcare centre since I noticed the effect that commuting had on me as a researcher.
During my fieldwork, I commuted from the privileged location of the UBC campus, where I have studied, worked, and lived for nine years, to the inner-city neighbourhood where the FRC was located. On the bus, I wrote extensively. Before each visit, I reviewed the last fieldnotes I wrote. I completed any critical detail that came to my mind, and I outlined what I should pay attention to during the next visit as well as what pending tasks I had to do. I wrote tirelessly to avoid missing the richness and complexity of an event. I barely lifted my head from my journal until I had to get off the bus.

I could not sustain this habit of writing for long. As I departed from UBC, people were getting on and off. Although most of them were quietly interacting with their smartphones, I started to notice how the geography inside the bus changed as it was moving along. On the way to my research site, from Cambie to Main Street, the passengers' voices started to get louder, and their movements got more expansive which made it very difficult for me to stay focused on tasks like reading or writing. I could not ignore what was happening on the bus anymore. While iPhones and backpacks dominated the bus geography in the first half of the ride from UBC to East Vancouver, the shopping carts, the ripped bags, and the big plastic bags carrying recycling cans dominated the other half. People spoke more loudly and more often. This could partially be attributed to the lack of technology among their belongings, which did not divert their attention from telling their stories to the drivers and other passengers.

23 I landed directly from Vancouver airport to Acadia Park, the UBC family housing with my 2 years-old daughter and my partner. Since then, we have worked, studied, and lived in Acadia Park situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam Nation. As I write this paper, I look through the window by my desk, and a few tall and ancient trees remind me of my privilege in being able to enjoy the greenery, the view of the mountains, the walk to the beach, and having school and work at hand. The 99 and 14 buses are a subtle reminder of my privilege and of the hidden inequalities that accompany moving from the Westside of Vancouver to East Vancouver.
For me, the bus revealed a reality in constant change that challenged my ways of seeing. Seats, backpacks, aisles and bodies of all kinds arranged themselves and offered different physical features for the passengers. In one of my rides to the childcare, I took the number 14 bus from UBC to East Vancouver and travelled downtown on Hastings Street. It was around 10:00 am when a shy sun was coming in through the window. Most of the young people with their backpacks and iPhones had disembarked at earlier stops in the downtown core. After the bus turned a few blocks ahead, some elderly and people experiencing homelessness began to get on. They were taking seats facing each other and simply talking about whatever came up. The geography of the bus reflected who took the bus and where they were headed, a wide distribution of the population and resources through a one-hour bus ride through Vancouver.

From my commuting experience, I became curious about the experiences of children travelling from their homes to their childcare. I imagined what it might be like to be a child commuting on public transit. How would the experience of moving through the city on the bus be for a three-or-five-year-old? What would they see, experience, like, or dislike about it? What would they learn about the others and about sharing a communal space like the bus? I wondered how relevant or irrelevant my research about diversity and social responsibility on early childhood was if it remained enclosed within the walls of a childcare centre instead of moving along with the child's everyday pathways.
I asked the children about their commuting experiences as part of the photography workshop: Can you draw for me how you get from home to the childcare and vice versa? I provided them with a large piece of paper and asked them to draw their ways to and back to the childcare (see Figure 21) as I was recording their stories. I learned a little bit about who walked or drove them to the childcare. Some children commuted by car, while others took public transit. They travelled shorter distances than me, though—one or two train stations or only a few bus stops. Although I kept asking them questions about what they were used to seeing during their
trips, we ended up talking about spaceships and other planets instead of buses and sky trains. Children put forward their thoughts no matter my recurring questions about commuting.

Their stories – not only in the photography workshop but throughout my fieldwork – fostered my curiosity about the places that children encounter every day. Most importantly, I was intrigued about what places continue to be more prevalent for children. Children's memories may not only be the result of their individual capacity, but their collective engagement with those moments we, educators and caregivers, give privileged attention to. How many stories that children bring to educators and adults are left unattended by the act of privileging others that capture adults' interests more. What are those stories, and what opportunities offer to engage in other types of relationships and forms of responsibility? I wonder what opportunities curiosity – as a response to the other human and more-than-human – offers for pedagogies about diversity and social responsibility. Fostering curiosity, as well as speculation, constituted a key piece while children engaged in taking photographs as well as talking about their thoughts on their everyday life. Curiosity and speculation emerged from attending to both children's and my ways of seeing our surroundings.

In this section, I have described how children took photographs by engaging through their senses. I also accounted for the need to give attention to curiosity and speculations to engage in new relationships with place. Examining our ways of seeing as a form of responsibility moves us away from understandings that privilege child-centered and pre-defined pedagogies for harmonic conviviality. In the photography workshop, I aimed to focus on the collective over the individual by privileging group narratives, the decision-making process and the joint authorship of children’s photographs. A sense of curiosity and speculation opens up opportunities to welcome stories from the outside into the space of the childcare centres. Teachers and children already
express interest and speculate about "what it would happen if." Perhaps the question that is worthy of asking is what sense of curiosity and speculation is needed to support children in their relationships toward places, and particularly, the places that seem to be out of their reach.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined the prevalent practices of responsibility in the FRC. These practices privileged the image of the individual child who is both innocent and responsible. This image of the child is possible first by marking boundaries among children, but most importantly, by creating barriers between children and place. Through these events, neoliberal rationality – a key barrier to reconnect with place for children – orchestrates a notion of responsibility that is practiced by a rational and exceptional individual, who must become, first and foremost, responsible for their behaviours and, ultimately, their fate. The child continues to be seen as innocent, but now more prominently responsible for their actions and future.

A sense of individual responsibility premised in self-regulation and the avoidance of difficult conversations prevents children and teachers from forging new relationships with place. The value of connecting with place and land as a source of learning about diversity and responsibility may be dismissed or overlooked if the motor of personal and ethical growth remains in the individual child. We need different narratives about responsibility in early childhood education (Haraway, 2016; Moss, 2014) to connect children with place and the history of these Indigenous lands. I proposed that being aware of our ways of seeing – what we see and what we overlook – offers opportunities to extend understandings of responsibility to the other – human and more-than-human. In this form of responsibility, curiosity and speculation extend children's individual responsibility toward a relational form where the collective is privileged.
Being aware of our entangled responsibilities makes us listen to the other in ways that are responsive to the obligations that the current times demand.
Chapter 8:

Concluding Thoughts

For the Mapuche people, as for all Indigenous people, the land and its elements, such as rivers, mountains, forests, water, air, birds, and animals, speak, feel, breathe, feed, and live together in harmony, where human – or the “che” - are no different than other forms of life […] MAPU is the Earth and everything that exists; Che is us, the people or peoples who inhabit the Earth. We are the people of the land, and our central responsibility is to protect everything that makes life possible based on a spirituality rooted in the natural world […] It has costed us economic hardship, genocide, land dispossession, theft of water and livestock, extrajudicial executions, destructive megaprojects, and invasions by forestry industry. Nevertheless, we are still alive!

