THROUGH THE KALEIDOSCOPE: A COMMON WORLDS ATTUNEMENT TO LIVELY CHILD-PLACE RELATIONSHIPS

by

Nancy van Groll

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the thesis entitled:

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Examine Committee:

Dr. Janet Jamieson
Supervisor

Dr. Margot Filipenko
Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Iris Berger
Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Susan Gerofsky
Additional Examiner
Abstract

Contextualizing early childhood pedagogies within the 21st century requires a readjustment of the lens through which early childhood education (ECE) is viewed and enacted. Provoked by Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw’s (2015) statement that “we can no longer afford the illusion of our separateness from the rest of the natural world” (p. 45), this thesis seeks to untangle and re-tangle the complexities of reconfiguring human relationships with(in) the places we inhabit, experience and hold as meaningful. I look to reconceptualize what early childhood pedagogy might look like in the Anthropocene if educators and children attune to our relationships with(in) place. Explorations into the pedagogical possibilities of enacting place-conscious practices are innovative research engagements that make visible ways of living and learning reciprocally in times of climate precarity. A variety of theoretical and epistemological traditions such as developmental and environmental psychology; ecojustice and sustainability initiatives; and postcolonial, feminist and Indigenous research, are critically analyzed in order to deconstruct romanticized and capitalistic assumptions of nature as pedagogical or developmental resource.

Using a narrative methodological approach informed by a common worlds theoretical framework, research was undertaken with four four-year-old children at a forest preschool in British Columbia to surface and assemble rich, detailed and relational insight into place-child relationships. Data were collected using pedagogical narration and conversive wayfinding and analyzed from a lively storytelling approach conceptualized as a spiral of attunement. The stories created and retold offer an opportunity to disrupt artificial nature/culture binaries embedded in ECE practices, to assemble place-conscious pedagogies that resist anthropocentrism, and to reconceptualize methodological approaches to early childhood studies. Opportunities to re-examine the ethical responsibilities of 21st century early childhood educators and to expand common notions of well-
being to be inclusive to more-than-human community members are suggested. Learnings could
ultimately inform early childhood educators while they make pedagogical choices, inspire researchers
to examine similar questions, and motivate policy makers to reconsider what is important in
decision-making in the early years.
Lay Summary

The realities of living and learning in times of climate precarity require educators working with young children to readjust and reconceptualize their approaches to early childhood pedagogy. Using a narrative methodological approach informed by a common worlds theoretical framework, research was undertaken at a forest preschool in coastal British Columbia to surface and assemble rich, detailed and relational insight into child-place relationships. The stories told and retold suggest opportunities to deconstruct and resist romantic and capitalistic assumptions of nature as pedagogical or developmental resource, and present place-conscious pedagogies as a way to resist human exceptionalism. Opportunities to re-examine and respond to ethical complexities of education in 21st century contexts are explored. Learnings from this work could inform early childhood educators while they make pedagogical choices, inspire researchers to pursue similar lines of inquiry, and motivate policy makers to reconsider what is important in decision-making in the early years.
Preface

This thesis is an original and unpublished intellectual product of the author, Nancy van Groll. The research conducted for this study was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia under the certificate number H19-00778.
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Dedication

“I stand
on the sacrifices
of a million women before me
thinking
what can I do
to make this mountain taller
so the women after me
can see farther”
Rupi Kaur, 2017

For my oma Anita and my grandma Nancy, from whom I learned to see the colour in everything
Chapter 1: Introduction

Inspiration

Place is a theoretical construct comprising how a spatial, environmental or geographical entity is experienced and held as meaningful to individuals (Ardoin, 2006; Gufaston, 2001; Jack, 2010; Morgan, 2010; Read, 2007). Despite this seemingly concise consensus, the concept of place is filled with paradoxes that make it both highly daunting to approach in academic work, but also incredibly fascinating and ripe for exploration in the field of early childhood education (ECE). To begin, I offer a series of paradoxical provocations by Greenwood (2016), a scholar, activist and educator whose research critically analyzes place:

1) Places are complex, and places are simple.

2) There is, after all, no such thing as a place, and likewise, there is really no such thing as the world—[that is, only way to understand the world is through places, but place can never be separate from the world].

3) Places are a meeting ground; places are contested ground.

4) Places are fundamentally ecological, and yes, places are fundamentally cultural.

5) To live more gently and sustainably on the earth and with each other, our places need to be reinhabited, reimagined. Yet, in order to reinhabit places without reinscribing damaging cultural patterns, places also need to be decolonized. Historical wrongs need to be reacknowledged, reconciled, healed.

6) Places can be thought about, intellectually, on a lot of different levels. While we can think analytically about place, places offer us something different: the experience of being wholly alive in this world. (p. 11)

At the core of what Greenwood is describing is an acknowledgment of the complexity and possibility of paying attention to place. His words call for the necessity of learning to pay attention to the places that are in and outside of us in order to become awakened to the rich relationships we build with place. To Greenwood, place is the meeting point between the past and the future and full
of rich implication for curriculum when we learn how we pay attention to our place, and what we pay attention to within it (or what we ignore). He conveys how a theoretical construct such as place is “lived as nuance and contradiction in everyday life, especially when we open to the experience of others, human and more-than-human” (p. 10). The ‘more-than-human’ community to which Greenwood refers is a phrase coined by Abram (1996) as a way to refer to plants, animals and natural earthly elements. Greenwood’s work has served as an impetus for me as I have become more and more sensitive to the nuance of place, and his statements have refined the questions that I continually grappled with throughout my graduate research.