(Belen Curamil, Monday, April 29th, 2019, San Francisco, USA)

I close this dissertation with a quotation from the speech that Belen Curamil made when she received, on behalf of Lonko Alberto Curamil, one of the 2019 Goldman Environmental Prize recipient, the world’s largest award honoring grassroots environmental activists. Her father, a Mapuche Land defender in Chile\(^24\), has remained in pretrial detention for more than a year with no judicial proceedings. At 18 years old, she has become an Indigenous leader for the defense of their land, the Wallmapu, against hydroelectric and forestry mega projects. Along with other young female activists around the world (such as Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, Malala Yousafzai, Isra Hirsi, Xiuhetzcatl Martinez), Belen Curamil understands that the current crisis is not only ecological, but also of economic and social concern. The communities that have

\(^{24}\) I met Lonko Alberto Curamil in 2015 when I co-organized the visit of two Mapuche Land defenders with three other Chilean doctoral students in UBC. I had the opportunity to hear his message during the three days of public events in UBC, but what I remember the most was the conversations we had about his struggles in stopping the construction of two hydroelectric projects on the Cautín River. Since then, I have followed Alberto Curamil’s defense of his traditional lands – the Wallmapu and the unjust treatment he has received by the Chilean government. The hearings finally began on 13 November 2019 and concluded last Friday, 13 December 2019. After more than a year in pretrial detention, Alberto Curamil was acquitted by a unanimous decision of the three judges of the court.
suffered the most have also been excluded from places of political influence and decision-making. This crisis is challenging the understanding of what it means to be a human and the relationships that humans forge with their places.

What does Belen Curamil’s speech mean for this dissertation focused on children’s relationships with place, diversity, and social responsibility? How do her words speak to Kathleen Kummen’s critique of Canadian multiculturalism which opened this dissertation? How does this doctoral study speak to a global environmental, social, and economic crisis and to the fact that young children will inherit a damaged world? As Kummen (2016) argues, liberal multiculturalism has covered the damaging consequences of colonialism under the celebration of diversity. Curamil and Kummen advocate for reconnecting with the voices of Indigenous communities as a key step toward environmental restoration. Their knowledges and experiences might offer not only a way out of the current ecological crisis, but most importantly, a way in to other frameworks of reference for how we can live well together. The words of Curamil and Kummen are important for this dissertation because they push the limits of the relationships between humans and place. They speak from a place that has been often disregarded in terms of political influence: the place of Indigenous people along with the place of early childhood educators. Their call is to follow Indigenous people’s knowledges and experiences to re-think the frameworks of reference in relation to environmental as well as educational problems. Such an endeavor demands the forging of intergenerational alliances that allows us to deal with the uncertain scenario ahead.

The BC Early Learning Framework (BC Ministry of Education, 2019) acknowledges the ongoing effects of colonialism and offers a pathway for rethinking diversity and social responsibility in early childhood education. To do so, educators are called upon to commit to
decolonizing pedagogies by resisting and interrupting legacies of colonization and contributing “to lasting reconciliation with Indigenous people” (BC Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 4). Tuck and Yang (2012) insist that “decolonization” (as a noun) or “decolonize” (as a verb) is not a metaphor for social justice demands or a synonym for decentering settler’s perspectives. They argue that the language of decolonization used for meanings like “decolonizing education or schools,” trivializes and weakens the core of the project of repatriation of Indigenous lands and life. Decolonizing schools do not address Indigenous nations’ demands for sovereignty or recognize their intellectual and political contribution to decolonizing frameworks. Their contention reminds me to be careful with the words I use to put forward my critique. I read the aims of decolonizing place in early childhood education as a pathway to contribute to Indigenous sovereignty.

Through this dissertation, I have chosen to use terms such as critical place methodologies and pedagogies that seek to interrupt the erasure of Indigenous people from their lands. A growing number of early childhood educators and researchers around the world, and more specifically, in Canada, have committed to create pedagogies that decolonize or unsettle the narratives and practices of colonialism. Their purpose is to open the possibilities for new forms of relationships that move away from human supremacy and individualism. As Curamil and Kummen show, youth and adults have joined efforts to create intergenerational partnerships to acknowledge the state of crisis and propose radical systemic actions. While they aspire to produce global change, the radical actions must be local, yet interconnected, since these radical actions take off in everyday places.

By opening and closing this dissertation with the words of Belen Curamil and Kathleen Kummen, I aim to bring together “worlds” that may seem at first glance unrelated. Since I seek
to produce knowledge that is historically and spatially situated, I focused on children’s
relationships with place to put side by side the lives of young children and the legacies of settler
colonialism. By bringing together children and the legacies of colonialism, more specifically, I
aim to expand our understanding about the role of place in children’s encounters with diversity
and practices of responsibility.

Before I move on to the conclusion, I would like to acknowledge that Indigenous scholars
and Elders have long established relationships with place outside the constraints that colonization
imposed on their traditional and ancestral Lands (Cajete, 2017; Simpson, 2014). They recognize
the lasting and damaging effects that settler colonialism has inflicted on Indigenous communities
through the dispossession and domination of their lands. Yet, they resist reducing their Land only
to a colonized place by embracing it as a source of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional
knowledge (Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019). This recognition has important implications for early
childhood education curriculum and pedagogies. While it is essential to be aware of the barriers
that impede teachers and children from engaging with place, early childhood scholars and
educators need to move toward more holistic understandings of place. In this regard, scholars
and educators have so much to learn from Indigenous and Land pedagogies.

Land pedagogy offers to early childhood education a lived curriculum that connects
that Elders have long been teaching Indigenous communities through storytelling about who they
are and their connections and responsibility toward the place they live in. However, Simpson
warns us that Land pedagogies challenge educators to create the conditions in which place-based
learning occurs. Children need to engage with places as a primary condition to learn from them.
Land pedagogy is not only learning about a place but also learning through the process by which we relate to that place.

Learning from the Land means to reject a standardized curriculum passed down by a school system grounded in the legacy of colonialism. Land pedagogy is the result of a long engagement with place – that lasts years, not weeks – where educators prescind the Western classroom to explore other ways of knowing. The learner voluntarily takes part in this process of knowledge production moving away from an understanding of knowledge as an imposition.

Early childhood scholars and educators can engage with place by learning from Indigenous scholars and Elders who, through Land, bring in stories of resistance, but also of resurgence and liberation (Simpson, 2014).

In the next few pages, I will offer some concluding thoughts regarding: 1) the study’s contributions to the field of early childhood 2) the significance of the findings for children, teachers, and policy-makers; 3) recommendations for the field; and 4) the study’s limitations and future directions for research. The conclusions that follow emerge from what qualitative researchers call “data collection” (i.e., fieldnotes, participant observations, photographs, drawings, and recordings), but also from resources that are not necessarily acknowledged as such. For instance, speculative thoughts of mine or others in the form of questions such as what if? or what else? have guided my inquiries and my observations. As a result, I acknowledge that the reader may have found incomplete accounts of what I have witnessed throughout this research. While I acknowledge that a dissertation must comply with standards of academic rigor, I do think that speculative thought has long infused academic work without necessarily being regarded as valuable. The speculative questions I refer to were put forward as transparently as possible. Together the data I collected and the speculative questions that I have asked throughout
my research have had a profound impact on my understanding about research methodologies for knowledge production. Opening the concluding chapter with the words of Belen Curamil helps me to make the point that closing this dissertation only by focusing on this study would be insufficient for the form of scholarship I am committed to.

Before I account for why this study matters and offer some recommendations, I will provide a summary of the argument I have elaborated throughout this dissertation. By drawing on Canadian historical scholarship and Indigenous critiques, I demonstrated that the assimilation of children’s diverse background continues to operate in acritical multicultural pedagogies in early childhood education. With this evidence in mind, I focused on children’s relationships with place as a powerful lens to reconceptualize diversity and responsibility in early childhood education. In doing so, I confirmed that children’s relationships with place in Canada cannot be examined without attending to the legacies of colonialism. This realization supports the use of a methodology of witnessing as a strategic approach that allowed me to examine children’s, teachers’, and my own ways of seeing. In focusing on what it is often overlooked or disregarded in research, I became more aware that some ways of seeing keep children away from diverse perspectives about their everyday lives. Walking the neighbourhood helped me to situate children’s encounters with diversity and practices of responsibility beyond the physical boundaries of their childcare centre to realize that symbolic boundaries may be as powerful as the physical ones. The analysis suggests that multicultural pedagogies continue to prevent educators and children from learning about the impact of colonialism in Canada. Early childhood policies, curriculum, and pedagogies create forms of protection that impede children from being aware of legacies of social injustice. As I demonstrate in Chapter 6, adult concerns about children’s safety may preclude opportunities for them to engage with Indigeneity in the
neighbourhood, reinforcing settler-colonial practices in early childhood education. In addition, pedagogies for social responsibility as dependent on the individual child not only limit access to particular places but also impede children’s engagement with responsible practices toward place. While these practices remain underexamined children’s narrowed encounters with diversity and their understanding of responsibility will continue unaltered.

I argue that bringing the discussion to the realm of children’s relationships with place might make the conversation about diversity and responsibility more productive than keeping them bounded only to social relationships and identities. I need to clarify that my intention of moving the conversation toward place does not mean that I disregard the importance of children’s identities in the tensions that arise from cultural differences in educational settings. The unequal relationships among individuals based on their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual identity and ability continues to be a pervasive feature of current societies. My argument is that examining children’s encounters with diversity and social responsibility through their relationships with place offers insights that a cultural and social identity framework does not. Foregrounding children’s relationships with place brings to the forefront the unattended tensions that arise from a multicultural approach to diversity in the context of Indigeneity and settler colonialism.

Contributions

The remainder of this chapter explains in detail the study’s main contributions: 1) why a liberal multicultural approach to diversity and responsibility continues to operate in early childhood education; 2) the barriers that educators and children face in engaging with diversity through
their places; and 3) the opportunities that children’s relationships with place offer to reconceptualize diversity and responsibility in early childhood education.

Is multiculturalism here to stay?

As I have said in Chapters 1 and 2, a growing number of early childhood educators are creating and putting into practice decolonizing pedagogies; however, seemingly, a liberal multicultural approach to diversity persists. While this qualitative study does not allow me to generalize the claim that liberal multiculturalism is the only approach to diversity in BC early childhood education, it sheds light on the pitfalls of such an approach. Despite the critiques and the evidence that my study offers, a multicultural approach to education continues to frame the relationships of respect and responsibility among children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Children’s encounters with diversity through their neighbourhood walks at FRC demonstrate that a liberal multicultural pedagogies approach at that site shut down opportunities to engage with difference and responsibility. The findings showed that teachers were committed to foster in children respect and acknowledgement of everyone’s cultural background. Nevertheless, Indigeneity, while present in the neighbourhood, remained marginalized in how children encountered diversity.

The question that arises is why a multicultural approach to diversity prevails despite its critiques. Before I continue, I would like to clarify that I am aware that critical multicultural education embraces a solid critique of the assimilatory nature of a liberal multicultural approach. By assimilatory nature, I am referring to an approach that privileges discourses and practices of social harmony over histories of racism and exclusions. The critiques I developed in Chapter 2 explain that values of tolerance, inclusion, and even social harmony are rendered as
unproblematic, thereby concealing Indigenous demands for sovereignty and restitution of their lands. The field of critical multicultural education has long challenged the uncritical celebration of diversity.

FRC educators proudly value Canadian multiculturalism through their pedagogical choices which may explain why they may still celebrate uncritical multicultural approaches to diversity. Teachers in the FRC were all first- or second-generation immigrants. For them, the values of tolerance, respect, and acknowledgement of cultural diversity spoke to their own experiences of immigration in a country that offered them better opportunities for their families. As part of my everyday conversations with the educators, I learned about some of their experiences as immigrants in Canada. Three of them shared with me that the critical economic or political situation back home forced them to leave their countries (i.e., two Latin American, and one from Eastern Europe). Their stories put into perspective their appreciation for Canadian multiculturalism.