I write the majority of this work sitting inside the second largest academic research library in Canada – a self-described “place of mind.” What strikes me, though, since the day I first stepped foot in the University of British Columbia (UBC), was how the campus seemed to have a striking sense of self—a sense of place. Though UBC is abundant with dedicated and fascinating minds challenging the boundaries of their academic fields, it is not wholly their presence that inspires me to want to work and learn here. Each time I look out a classroom window to the view of the looming, majestic mountains of the North Shore, hear the incessant squawks of seagulls interrupting the resounding silence of the Irving K. Barber Library, or feel the breeze of the ocean wind through the trees of Pacific Spirit Park, I am met with a sense of familiarity and belonging. It is as if each visual, physical or sensory clue to where I am signals to me that I am welcome and supported, that I am on the right path, and where I am supposed to be. This overwhelming sense of place has pushed itself to the forefront of my mind and characterized much of my work and thinking. It is almost as if each paper I have submitted has been scented with fir, has had cherry blossoms pressed between the pages and has been spritzed with ocean salt. My memories of important theorists, research and policy are framed by the rain, or intermittent lack thereof.
Though it feels like I have just awoken to this sense of place, due to the overwhelming presence and beauty of the West Coast, if I think back to my earliest memories of school in Toronto, I can remember in vivid detail the sound of parachute-like maple leaves tapping the window when my Grade 1 teacher sharply corrected the way I held my pencil. I remember the slope of the ravine that surrounded my middle school, and the butterflies in my stomach as my classmates and I trudged up it, toboggans clenched in our hands as we took in the sights of the first sparkling snowfall. I remember what it felt like each time a field trip took my class outside of our neighbourhood and we adjusted our idea of home to include the excitement of riding the ferry, the way people looked like ants from the high vantage point of the CN tower, or the astounding abundance of squirrels who nested in High Park. I now notice how prevalent place was in my childhood, and how I felt a sense of security and warmth in the places I knew best with the people I loved, trusted and respected.

It is with a recognition and appreciation of my own experience awakening to place that I have become curious about the role of place in young children’s lives, particularly the ways in which a reciprocal child-place relationship might mediate childhood well-being and belonging. The spark behind this curiosity began in my final year of my undergraduate degree in ECE, when I travelled to Northern Canada to complete an internship at a child development centre. It was further fueled by a summer institute that I attended based out of the Peruvian high Amazon. Both experiences broadened my understanding of education and the necessity of adapting what and how young children learn in order to fit the contexts in which they live and interact. Further, each context represented a radically different approach to education: my internship at the child development centre revealed the intersection of ECE, developmental psychology and Western medicine. My experiences in Peru, on the other hand, illuminated the importance of respectfully and reciprocally
resurfacing Indigenous ontologies and the interconnection of people, place, plants and animals as part of what informs and enriches ECE practice. As Greenwood (2016) so pointedly remarked,

_We all carry our places within us, and it’s not a single image, but more like a mandala, a colourful cosmology of our relationships with other people and places, a cosmology of our relationships with ourselves. How we pay attention, and what we pay attention to, depends a lot on what’s in our mandala._ (p. 16)

Greenwood recognized the sociological theory of Richardson (1990), which asserts that people make sense of their lives through the stories they encounter—each experience is fit into the existing narrative of their lives that is available to them. In a sense, people live by stories and storytelling. Greenwood posited that people make sense of places through a mandala of the narratives they have created for themselves: “place is where our mandalas come imperfectly together” (p. 16).

My mandala is a vibrant cosmology of the ocean lapping at the mountains of Vancouver, the imposing concrete jungle of Toronto, the calming blue waters and twisted trees of Georgian Bay, the energizing midnight sun of Whitehorse and the lush, living rainforest of Llamas. It has been shaped by the people who I learned from and with, and coloured by the person I became through my relationships with the human and more-than-human world. My mandala contains aspects of my experiences as an early childhood educator, which were originally contextualized within Western developmentalist paradigms and modernist assumptions about knowledge, but are now clarified with a hesitation towards orienting myself fully within that framework. My mandala now contains reconceptualist discourses of childhood led by critical, feminist and postmodern scholars who have opened my pedagogical mind to the possibilities of being well with and in place. It is heavily weighted by the intensifying ecological changes all earth-bound beings encounter on a daily basis in the age of Anthropocene, whereby human activities have become so pervasive and profound they rival the great forces of nature (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007). My mandala has been affected by growing uncertainties regarding how livable this planet will be if we do not respond to the current
crisis. It is further contextualized by an acknowledgement that despite rising literacy rates and math achievement scores, young children in British Columbia (BC) are increasingly socially and emotionally vulnerable and the use of mental health services for children is rising (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2019; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2015). I wonder how to respond to these seemingly unrelated concerns, and have found that my mandala now calls for a critical reconfiguration of what we consider being and living well. Could place be an impetus? If so, exploring child-place relationships and their nuance in the context of early childhood pedagogy is necessary. How young children make meaning, create narratives and build relationships with(in) place might have important implications for practice, policy and future research.

**Theoretical Orientations**

In keeping with Greenwood’s (2016) provocation to make sense of experience through stories, this thesis employs a narrative approach in order to make meaning of child-place relationships. In a detailed critical review of the literature, I will describe the evolution of place-conscious pedagogy within early childhood contexts. Supporting reciprocal child-place relationships through place-conscious early childhood practices is an emerging area of research that draws inspiration from a variety of theoretical and epistemological traditions. Developmental and environmental psychologists look to the theory of place attachment and biophilia in advocating for place-conscious practices, asserting the parallels and similar importance of developing attachments between humans and places (Chalwa, 1992, 2007; Jack, 2010; Low & Altman, 1992; Scannel & Gifford, 2010; Spencer, 2010). Further, environmental theorists researching ecojustice and sustainability view place-conscious practice as opportunities to encourage environmental stewardship and responsibility. Indeed, many nature-based early childhood programs looking to ‘green’ early childhood education have proliferated (Ardoin, 2006; Duhn, 2012; Somerville, 2013).
It is a challenge to contend with the weight of the assumptions of truth developmental psychologists, educators and researchers have asserted. Due to the ways in which societies and systems privilege Eurocentric knowledge systems, who and what is included in early learning environments is very much oriented within a modernist paradigm of childhood. From this lens, childhood and learning are seen as universal processes that can be standardized and applied to any context. However, there have been recent explorations by contemporary scholars such as Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999), Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007), and Blaise, Hamm, and Iorio (2017) who resist objective notions of childhood. They experiment by contextualizing childhood within the thinking that within society and the world at large, truths are connected, subjective and exist in multiplicities.