The language of diversity becomes materialized in most Canadian early learning frameworks (see Langford, 2010) through learning areas for diversity and social responsibility. While the 2019 BC ELF has kept the identities, social responsibility, and diversity learning strand as central for children’s learning, the framework goes one step forward by framing all living inquiries (former learning areas) within the context of colonial legacies. This step extends the focus of curricular and pedagogical practices from the child to the relationships that the children have with the world. This shift offers some opportunities as well as some challenges. While the framework was the result of a participatory and collaborative process in which many educators were involved, it will take some time for all BC educators to become familiar with the new perspectives in the framework just released in 2019. For example, the use of new language
to refer to former learning areas and outcomes as living inquiries and pathways suggests a radical change in the curriculum and pedagogies. In short, the challenge is how to spread the word especially to educators that are out of academic institutions’ reach, usually at the forefront in these curricular and pedagogical innovations. In my own experience as a graduate student, I have been inspired by educators affiliated with the University of British Columbia childcare centre, Simon Fraser University, and Capilano University. I understand that the pedagogical experimentation that emerges from the practices of the educators involved in the new 2019 BC ELF does not represent all BC educators’ experiences. My argument here is that as long as some early childhood educators have not yet adopted a new understanding of diversity and social responsibility, multiculturalism will remain as a big umbrella for what counts as respect and acknowledgement of diversity. A closer look about how multicultural pedagogies get implemented through everyday practices remains as a key contribution of this dissertation.

**Impermeable worlds, enclosed diversity**

As I elaborated in Chapter 5, children’s walks privileged certain places while marginalizing others. Children’s engagement with Indigeneity was repeatedly peripheral and superficial as children were led to appreciate selected icons of their walks such as the train or the blooming trees. Safety practices influenced teachers’ decisions that privileged some encounters with diversity over others. What is important to note here is that through walking, children were learning and embodying particular forms of engagement with the public space of their neighbourhood. They walked over and over through the same circuits. If we think about walking as a practice that leaves a trace in children’s learning, then walking as a repetitive practice offers them an opportunity to develop a deeper perspective of the places they come across (Ruitenber,
Nonetheless, the iteration of the same encounters may inscribe in children’s bodies a particular way of seeing and relating to place that by default excludes others.

The peripheral encounters with Indigeneity through the neighbourhood walk should never be explained only by individual choices. Safety as a boundary-making practice comes from childcare regulations that are reinforced through pre-service and in-service education and parents’ and caregivers’ reasonable concerns about the wellbeing of their children. As I have reiterated throughout this dissertation, my observations indicated that early childhood education routines were implicated in producing children’s relationships with place. The examination of routines allowed me to argue that they were also doing a disservice to children’s understanding and practices of diversity and responsibility. How are educators to promote intimate relationships with place, when place is framed, first and foremost as a source of risk? How are teachers to manage the tensions and even contradictions that arise from controlling and tailoring place for children in ways that separate them from the world?

To answer some of these questions, I would like to draw attention to fear as a disposition to the unknown and as a component of the boundary-making practices that exist in the FRC. Battell and Barker (2015) argue that settler Canadian who are aware of colonial injustices prefer “mild social reforms – fairer elections, economic development, cultural development” (p. 93) because they fear losing their benefits as settlers. My observations led me to think about fear as a boundary-marker. I observed that fear contributes to the production of boundary-making practices at FRC to prevent anything unknown from happening to the children. Part of teachers’ anxiety regarding the preservation of children’s safety can be also interpreted as a fear of what would happen if something changed their routines. Fear, as a way of seeing, is perhaps one of the most difficult barriers to overcome. It is still challenging to give an account of its presence and
the role it plays in early childhood education pedagogies. For example, the anxiety that Mary, the substitute teacher, expressed about reading books with reference to Indigenous people suggests that fear of engaging with Indigeneity may come from lack of pedagogical training and support that would have helped her understand other forms of relating with place. Educators are aware of the incommensurability of the radical differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people which may situate the scope of the task as daunting.

What do the neighbourhood walks offer that might shift those boundary-making practices? Despite efforts to erasure Indigeneity from public space or reducing Indigenous art to only to a cultural manifestation, the presence of Indigenous people and their demands remain in the city. Unlike walks in natural environments, neighbourhood walks in highly urbanized areas can be, not only profoundly pedagogical (Ruitenberg, 2012; Springgay & Truman, 2018), but also a powerful public space intervention. This study has shown that going out for a walk does not guarantee that one is actually out in the world, having an intimate encounter with diversity and Indigeneity. Children were out for walks on a daily basis and they remain closed to what place had to offer. However, going for daily walks can be a necessary condition for learning about a world that cannot be entirely facilitated by the teachers. Learning from what the neighbourhood has to offer means, in other words, shifting practices of marking, bounding, and controlling place (Smith, 2012) in ways that create boundaries between children and places wherever they are. I further comment on this point in the recommendations section.

**Responsibility for current times: From the individual to the collective.**

What might educators need to develop a more attentive relationship with their neighbourhoods? What would help them to bring down the barriers that separate children and the places where
they live? What forms of responsibility can educators pursue to create pedagogies that unsettle colonial places? Shifting our frameworks of reference – those that guide curricular and pedagogical choices – challenges us to think deeply about what it means to be a child and a teacher and the forms of responsibility that are expected from each of them. Through the practices of responsibility in the FRC, I experienced the incommensurability of the task ahead. Aware of the limits, I narrowed down my inquiry to understand what forms of responsibility were privileged in the FRC. I witnessed that an emphasis on individual responsibility for one’s actions is not enough to develop more collective forms of responsibility, including toward place. The cultivation of the responsible child through the prescription of basic rules of conviviality is not only insufficient but also unconducive for other forms of responsibility. Although I do not further develop how responsibility toward place might look, I believe that Haraway’s (2008; 2016) notion of responsibility as care and response can be further explored in future research. Rather than nurturing responsibility through children’s capacity to make individual choices, responsibility in Haraway’s terms is about cultivating their capacity and curiosity toward their surroundings and relationships with the more-than-human world.

A notion of responsibility as care and response challenges us to rethink the understanding of place in education. Belen Curamil’s choice of referring to the sentient nature of place in her speech to the Goldman Prize’s audience – “the land and its elements […] speak, feel, breathe…” makes an important point. Settler colonial meanings of place arguably constitute one of the major differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Marker (2018) proposes that scholars studying place in Salish Coast Territories should be open and receptive of Indigenous perspectives of place, which may be also true for early childhood educators. Along with rethinking the image of the child and the teacher, it is important to create pedagogies that move
away from images of place as fixed, concrete, and passive. Without a shift, educators and researchers risk operating under the colonial assumptions that place is simply a source of extraction for social and economic development. The question that remains is: what would it take for educators and scholars to acknowledge the leadership of Elders, Indigenous scholars, and educators to unlearn our relationships with place? It is common to find claims about social transformation underexamined in educational scholarship and pedagogical practices. In this regard, critical place research seeks transformation by uncovering colonial practices anchored in place. Transformative pedagogies need new voices and leaderships that unsettle long-standing colonial understanding of place. Listening and engaging with Indigenous communities’ projects of social transformation in education may be a first step in becoming responsible toward place.