Finally, postcolonial, feminist and Indigenous researchers view place pedagogy as a way to unsettle, disrupt and reconceptualize inclusion in ECE (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Nxumalo, 2018; Nxumalo & Cedilo, 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Taylor, 2013; Taylor & Guigni, 2013). Learning to be with(in) the natural environment resonates as one of the most important aspects of educating children of today and of the future, particularly when taking into account the intensifying ecological changes affecting Earth. The ways 21st century children are grappling with climate-related challenges are unprecedented. In 2019, global youth in 228 countries have begun ‘striking for future’ to protest the lack of action on the climate crisis (Fridays for Future, 2020). How we got to now is complex and characterized by a historical and systemic conceptual separation of humans from nature. As Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) stated, “we can no longer afford the illusion of our separateness from the rest of the natural world, and so educators and young children must rethink our understandings of our responsibilities in the common world we share with other living beings” (p. 145).
In addition to Greenwood’s (2016) paradoxes, this thesis draws theoretical and practical inspiration from the work of the Common Worlds Research Collective (2019), a group of researchers who position themselves within a ‘common worlds’ approach that avoids the divisive disconnect that is often drawn between human societies and natural environments. The Collective draws from a conceptual framework developed by Taylor and Giugni (2012) that focuses on the ethics and politics of living together in a ‘common world’ (Latour, 2004), one that is inhabited not only by humans of diverse cultures and backgrounds, but also by more-than-humans. The framework resists anthropocentric, or human-centred, approaches to place-conscious practices and encourages early childhood educators to grapple with the complexity and challenge of the reality of living and learning in an ecologically damaged world.

Positionality

In order to contextualize and situate the work that follows, it is essential that I make visible my positionality and locate myself and my thinking within existing research, practice and policy in early childhoods. I approach early childhood education as a political and ethical act, responsive to and with current and historical contexts and visions of the child and childhood (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Over the years, my work as an early childhood educator has been immersed within dominant discourses of modernity and developmentalism. In my undergraduate degree in Ontario, focus and attention were made to universalized developmental milestones, assessment practices and standardization of curriculum. Amongst the endless assessment tools and Ontario curriculum standards, I felt a jarring lack of attention to both educators’ and children’s well-being and relationality. Educators I knew were often leaving the field due to burn-out, and I noticed inconsistent approaches to discussing emotions, feelings or relationships. I began to become curious about the possibilities of being well through social and emotional learning tools such as mindfulness, meditation practices and other self-regulation tools. This curiosity initiated my graduate work and a
physical move to British Columbia from Ontario. In the beginning of my program, I thoroughly engaged with research regarding young children and early childhood educators’ well-being. However, I began to realize how social and emotional learning tools are located within an individualist paradigm. Questions about why collective notions of wellness and relationality are absent in North American contexts and what it means to be well together began to percolate.

A field school in the Peruvian Amazon, focused on ecopedagogies, introduced me to the ways in which current educational systems are embedded within a neoliberal, neocolonial and globalized milieu that has so pointedly separated humans from nature. Centuries of agricultural, industrial and technological revolutions have entrenched in Western European societies a binary between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘human’ (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nxumalo, 2015). My time in Peru encouraged me to pay attention to the cognitive dissonance of human exceptionalism and the resulting disconnection of humans from ‘natural’ environments. Threading the ways this individualistic disconnection has resulted in colonialism, legacies of environmental commodification, and neoliberal and capitalistic value systems has been fundamental in heralding a shift in my thinking and in my positionality as a researcher. I became curious about paying attention pedagogically to and with place. What might happen if educators and children chose to pay attention differently? To recognize how the world affects us – even as we affect it (Taylor, 2013)?

I now see vibrant possibilities for being and living well with(in) place. In reorienting myself within the thinking that humans and nature are one, my drive to get to know the ways in which being and living well is situated within a collective, living community rather than in the individual. The work that follows is an activation of my positionality in what Haraway (2016) calls responsibility, the cultivation of collective knowing and doing in response to local and situated contexts.
The Study

My intricate mandala, and the many questions, curiosities and wonderings that have composed it have led me to explore the topic of child-place relationships and ECE enacted with(in) place. Despite the rich insight postcolonial, feminist and Indigenous place-conscious researchers bring to the field of education, there still exists a dearth of understanding of what place-conscious pedagogies might look like when enacted in early learning environments. The BC Early Learning Framework (2019) notably mentions the cultivation of a sense of place as fundamental for children’s well-being and belonging, and I wonder if connections or disconnections with place might have implications for the aforementioned ‘vulnerabilities’ of young children in the province.

By exploring the pedagogical possibilities of enacting place-conscious practices, there may be opportunity to make visible reconceptualized ways of living and learning in Anthropocene. What might happen if educators and children attune to more-than-human worlds and reconfigure their relationships with place? Learning more about child-place relationships could inform early childhood educators while they make pedagogical choices, inspire other researchers to examine similar questions, and motivate policy makers to reconsider what is important in the creation of an ECE framework. Furthermore, framing this inquiry through a common worlds theoretical framework may facilitate consideration of the ethical complexities of living and learning in times of climate precarity. The purpose of this thesis is to attune to, surface and assemble rich, detailed and relational insight into the possibilities of place-conscious pedagogies by paying attention to place-child relationships.

The research will be guided by the following questions:

- From a common worlds perspective, how are child-place relationships enacted?
- In what ways do more-than-human community members engage children in building relationships with(in) place in ECE settings?
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Overview

This chapter outlines current literature related to place-conscious pedagogy and its inclusion within ECE programs in British Columbia (BC). First, the theoretical roots of ECE will be explored, with a focus on how the field grew out of a modernist, developmental paradigm. Next, a review of current research will be conducted, looking to reconceptualize ECE theory in a challenge to developmental assumptions of childhood. In particular, place-conscious pedagogy will then be introduced as a way to reorient pedagogies to 21st century contexts. Challenges and paradoxes to a place-conscious pedagogical approach related to the pairing of place-based and environmental education will then be explored. Finally, inclusive place-conscious pedagogy enacted in early learning environments from a common worlds theoretical framework will be considered as a possibility for being and living well with(in) human and more-than-human communities.