In addition to the contributions to the place-based knowledge literature this study also offers insights into pedagogies that support children in developing the perspectives and tools to live well with difference in a damaged world. Diversity in educational settings will only increase in the time to come and educators and scholars have to be up to the task. Predictions indicate that the environmental, social, and economic crisis is moving faster than imagined. In this context, keeping the same pedagogies that reinforce human exceptionality and heroism will fail again. This study offers solid reasons for and examples of those failures and opens up spaces for pedagogies that go beyond developmentally appropriate approaches in early childhood education.

**Place-based knowledge.**

This study about children’s relationships with place contributes to place-based knowledge by rethinking pedagogies and rethinking research methodologies. I expand on rethinking pedagogies
in the next section on recommendations. Here I would like to highlight that attention to place allows researchers to think about their positionality differently considering an often-overlooked perspective about their responsibility in proposing certain methodologies. For example, as I developed throughout this dissertation, my position as a settler-immigrant made me think deeply about the methodologies I proposed for this study. The acknowledgement that my previous academic trajectory aligned to a settler colonial understanding of place made me examine the role of place and Indigeneity in traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of Indigenous people in relation to diversity. Moreover, I was driven to account for whether Indigeneity has been silenced through everyday narrative and practices. Place-based knowledge provides educators with important tools to understand not only the history a place and its aesthetic, but most importantly, the configuration of social relationships that have led to ongoing settler colonial practices in early childhood education.

**Considerations and Recommendations**

This qualitative study in one childcare centre in Vancouver aimed to understand how children’s relationships with place contribute to reconceptualizing a notion of diversity and responsibility in early childhood education. While the nature of a qualitative study does not allow me to generalize these findings, I would like to offer some insights and recommendations for early childhood education in the province of British Columbia. These recommendations are based on my reading of the TRC calls to action, the 2019 BC ELF, and the findings of this study.
Building capacity among early childhood educators.

Pre-service and in-service education institutions including universities and colleges play a key role in opening up spaces for new curricular and pedagogical perspectives. It is important to design and offer pre-service and in-service professional development courses and ongoing support to connect children with place differently (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). The case of bullying prevention workshops in Chapter 7 may be useful to illustrate my point. In an effort to work against bullying behaviours in early childhood education and schools, a consistent lineup of workshops is offered to practitioners. Because I strongly believe in commitments toward truth-telling and reconciliation, I think that a systemic effort toward pedagogies against the persistence of colonialism and racism need to be in place.

The TRC Calls for Action call upon all Canadians to building capacity among non-Indigenous people to understand and respect Indigenous history, rights, knowledge, and spirituality. In addition to abandoning an acritical multicultural perspective, it is important to build capacity among early childhood educators to advance in the national commitment toward truth and reconciliation. To build capacity means to engage with the barriers that children come across in their encounters with Indigeneity. Administrators and policy makers have also a role in reviewing policy documents in the context of current commitments toward truth telling by making changes that offer early childhood educators the tools to get on board to such commitments.

Rethinking what it means to be a child in current times.

The barriers that separate children from places work under the assumption that children are innocent. This image of the child has long been challenged for keeping children away from
knowledge that is key in their acknowledgement and respect toward others. Conceptualizing children as innocent and, at the same time, responsible for their own fate impedes the new generations from understanding, and become committed to, the collective challenges that current times impose on them. Understanding children primarily as innocent and responsible for their own fate also conceals a childhood that has had the fortune – fortune that other children have not had – to be privileged enough to avoid experiencing the consequences of environmental disaster, forced displacement, and radical assimilation and cultural genocide.

An examination of the image of child should be done alongside an examination of assumptions underlying early childhood education narratives and practices involving all actors from early childhood educators, families, administrators, and policy makers. For instance, relevant questions to ask are: how are the BC childcare regulations interpreted and applied in childcare centres? Do these regulations impose important limitations for educators to support children’s encounters with diversity? Do the ideas on which the educators based their practices help or constrain their pedagogies for children to connect with place? While these important questions may have case to case responses, they need to be part of teachers’ pre-service education and in-service professional development courses as crucial areas of inquiry.

**Re-thinking pedagogies.**

As I demonstrated throughout this dissertation, pedagogies that focuses on the individual child risk leaving behind more relational and collective pedagogies. To reconnect children with place, it is important to rethink pedagogies so that, instead of enclosing children’s worlds, they are able to open up opportunities to acknowledge the diversity that surrounds them. These pedagogies need to be situated and respond to children’s local places in ways that make collaboration with
others community members possible. Building relationships with Indigenous communities constitute a key piece in these pedagogies since they have the knowledge that children need to relate to place that is not only visual or passive, but also sensorial and participatory. I would like to clarify that building relationships with communities takes time and effort and these two elements must be considered before establishing any intention of collaboration to avoid instrumental relationships with key potential partners.

Walking pedagogies offer space for cultivating children’s respectful and compassionate relationships with place as well as relationships with other children and adults. In addition, walking as a pedagogical approach offers a space of rich complexity where the enclosures of multiculturalism can be noted. Children can learn about diversity and responsibility in ways that restore Indigeneity and challenge legacies of settler colonialism.

**Educating the public.**

As a public scholar, I understand the importance of making academic research accessible to the public, including families, and caregivers. The UBC Public Scholar Initiative that I am part of starts from the premise that the approach to doctorate education has not fundamentally changed, despite the rapid and unstoppable transformations in the world. The problems that society faces will likely continue if academics persist in missing opportunities for public engagement. Early childhood education scholars need to engage with two important public audiences in the province: families and policy-makers. This can be done by diverse forms of collaborative scholarship and innovative forms of scholarly products. One local strategy is engaging with community partners through knowledge mobilization in which the work of educators and children may be disseminated as I did through the photography workshop and exhibit in June.
2017. Knowledge mobilization strategies can be undertaken at different scales, from the local to the provincial level. Engagement with the press and with local authorities or social organizations need to be part of the strategy. Ideas about diversity and responsibility may be deeply engrained in the public as part of Canadian identity. In a context where the commitments toward truth-telling and reconciliation are present in the public conversation, shifting understanding of diversity may be well-received.