In order to situate the field of ECE in its modern-day context, it is pertinent to look back at the influences from which it was shaped. ECE is unique within the field of education in that its history is largely intertwined with not only shifting ideals on childrearing, but also with the transformative and polarizing political and socio-economical atmosphere at the helm of steering the way we as a society live, work and learn globally. Education for children before they enter the school system resides in a grey area unregulated by coherent national policy and structure and organized by a patchwork of agencies and organizations that are motivated by differing agendas or rationales. Important to note, and one of the most problematic issues underlying the field today, is that child care (what we now interpret as formalized educational/care structures for children who have not yet entered the provincially mandated school system encompassing Kindergarten to Grade 12) and child study (the academic study of child development, psychology and education) have
predominantly grown in silos, creating a complicated barrier of translating theory to practice.

Though the two fields have merged into what is now known as early childhood education, there remains a disconnect that forms a grey area, open to multiple interpretations of the purpose of the field. Is it to care for children, to support their health and well-being, to prepare children for their transition to school, or solely to provide parents with more opportunity to participate in the workforce? Or is it something else entirely?

**ECE Policy in BC: Recent Initiatives**

In 2008, the Ministry of Education of BC consulted with practitioners, researchers and other stakeholders in the field of ECE to create the first version of the BC Early Learning Framework. The document was intended to be used as a resource for early childhood educators, service providers and governments in their provision of rich early learning experiences for children aged birth to five years old. In 2018, a draft revised document was prepared for the public, to accommodate and be inclusive of the new realities of the social, political and economic contexts of the province. Despite this revision, the language and direction guiding the original framework has undoubtedly had implications on the pedagogical approaches of the professionals who have looked to it as a resource for the past 10 years. The 2008 document defined well-being and belonging as both outcomes and processes that facilitate children’s embodiment of their “capacities as family members, friends, thinkers, citizens, and discover their connections to the natural environment” (p. 18). According to the framework, as children gained confidence, agency, and mastery over their bodies and routines, they began to cultivate a *sense of place*, or the “feeling of being grounded in their immediate environment, their communities, their culture and the wider world” (p. 18). Despite a defined recognition of importance within the document, there was a vague conceptualization of what well-being and belonging are and how they could be promoted in early learning environments. For each area of early learning described, the framework suggested considerations for practitioners.
as they reflected on their practice. Considerations pertaining to the area of well-being and belonging were characterized by the observable emotional, physical and cognitive health of children. The framework asserted these outcomes to be attainable through careful cultivation of secure relationships, modeling of healthy active lifestyles and cognitive stimulation intended to both enhance learning as well as self-regulative behaviours (BC Ministry of Education, 2008). To those who used the document, for the past 10 years, there has been an underlying implication that if children felt safe and secure, mirrored the healthy active lifestyles of the adults around them and were cognitively stimulated, they would thrive and arrive at an objective definition of being, learning, and living well.

The 2019 version of the BC Early Learning Framework, by contrast, expanded the focus from children aged birth-5 years to include children aged birth-8 years, aiming to connect the “pre” school age groups with children in the elementary years. A noticeable shift in the framework is how the creators envisioned learning and being as a holistic, inclusive process that occurs relationally through relationships with others, ideas, materials, places and histories. Further, rather than suggesting considerations for practice, the revised document “carries the hope of inspiring and supporting the creation of rich, joyful early childhood spaces where children, adults, ideas, and materials come together, and where knowledge is constructed about learning and living in ways that are local, inclusive, ethical and democratic” (BC Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 11). The framework articulates aims to resist Eurocentric and exclusive language, concepts, and pedagogies, and intends to contribute to reconciliation by honouring Indigenous agency, authority and self-determination in education. The revised framework represents a necessary paradigm shift for users, a shift that might be challenging for some practitioners to accommodate, particularly those whose approach to well-being was engrained within a developmental focus. To better articulate the context necessitating the
paradigm shift in the framework, the history and shifting ideals in ECE will be explored in the following sections.

**Developmental Roots of ECE**

The field of ECE has long been entrenched with tendencies to rely on objective measures of childhood, children and learning. Dominant societal discourse and ideology regarding young children’s lives, development and education is historically grounded within Western epistemology and ontology. In fact, research in ECE began in the early 1900s by psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and Arnold Gesell, both of whom conducted empirical studies seeking to advance children’s physical, mental and moral well-being and establish a normative chronological order of development (Brehony, 2009; Follari, 2010). Their work laid the foundations for a positivistic science of education which influenced many theorists such as Piaget (1969, 1973), Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1994, 2005a, 2005b).

The impacts of developmental psychology are far reaching in early childhood practice and research. For example, ECE centres with an emphasis on active explorations of materials such as building blocks, puzzles, and drawing pull theoretical inspiration from Piaget’s primary value of children’s active engagement with materials in order to develop cognitive understandings. Further, when applied to early learning environments, Vygotsky’s contributions translate to educators’ practice of scaffolding, whereby they meet children in their ‘abilities’, while slightly pushing them further within their developmental zone. Finally, Bronfenbrenner’s ideas have influenced educators to begin to view parents as supportive collaborators in learning, as well as to recognize how the home, culture and society impact children’s experiences of early learning environments.

**Current Understandings of Early Learning Experiences**

The effects of developmental psychology reach beyond the confines of early learning environments. Based on the collective work of the theorists mentioned previously, over the past
century formalized early childhood programs have become the subject of intense public interest and scrutiny (Prochner & Howe, 2000). In recent years, a proliferation of research has highlighted the importance of quality early learning experiences in children’s lives. Experts in education, neuroscience, developmental and social psychology have concluded that quality early childhood experiences set a foundation for lifelong learning, well-being and health (Mashburn et al., 2008; Pascal, 2009; Schweinhart, et al. 2005; Shanker, 2014; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The early years are now positioned as critical periods of life and posited to be ‘protective’ against possible negative effects of life experiences such as poverty, ill health and unstable relationships. ECE and provision of childcare have moved from a government or charitable targeted investment in services for children who were at risk to a more widespread and government-regulated system (Gomez, 2016; Prochner & Howe, 2000). Over the past 30 years, with the combined rise of women in the workplace and an increased pressure on the education system to produce economically contributing citizens, preschools and early learning centres have proliferated. Politicians, businesses and economists have begun to advocate for quality ECE as a means to secure future economic and social payoffs (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; McTavish, 2012; Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006; Prentice, 2009). Frameworks similar to the BC Early Learning Framework (2008; 2019) have been established across Canada in a push to regulate and standardize ECE curricula.

Reconceptualist Movement

In the midst of this rising pressure to create and invest in quality early learning environments, researchers and educators in the field of ECE have begun to challenge long-held assumptions of childhood and the prevalence of child psychology and developmental theories within the field (Blaise et al., 2017; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008). They problematized the dominant developmental discourse of ECE in
terms of how best to educate young children in ways that assume a natural and universal order of
growth and learning. Much of the research contributing to this viewpoint was gathered through
experiments conducted on children from a modernist perspective that sought to separate and clarify,
employing a positivistic and empirical analytic paradigm, rather than holistically understand or relate
to children (Dahlberg et al., 1999). The reconceptualist movement advocated for alternative
approaches in the field of ECE that leave room for complexity and subjective realities. The
movement built on and moved beyond social constructivism, shifting the focus to the reciprocal
relationships, a multiplicity of perspectives in understanding children and the effects these
understandings have on children’s lives (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008).

Similarly, recent research regarding well-being and belonging has argued for the inclusion of
subjective experiences within the literature. Though there is a dearth of literature looking at young
children’s well-being and belonging, current researchers are instrumental in creating a precedent for
future work and exploration. For example, Mashford-Scott, Church, and Taylor (2012) highlighted
the tensions between the developmental dimensions of well-being that are often noted within early
childhood settings and the actual processes of feeling or being “well.” They recognized that well-
being is often associated with social and emotional skills, and advocated for the inclusion of
children’s perspectives in order to understand how children experience being well in the present. By
way of further example, Wastell and Degotardi (2017) recently investigated what belonging means to
children between the ages of three and five years. Their work acknowledged the importance of
people, agency, place and inclusion in children’s sense of well-being and belonging and confirmed
that young children are capable of conceptualizing and expressing their experiences. Both studies
recognized the interconnection of people, places and relationships in living or being well and
advocated for the exploration of the subjective experiences of children’s well-being outside the
confines of developmental and modernist dialogues.
Place-Based Pedagogies

Environmental and place-based early childhood programs have seen a rise in popularity in recent years due to a proliferation of research on the benefits of learning in nature for young children’s well-being and development (Kellert, 2005; Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Plotkin, 2008; Wilson, 1984), coupled with a recognition that children’s natural outdoor play experiences are becoming increasingly limited (Dowdell, Gray, & Malone, 2011; Louv, 2005; Malone, 2007). Though much attention has been sustained in the field of ECE on the importance of children’s interactions and relationships with objects (Piaget) and people (Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner), there has been only recently an interest in how children relate to place. As mentioned previously, ‘place’ is a theoretical construct comprising how a spatial, environmental or geographical entity is experienced and held as meaningful to individuals, communities and cultures (Ardoin, 2006; Gufaston, 2001; Jack, 2010; Morgan, 2010; Read, 2007). It has been studied through a variety of lenses and theoretical frameworks, such as geography, cultural anthropology, architecture, psychology, human development and education.

Place, while often discussed within the context of environmental education, has only recently begun to appear in Western literature weighing the relevance of place to pedagogy (Somerville, 2010; Stevenson, 2008; Tuck & McKenzie, 2008). Place-conscious pedagogies are rooted in local communities, environments, relationships and lived experiences (Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2005). These pedagogies are advocated for by three main groups of thought: developmental and environmental psychologists (Chalwa, 1992, 2007; Jack, 2010; Scannel & Gifford, 2010; Spencer, 2010); advocates of ecojustice and sustainability, who seek to encourage environmental stewardship and responsibility in young children (Ardion, 2006; Duhn, 2012; Somerville, 2013); and advocates of inclusive, postcolonial disruption of the educational norm (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Nxumalo, 2018; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Somerville, 2013; Taylor, 2013; Taylor
& Giugni, 2012). By grounding learning in place, children are encouraged to explore and feel a connection with their environment, as well as with the community of humans and more-than-humans that inhabit the Earth. Children learn about things that they can experience and with which they can tangibly interact, as well as the histories, purposes and meanings behind everyday objects in natural and built environments.

**Developmental Benefits of Nature**

Contemporary arguments for the re-integration of humans with natural, or non-artificial, environments for the purposes of supporting well-being and development have risen out of an acknowledgement of the dominance of technological activities, increasingly urbanized development and noticeably risk-averse society (Dowdell, Gray, & Malone, 2011; Kellert, 2005; Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Louv, 2005; Malone, 2007; Plotkin, 2008; Somerville & Williams, 2015; Wilson, 1984). For example, the theory of *Biophilia*, coined by Wilson (1984), articulates the innate human disposition to seek interactions with nature, as well as the dangers of an increasingly urbanized world. Researchers looking to the cognitive benefits of early contact with nature cite children’s improved reasoning, observation skills, creativity and concentration when they have spent time in a natural environment as strong motivations to bring children back to natural settings in their play (Pyle, 2002; Taylor, 2001, 2002). Furthermore, Stress Recovery Theory suggests that through the history of human evolution, interactions with a non-threatening natural environment automatically elicit a calming parasympathetic response (Ulrich et al., 1991). Consistent with this, a rise in “green” spaces in the treatment for disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, anxiety and depression have been noted in academic literature (Beute & de Kort, 2018; Kjellgren & Buhrkall, 2010; van den Berg & van den Berg, 2010).
Geographers and environmental psychologists have begun to investigate the emotional and cultural bonds humans share with natural or constructed settings (Gufaston, 2001; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Low & Altman, 1992; Morgan, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). After some discussion and contradiction among academics, a consensus has begun to form around the conceptualization of the relationships between people and places as a process called ‘place attachment.’ Place attachment subsumes a variety of similar ideas, including topophilia, place identity, sense of place, or rootedness and environmental embeddedness (Low & Altman, 1992). Though definitions of the concept vary depending on the field within which it is discussed, in general, place attachment is defined as an affective, cognitive and behavioural bond between people and specific places (Gufaston, 2001; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

Place attachment draws parallels and theoretical inspiration from human attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and elaborated on by Ainsworth and Bell (1970). Human attachment theory is developmental and modernist in its assumptions of an organized system of attachment (secure, insecure or disorganized); however, place attachment holds promise for reconceptualization in that it is not entirely anthropocentric, is highly relational, is highly flexible and is malleable to myriad contexts. That is, place attachment pushes beyond the idea of human-like attachment being possible only to other humans, thus opening up multiplicities of possibility for attachment to many aspects of the more-than human world.