**Limitations & Future Work**

A first limitation of this study is methodological. My role as a researcher was never presented to the teachers at the FRC as one in which I would work together with them and contribute insights regarding diversity, social responsibility, and place. Such an arrangement would have involved a more detailed plan of what it would mean for the teachers’ schedule to participate in such a project. When I invited the Centre to participate in this study, I did not make explicit plans to schedule meetings with the educators to keep them updated about my research in the Centre and get their perspectives as a group. Although I did short follow-up meetings and offered them brief handouts with information about my fieldwork, they had time limitations to participate more frequently in meetings with me. Given that I was not a certified early childhood educator, I was not able to help the staff in ways that might have been perceived as more directly useful to them. In regretting not having had more group exchanges with the teachers, I realized that part of this regret came from my inability to provide solid answers to some of the questions I was asked about my fieldwork. Some of these questions included, how did I know that Indigeneity was being silenced or erased from early childhood education narratives and practices? Why did I think that the mural was proof of my argument about overlooking Indigenous past and present
during the children’s neighbourhood walks? Some of these questions led me to try to find those answers in teachers’ intentions and opinions. If I could have collected more data about their perspectives, I would have been better positioned to justify the silences that I was hearing and the absences I was witnessing. Over time, I came to the conclusion that the main limitation was not that I lacked teachers’ perspectives about those silences and absences. After all, having been in the Centre over eight months gave me the time to make such an observation. The main limitation I faced was how I was to account for the silences that I was hearing and the absences I was witnessing. Taking into account place as a lens of analysis requires researchers to create methodologies that account for what we see and hear, but also what we do not – the silences and absences I was referring to.

A second limitation of this study is about language. Battell and Barker (2015) argues that “Indigenous and settlers are not defined by their distances and differences, but rather their relationships to each other and to the land” (p. 17). Their idea resonated with me in the earlier stages of my fieldwork. When I read that Battell and Barker (2015) propose that the term “settler” can be used as an interrogative category, I came to realize that the language I used to refer to settler colonialism in early childhood education, although emerging, was, and continues to be, limited. I wondered, for example, should I use the term settler to refer to children or teachers? What words would help me to extend the definition of place in the context of my research? What vocabulary do I need to use to center the relationships of children and place in ways that capture others’ attention? Is the term settler productive to name Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships in early childhood education settings?

Another limitation of this study is the lack of a richer language to name Indigenous-settler relationships, but it is one that allows future directions for research to be envisioned.
While the term “settler” constitutes an identity marker, it helps to examine the relationships of settler and Indigenous people with the land. I am aware that “settler” is loaded with negative assertions and as such may be perceived as a term that creates division and reinforces binaries (Indigenous/settler) instead of opening possibility to new pedagogies for diversity and responsibility toward place. Nonetheless, as Haraway (2016) puts forward, a new language needs to be created constantly so one can brings analysis and imagination together with the hope to create other relationships and worlds.

This study opens up a number of possibilities for future research. Since this research project took place in only one early childhood centre, it will be interesting in the future to conduct a study on Indigeneity and neighbourhood walks with multiple childcare centres. Such a project should be participatory, namely, in collaboration with early childhood educators and children to define the purpose of the study and how they, as an early childhood education community, can benefit from such a study. Following this study’s suggestion, it would be essential to build relationships with Indigenous educators and Elders who could guide educators, children, and the researchers in terms of relevant research questions. I envision this project opening up opportunities to critically examine ideas about some of the barriers between children and particular places. For example, the project could offer opportunities to work together with teachers and the researcher in examining risk and hazard, so children could encounter diversity in the multiples places that they come across during their neighbourhood walks.

Reconceptualizing Diversity and Responsibility in Early Childhood Education

As I argued throughout my doctoral dissertation, reconceptualizing diversity and responsibility in early childhood education becomes imperative, if we, scholars and educators, aim to shift the
ways we have been living together. “Reconceptualizing” constitutes a difficult endeavour because it starts even before we know what we want to change and why. It starts by questioning the order of things by attending to what seems wrong, incomplete, or inappropriate. During my research, I doubted whether reconceptualizing the understanding of diversity was really what I was aiming for. Now as I come to the end of this dissertation, I realize that reconceptualizing key concepts is an ongoing responsibility. The reconceptualizing movement in early childhood education has challenged for decades ethnocentric perspectives that marginalized children from diverse cultural backgrounds for being considered inferior or “at risk.” Keeping these histories of advocacy in mind, I think that today we are due to the challenge of uncovering settler colonialism in places like Canada as a key framework of reference that excludes those who do not conform with the white, middle class, able bodied ideals, but most importantly, the demands of Indigenous people of sovereignty, restitution of the lands, and truth telling about the legacies of colonialism.

A decade ago, Goodwin, Cheruru, and Genishi (2008) proposed to move away from understanding diversity as a noun to understanding it as a verb – “something to be enacted or expressed, something that is dynamic and agentic” (p. 6). These scholars called for rethinking diversity to resist a climate in the US where the deep social inequalities and a rapid standardization of education at every level continues to assimilate children’s cultural differences. Aware that this project is still needed, this study moves an equity agenda forward by including place relationships in reconceptualizing diversity and responsibility. To include place, educators and scholars need to follow the teachings of Elders, Indigenous scholars, and educators. If we accept their leadership, we may understand and experience what places have to offer.
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Appendices

Appendix A  Consent Form for Parents

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD dissertation: a public document used to satisfy the requirements of the degree in progress. As such, the study’s results will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may be published in journal articles and books.

I. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

The [Name of the Childcare Centre] has agreed to be a site for this study and therefore your child is invited to take part in this research. Childcare centres are of interest for this study because of the importance that the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education, has given to creating more inclusive and diverse environments for young children through the BC Early Learning Framework.

The main purpose of this study is to research how young children aged 3 to 5 learn about social responsibility and diversity in early childhood education environments and how their learning plays a role in their perspectives of themselves and others. Social responsibility and diversity is a learning area included in the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. Learning experiences of social responsibility and diversity include community events where children learn about other cultures and traditions, everyday situations where children can help each other, or children’s participation in the making of inclusive game rules, among many others. In these activities, educators provide children with opportunities to develop their sense of fairness, and to exercise more just responses to more difficult situations, for example, when facing discrimination or exclusion.
We believe that understanding children’s perspectives of themselves and others through learning experiences of social responsibility and diversity enables us to know more about children’s thoughts, feelings, reflections, and experiences of who they are and who they will become. This knowledge may inform pedagogical practices in early childhood education (ECE).