Environmental psychologists Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) described a terminological and conceptual confusion limiting advances in researching place attachment, due to a variety of definitions used to explain similar concepts but focusing on different aspects. These researchers decided to conceptualize place attachment in relation to the main characteristics of human attachment: the desire to maintain closeness to the object of the attachment (Ainsworth & Bell,
Hidalgo and Hernandez recognized some of the flexibility and malleability of place attachment mentioned previously, namely the fact that the places people can be attached to vary in scale, specificity and tangibility. They hypothesized that humans can be attached to places very small (i.e., objects), more broadly to the nation in which they are born, and even more broadly to the planet Earth or to the universe itself. The work of Hidalgo and Hernandez, which is mostly quantitative, revealed that place attachment does, in fact, develop in different degrees towards places in varying spatial ranges.

Morgan (2010) recognized the lack of dialogue between developmental psychology and environmental psychology as a barrier in creating a coherent and systematic theory of place attachment. His qualitative study of adult remembrance of childhood place experience emphasizes parallels between the developmental processes of human and place attachment. His findings begin to shed light on human attachment theory’s lack of attention to place as an integral and interactive presence within children’s formation of secure attachments. This work, although situated within environmental psychology, does have value in the field of ECE, in that it describes a plethora of possibilities for developing a sense of place and a feeling of belonging to a place in a way that somewhat mirrors Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of development. To Bronfenbrenner, development occurs through interactions between children and their immediate, everyday relationships and environment (Robson, 2013). A theory of place attachment expands on the traditional developmental model of attachment, leaving room for sociocultural context as well as individual and collective diversity and difference.

Scannell and Gifford (2010) established a tripartite model of place attachment, proposing that place attachment is a multifaceted concept with dimensions related to person, psychological processes and place. The person dimension describes place attachment at both the individual and collective level, or how place attachment can contribute to a stability in the sense of self, as well as
emphasize community connection. The psychological process dimension describes how individuals and groups relate to place through affect, cognition and behaviour. Finally, the place dimension describes the social and physical levels of place attachment, in the sense of what it is about a certain place to which people connect. Moreover, the authors described the functionality of place attachment from the lens of survival and security, goal support and temporal or personal continuity. Their writings are intended to clarify and refine a framework for understanding place attachment, in order to establish a level of consistency in place attachment research. Though writing from an anthropocentric lens, this model is beneficial to ECE in that it recognizes the deep connections between people and places, and establishes an interdisciplinary dialogue enabling discussions about place and well-being.

Calls for interdisciplinary dialogues of place attachment and sense of place are resounding (Chalwa, 2007; Morgan, 2010; Spencer, 2010). Despite the fact that place attachment literature is at a nascent stage within environmental and developmental psychology, it is beginning to be considered seriously within educational research. For example, Chalwa (2007) described how ecological care in the early years, coupled with a secure attachment to an environmentally conscious adult, can have possibility for an early cultivation of care and concern for the natural world in adulthood. Spencer (2010) further asserted the value of children’s explorations of their local environments and communities in developing a sense of self, sense of community and a sense of citizenship in the wider social world. He encouraged researchers to look outside the confines of their immediate subject areas and specific disciplines in order to synthesize and generate knowledge on the topic of place in relation to children’s learning and well-being.

Researchers such as Derr (2012) and Bartos (2013) have conducted qualitative investigations into how children experience place, and the attachments they feel to their environments. Derr (2012) conducted exploratory ethnographic research into children’s place experiences and the factors that
contribute to children’s sense of place in their communities, which ranged from rural to urban in New Mexico. Derr focused on children in middle childhood, or aged 9-11 years. Findings suggest when a child experiences nature, culture and family as an “interwoven entity,” their connections and attachments to place, as well as to people, become strong and meaningful (p. 135). Bartos (2013) built on feminist and humanistic frameworks in conducting her ethnographic study with children aged 9-11 years in rural New Zealand. Her research investigated the social and ‘natural’ dimensions of children’s sense of place, using photography-based methods in conjunction with other techniques that acknowledge children’s sense of agency and unique ways of communicating and representing their thoughts and feelings. She argued that children identify with and emphasize special places within their everyday environments through sensory engagement. Findings from the children’s photo journals included both positive and negative emotional responses, suggesting that childhood emotional attachment to place is not straightforward, uncomplicated or unproblematic. Finally, Bartos asserted the importance of investigating emotional sensations embodied in place, and how these contribute to a holistic sense of self, the body and the environment. Overall, the connections between place attachment and well-being are clear, but in light of the disconnect between many disciplines studying the topic, and the lack of research conducted with children in the early years of life, there is much work and research to be done to further understand how place can foster a sense of well-being and belonging in young children.

**Greening ECE: Critiques**

*Connection to Nature*

In Somerville and William’s (2015) review of sustainability education in the field of ECE, three major categories of theoretical orientation were found to describe the majority of the literature: *connection to nature, children’s rights and post-human frameworks*. Articles categorized by *connection to nature* discourse were informed by a desire to connect children to the natural world and to teach them
conservational values. Although these articles described learning that is embedded in local places, they drew on Wilson’s (1984) *biophilia* theory and emphasized Louv’s (2005) ‘nature deficit disorder.’ Both ideas emphasized the belief that children and communities have become disconnected from nature and lack oneness with the natural environment. A drive to resituate ECE in nature, or to “green” ECE practices, recalls a romanticized and Eurocentric notion of childhood dating back to the time of Rousseau. Despite the best parallel intentions of green ECE programs and dialogues of environmental stewardship, such initiatives can be limited by an assertion of a nature/culture binary. According to Nxumalo and Cedillo (2017), in many popular nature-based educational settings, “(human)children and (nonhuman)nature are separate and the focus is on anthropocentric child-centred developmental learning “about” the nonhuman environment” (p. 101).