II. WHAT DO CHILDREN DO IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher will visit [name of the childcare centre] three times per week in blocks of three hours over the course of three months starting in the middle of November, 2016. If you consent your child’s participation, the researcher will do the following:

**Observations** of children’s everyday routines, practices, and interactions in the childcare centre or in visits to the neighbourhoods as part of childcare activities. As a former educational practitioner, the researcher is aware of the importance of minimal disruption of everyday childcare routines while she conducts her observations. Her approach is to become a familiar, friendly, and unobtrusive part of the childcare routines. The purpose of these observations is not to assess or evaluate your child’s learning since there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ practices or actions. These observations will not disturb children’s activities and there will not be additional time required for your child to participate in this study.

**Short Interviews with Children:** The researcher will talk with your child in the childcare centre during its hours of operation **three up to five times** during the course of this study. Each interview will last no more than 15 minutes per time. To ease a conversation with your child, the researcher will ask her/him to take pictures of their early childhood education environments with a digital camera provided by the researcher and to draw about their learning or how they perceive themselves and others. The researcher will continuously remind your child there is no obligation for her/him to participate by talking with the researcher, or drawing, or
taking pictures for her. The researcher will also remind them that if they do not want to participate, they can participate anytime later on as they wish. The purpose of these short interviews is not to assess or evaluate your child’s learning. We believe that children’s pictures and drawings will offer rich information about how they learn about social responsibility and diversity in their childcare centre.

Children with special needs or who are not fluent in English will be included in participant observations and interviews. The researcher will accommodate children’s special needs in collaboration with her or his educator. If needed, the educator may be present in some of the interviews to facilitate researcher-child communication. For children who do not speak English, the researcher may ask educators’ assistance for asking children whether they want to participate by drawing or taking pictures. If the assistance of educators is not enough for children to understand the assent process and instructions, the researcher may ask your assistance.

III. STUDY RESULTS

The findings of this study will be reported in a PhD dissertation and may be published as a book chapter or as articles in academic or professional journals about early childhood education, childhood, or related topics. If you would like to know the results of this study, you are welcome to provide your mailing address along with your consent form to send you a copy upon the completion of the project.

IV. HOW WILL POTENTIAL RISKS OF THIS STUDY BE ADDRESSED?

This study does not post any known risk for children other than the ones typically present in the everyday operations of any childcare centre. During the observations, the researcher will not be interacting directly with children, thus this part of the study does not involve foreseeable risks.
During the interviews, as in any conversation, children may have some unpleasant feelings. If that is the case, the researcher will invite the child to close the conversation. The researcher will work to minimize the possibility of discomfort during the interviews by ensuring that she becomes a familiar presence in the Centre. The researcher will, for example, spend time in the Centre (one month) before she starts the short interviews. The researcher will also carry out the interviews in the familiar context of your child’s care centre, and will ask children only open questions related to their everyday, familiar routines and practices. This approach will help the researcher to provide children with a safe environment for them to participate in this study. For those children who have parental permission, the researcher will remind them before each interview that their participation is completely voluntary and that they may choose to participate or not participate any time they want. If under these circumstances, your child has unpleasant feelings, the researcher will have a plan in place in agreement with the centre director to help your child, for example, by using a counselor’s service.

V. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR YOUR CHILD’S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Although this study may not have direct benefits for children who participate in it, they may enjoy taking pictures and drawing about their learning, about themselves, and others. The extra attention your child will receive by the researcher may also have a positive impact on your child’s self-esteem and confidence.

Your child’s participation in this study may also improve the knowledge in the field of early childhood education by contributing their perspectives about how they learn about social responsibility and diversity. We hope that their perspectives about themselves and others help to
expand what we know about children’s perspectives and experiences and enhance pedagogical practices toward more diverse and inclusive classrooms.

VI. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY BE ENSURED IN THIS STUDY?

During observation, the researcher’s note taking will be handwritten using codes (i.e., letters or numbers), previously assigned and not using your child’s name. The interviews with children will be audiotaped. All notes and interviews will be kept on the researchers’ computers, which have password encryption solely for their use. Printed documents like drawings and interviews transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within a UBC facility. The researcher will use these notes, drawing, and pictures mainly for our analysis. In case the researcher uses the pictures for a public presentation, she will use a software program, such as Facepixeler, to anonymize your child’s face.

Children will be given a pseudonym to be used in the PhD dissertation, public presentations, and in any other future publication. Other identifying details such as the name of the childcare centre or information about its location will also be changed as much as possible to avoid possible identification of the centre and the participants involved in this study.

If a child reveals abuse or neglect, the researcher (as other childcare employees) must report the information to appropriate authorities.

VII. REMUNERATION/COMPENSATION

There is no pay involved in this study. This study will require minimal time and no cost to the participants.

VIII. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT OF YOUR HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking you, please contact Dr. Mona Gleason or Claudia Díaz-Díaz. The names and telephone numbers are listed at the top of the first page of this form.

**IX. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**X. PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is your right to choose not to participate. If you let your child to participate, you can withdraw his or her participation any time without giving a reason and without negative consequences for your child’s wellbeing in the centre.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Please, mark one,

____ I consent to my child’s participation in this study

____ I do not consent to my child's participation in this study.
Parent or Guardian Signature  Date

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian signing above

NOTE: Please return this signed consent form to the researcher directly or leave it in the sealed envelope provided by me in the box at the entrance of the childcare.
Appendix B  Consent Form for EC Educators

This research is conducted as part of a PhD dissertation. This research will fulfill the thesis requirement of the researcher’s doctoral degree in the Department of Educational Studies with the University of British Columbia. As such, the results of this study will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may be published in journal articles and books.

Purpose:

A childcare centre is of interest for this study because the importance that the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education, has given to create more inclusive and diverse environments for young children through the BC Early Learning Framework.