For example, researchers Chan, Choy, and Lee (2009) advocated for the use of ECE as a cornerstone of sustainable development. In their work, they explored how the Chinese value of “He” or Harmony can be embraced in early childhood settings, as it views students as a “catalyst for change” (p. 41). Chan et al. described a case study of an international education institute that provided early learning opportunities to children. Teachers at the institute approached a “harmonious relationship between human and nature” by focusing on raising children’s awareness of environmental sustainability (p. 41). The article emphasized anthropocentric attitudes toward how a polluted, damaged ecosystem affects humans. Further, it positioned learning “about” nature for the gain of humans, asserting the importance of learning to live sustainably, or harmoniously at a young age. Although living harmoniously with nature is a step away from anthropocentrism, the project nevertheless embodied a limiting nature/culture binary that emphasized moving towards an idealized ‘harmony’, rather than recognizing the existing interaction of humans and more-than-humans on Earth.
In another example of connection to nature discourse, in her participatory action research study of two early childhood centres in New Zealand, Prince (2010) examined how values of sustainable living can be instilled at an early age through curriculum-based learning experiences and modelling by adults. Most of the work highlighted an anthropocentric approach to greening early childhood practices, focusing on teachers’ and parents’ knowledge about the need to live sustainably and the dangers of exploiting the earth’s resources. Discussions with children focused on the exploitation of natural resources, framing phenomena such as overfishing in anthropocentric ways.

For example, an interaction between a teacher and her students was documented:

Megan: There are special rules about taking those [crayfish] out of the ocean. If we took all the mummies, daddies and babies would there be any left for us to eat?”

Children: No.

Megan: So we need to take some mummies, some daddies and no babies! (p. 431)

This exchange highlights how early childhood practices can separate the human and non-human world and positions learning in an anthropocentric view, focusing on how overfishing results in a lack of food for humans, not in the extinction of a species.

In yet another example of connection to nature discourse, Hadzigeorgiou, Prevezanou, Kabouropoulou, and Konsolas (2011) explored the effectiveness of storytelling as an approach to teaching Greek preschool children about the importance of trees. After more than 6000 fires broke out in Greece in the summer of 2007, more than 700,000 acres of forest and farmland and 120 villages were destroyed, enacting an immediate government and non-government organization response and setting the context for research into environmental education. Hadzigeorgiou et al. randomly assigned 159 preschool children from eight schools into two groups. For 11 weeks, on the same day of the week, one group of students listened to a story about trees while the control group listened to a researcher talk about trees, using photographs and pictures to illustrate the importance
of trees for human life. The plot of the story about trees involved two children who, after a nearby forest was clear-cut, began to face problems of flooding and feelings of illness from the heat, dirty air and noise that arose from the disturbance to the forest. During two pre-tests and four post-tests, the researchers assessed children’s intentions to participate in a tree planting activity, as well as their knowledge of trees. The study found that storytelling was more effective in provoking children to plant trees than using expository teaching methods. Due to the post-natural disaster context of the research, Hadzigeorgiou et al.’s work is clearly positioned in an anthropocentric, nature-as-resource narrative. While the findings are interesting from a pedagogical standpoint in that it is important to understand that children create meaning more from stories than from facts, the discussion further widens the nature/culture divide and positions children and nature as inherently separate. Furthermore, the researchers positioned children as ‘agents of change’ for sustainability, rather than illustrated an inclusive human and non-human community categorized by reciprocity and connection.

According to Somerville and William (2015), connection to nature frameworks are limited because “in this framework, nature, or the environment, is regarded from the human social world. There is a lack of theoretical depth with no examination of the ontological or epistemological bases of core meanings such as ‘nature’ or ‘the child’ ” (p. 109). Ultimately, Somerville and William warned that lack of depth results in a dearth of theoretical rigour due to unexamined assumptions.

Children’s Rights

Another trend within literature aimed at greening ECE is the tendency for researchers to draw on children’s rights frameworks to rationalize connections with the environment and advocate for sustainability dialogues in ECE settings (Caiman & Lundegård, 2013; Engdahl & Rabusicova, 2011; Johansson, 2009). At the foundation of these inquiries lies the belief that, as children represent the future of humanity, they will ultimately inherit the damaged environment and thus should have a
voice in global sustainability issues that may impact their lives. For example, Swedish researchers Caiman and Lundegård (2013) examined how preschool children’s agency is activated while they explored science-related issues in the context of learning sustainably. The research focused on how children made choices about their actions while problem-solving in environmental situations. For instance, the children planted peas in their school garden, and were introduced to a problem of a potential heavy rainfall that might affect how that plant thrived. The researchers observed the choices the children made in order to preserve the plant life, and how the children arrived at a solution through negotiation with one another. Findings showed children’s care and concerns toward living organisms, as well as their ability to anticipate the needs and improve the circumstances of their more-than human companions. Caiman and Lundegård speculated about the potential agent for change that could be enacted in an early learning environment based on the observed agency in problem-solving. This type of project is characterized by an opposite limitation to connection to nature dialogues. The project highlights how children can care for the earth and the more-than-human community but does not engage in any critical dialogue about the agency and reciprocal role the more-than-human community plays in meeting human needs. It misses an opportunity to showcase the relationality and interconnectedness between humans and more-than-humans by positioning the children as ‘agents of change,’ or caretakers of the environment.