The study’s main purpose is to research how young children aged 3 to 5 learn about social responsibility and diversity through their everyday childcare routines and how their learning plays a role in their perspectives about themselves and others. In 2008, the British Columbia Early Learning Framework introduced the ‘social responsibility and diversity’ learning area along with four others, including well-being and belonging, exploration and creativity, and language and literacy. To promote the exercise of social responsibility and respect for diversity, educators are encouraged to expose children through their choices of curriculum and pedagogical practices to learning experiences of social responsibility and diversity. These experiences include community events where children learn about other cultures and traditions; everyday situations where children can help each other; or children’s participation in the making of inclusive game rules, among many others. In these activities, educators provide children with opportunities to develop their sense of fairness, and to exercise more just responses to more difficult situations, for example, when facing discrimination or exclusion.
We believe that understanding children’s learning experiences of social responsibility and diversity enable us to know more about children’s thoughts, feelings, reflections, and experiences of who they are and their perspectives about themselves and others. This knowledge may also inform pedagogical practices in early childhood education (ECE).

**Study Procedures:**

The researcher will visit [name of the childcare centre] three times per week in blocks of three hours over three months, starting in the middle of November, 2016. This project will use three research methods: 1) observations of childcare everyday routines in which children and EC (early childhood) educators participate; 2) short interviews with children by using photographs and drawings; and 3) interviews with EC educators. Interviews with EC educators about childcare’s routines and pedagogical practices will focus on how they understand and implement activities to promote social responsibility and diversity learning.

**Observations:** The researcher will observe childcare everyday routines, practices, and interactions in which children and educators participate. These observations can take place in the childcare centre or during visits in the neighbourhoods as part of childcare activities. As a former educational practitioner, the researcher is aware of the need of minimal disruption of everyday childcare routines while she conducts her observations. The researcher’s approach is to become a familiar, friendly, and unobtrusive part of the childcare routines. These observations will not disturb children’s activities and there will not be additional time required for you to participate in this part of the study. The observations will focus on:

- What are the practices and interactions that take place when children learn about social responsibility and diversity in the childcare centre?
- Where do these practices and interactions take place?
• How do children relate to those everyday places?

• How do children’s relationships with their everyday places refer to their learning about social responsibility and diversity in early childhood education settings?

• How do these practices and interactions along with the places where they occur inform children’s perspectives of themselves and others?

**Short Interviews with Children:** The researcher will talk with children one-to-one, three to five times over the course of this research in the childcare centre. To ease a conversation, the researcher will ask them to take pictures of their early childhood education environments with a camera provided by her and draw about their learning or about their perspectives of themselves and others. The researcher will continuously remind children that there is no obligation for them to participate in the study by talking with the researcher, drawing, or taking pictures for her. The researcher will also remind them that if they do not want to participate, they can participate anytime later they wish so. We believe that children’s pictures and drawings will offer rich information about how they learn about social responsibility and diversity in their childcare centre.

The researcher will talk to the children in the childcare centre during operational hours. These conversations will last no more than 15 minutes each time. The short interviews will focus on:

• What are children’s perspectives of those learning activities about social responsibility and diversity?

• What are children’s thoughts, feelings, and reflections, about themselves and their classmates?
Some sample questions can be: What do you think about the rule of taking turns to use the water table? or can you take a picture of one of your favourite places in your childcare? can you tell me more about why this is your favourite place?

The short interviews are meant to be friendly and fun activities for children to participate in. Both observations and short interviews with children will require consent by children’s parents or guardians.

**Interviews with EC Educators:** The researcher will also hold an interview with you regarding planning and delivering activities to promote social responsibility and diversity learning in the centre. The purpose of the interview is not to assess your pedagogical practices. The interview will help the researcher to better understand how this particular curriculum is implemented in the centre. There will be one interview of 90 minutes as maximum, which may be split in two or three shorter interviews 45 or 30 minutes each respectively. You can determine if you would prefer the interview to run a longer or shorter time depending on your convenience. The interview will be held in the centre. You are welcome to ask for a copy of the transcripts and write-ups of the interview and report any inaccuracy from your point of view before giving your final permission to use them.

**Treatment of Data**

The findings of this study will be anonymized and reported in a PhD dissertation and may be published as a book chapter or as articles in academic or professional journals about early childhood education, childhood, or related topics. If you would like to know the results of this study, you are welcome to provide your mailing address on this consent form to send you a copy upon the completion of the project.
How Will Potential Risks of the Study Be Addressed?

This study does not post any known risk for children and educators other than the ones typically present in the everyday activities of any childcare centre. During the observations, the researcher will not be interacting with children or educators, thus this part of the study does not involve foreseeable risks.

Interviews’ questions will be open and will relate to your everyday routines and activities like planning or implementing learning activities to promote social responsibility and diversity. It is not part of the study to ask questions unrelated to childcare routines and practices. This approach will help the researcher to provide children and educators with a safe environment for them to participate in this study. The participation in the interviews is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw anytime from this study without providing any reasons for it.

Your decision of not participating in this study will not involve by any means negative recourse in terms of your employment or career.

Potential Benefits of the Study:

Although this study may not have direct benefits for children who participate in it, they may enjoy taking pictures and drawing about their learning and perspectives of themselves and others. Also educators may enjoy contributing to early childhood education scholarship with the goal of promoting more diverse, inclusive, and just early childhood education environments through pedagogical practices and policies.

Confidentiality:

The researcher’s note taking will be handwritten using codes (i.e., letters or numbers), previously assigned and not using your name. The interviews with children and educators will be audiotaped. All notes and interviews will be kept on the researcher’s own computer that has
password encryption solely for her use. Printed documents like drawings and interviews transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within a UBC facility. The researcher will use these notes, drawing, and pictures mainly for analysis. In case the researcher uses the pictures for a public presentation, she will use a software program, such as Facepixeler, to anonymize your face.

Children and educators will be given a pseudonym to be used in the PhD dissertation, in any other future publication or public presentations. Other identifying details such as the name of the childcare centre or information about its location will also be changed as much as possible to avoid possible identification of the centre and the participants involved in this study.

If a child reveals abuse or neglect, the researcher (as other childcare employees) must report the information to appropriate authorities.

**Remuneration/Compensation:**

There is no payment involved in this study. This study will require minimal time and no cost to the participants.

**Who Can You Contact If You Have Questions About This Study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Mona Gleason or Claudia Díaz-Díaz. The names and telephone numbers are listed at the top of the first page of this form.

**Who Can You Contact If You Have Any Concern or Complaint About This Study?**

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.
Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is your right to choose not to participate. You can withdraw your participation any time without giving a reason and without negative recourse in terms of your employment or career.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________
EC Educator Signature                          Date

____________________________________________________
Printed Name of EC Educator signing above

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.