Engdahl and Rabusicova (2011), project coordinators within the World Organization for Early Childhood Education, reported their findings about children’s thoughts, comments and understanding of a picture of a globe in the context of early education for sustainable development. The picture depicted children around the globe, touching and engaging with it in different ways. During the study, 9,142 children aged 2-8 years from 28 diverse countries were interviewed and their interpretations of the picture were recorded. Results of the project indicated the majority of children who viewed the picture interpreted the drawing as children cleaning the globe because it was dirty.
The findings highlighted the knowledge of the participating children regarding the complex environmental problems plaguing the Earth. Finally, Enghdal and Rabusicova advocated for reform within ECE to include more child influence and participation regarding issues of sustainable development. Though the perspective offered by Eghdal and Rabusicova is important in surfacing children’s voices and advocating for their agency and collaboration in research, it presents a human as ‘caretakers’ narrative similar to Caiman and Lundegård’s. Evoking this type of thinking emphasizes an anthropocentric divide between the human/more-than-human world, as it lacks a dialogue critically engaging with the relationality and reciprocity between all species on Earth.

Swedish researcher Johansson (2009) emphasized the idea of children as world citizens in her work regarding sustainability in education. Drawing from research on morality among children aged 1-6 years, Johansson argued that as children develop moral identities, they are thus becoming a part of both a local community and a common world. She asserted the importance of this notion for educators and researchers to consider as they prepare learning environments and curriculum. This view of children as active, competent and engaged with (in) their environment is aligned with the views of reconceptualist theorists described earlier in the chapter. Research framed from this perspective surfaces children’s agency in their learning and holds the potential for translation into pedagogical application. However, it can exclude important context and learning opportunity by focusing on global concerns, rather than engaging local materiality (Somerville & William, 2015).

Posthuman Frameworks

Nxumalo and Cedillo (2017), on the other hand, emphasized the necessity to critically engage with the “colonial, raced and gendered politics impacting the accessibility and affordability of outdoor education programs” (p. 101). Nxumalo and Cedillo pointed to the recent proliferation of programs modelled after the forest schools of Northern Europe as problematic examples of educational settings which cast a Rousseauian romantic coupling of the child and nature, that is,
settings that re-envision Thoreau’s “redemptive wilderness” (Thoreau, 1992 [1862]). Settings such as these position nature as a resource from which educators can draw in order to support children’s development and learning, ignoring the interconnectedness and reciprocity of all beings that form the ecosystem of Earth.

In the context of BC, romanticizing the notion of returning children to nature also contributes to the exclusion of Indigenous lifeways and ways of knowing, a damaging extension of the colonial histories on which the province was founded. At the time of European settlement of North America, the land we now know as Canada was not unsettled, “wild” or uninhabited (Apffel-Marglin, 2012). Indigenous cultural groups have lived with and on this land for thousands of years. BC is home to approximately 200 Indigenous cultural groups who speak over 30 distinct languages and dialects, and attend to myriad cosmologies, ontologies and value systems based on each group’s respective ancestry (BC Ministry of Education, 2008). Though Indigenous ways of knowing and being are diverse and each cultural group has a distinct set of values and beliefs, some commonalities exist that form a foundational worldview. Indigenous ways of knowing and being are oriented in a “sacred orientation to place and space; a fluidity of knowledge exchange between past, present and future; and an honoring of language and orality as an important means of knowledge transmission” (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007, p. 50). Further, Brayboy and Maughan (2009) asserted that:

Indigenous knowledges are rooted in the lived experiences of peoples, these experiences highlight the philosophies, beliefs, values, and educational processes of entire communities over time. In other words, individuals live and enact their knowledge, and, in the process, engage further in the process of coming to be: of forming a way of engaging others and the world. (para 9)

The work of Indigenous scholars has been instrumental in establishing a space for postcolonial critique and analyses of ECE spaces and pedagogies that build upon reconceptualist dialogues.
Ultimately, context-less early childhood environmental education practices recreate modernist underpinnings of child development and reaffirm Western assumptions of knowledge. Scholars are beginning to challenge the dualistic notions of nature/biology and social/cultural that have dominated discourse regarding children’s development and well-being. These scholars look to “unsettle the social, cultural and educational issues that impact on the everyday lifeworlds of children and their families” in early childhood settings (Yelland, 2017, p. x). Their work draws from a common worlds conceptual framework that resists anthropocentric approaches to place-conscious practices, reconceptualizes inclusion in ECE and resists the separation of human and more-than-human worlds (Latour, 2004; Taylor & Guigni, 2012; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nelson, 2015).

A project by Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nelson (2015), introduced a place-conscious perspective to early childhood practices that exemplified a common worlds approach, based out of Victoria, BC. They described a pedagogical narration of a group of preschool-aged children’s interactions and relationships with their local forest. The children embarked on a walk through this familiar surrounding and were encouraged to wonder and inquire beyond their human selves, considering the perspectives of other beings, plants and animals in their world.

Similarly, Somerville (2013) described the experiences of children in an Australian primary school. The children were introduced to educational activities based in a local wetland, and over time created learning maps on which they articulated their wonderings, reflections and understandings. Somerville positioned her research from a postcolonial perspective and used the lens of “thinking through country” as a contemporary translation of a local Indigenous ontological epistemology that encompasses the immersion of nature and culture; she rejected a nature/culture binary. Further, by employing the use of learning maps, drawings and wonderings, Somerville identified ways in which place learning can be meaningfully represented while still embodied and connected.
Additionally, Iorio, Coustley, and Grayland (2018) sought to understand how Australian children in a Grade 1 and 2 classroom learned from and with their relationship with the more-than-human. Rather than focusing on only the children, this study broadened its scope to include teachers’ collaborative voices as the teachers engaged with the process of pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation, first practiced by educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy, traditionally makes children’s thinking and listening visible by recording everyday moments in early learning environments. In Iorio et al.’s project, the researchers challenged the classroom teachers to resituate their pedagogical documentations within place — editing their written descriptions of everyday moments to foreground place. For example, the following is the teacher’s original documentation:

We turn the first rock and look quickly to see if there is any movement, but there is nothing but more sand. We turn a second, third, and fourth. Yes! We found something. It has eight legs and two pincers. It is a crab. It must be a baby because it is only small and is a light sandy colour. We place it in a hat to look after it. We lift more rocks and find another, and then another. They are getting bigger and bigger and make my hands feel tickly. (p. 160).

In responding to this passage, the researchers noted how central the human was to the narrative and wondered what might happen if place was central instead. They suggested the following revision:

The rock turns, pushed over by child hands. Sand, no animal. A second rock, and a third rock, and a fourth rock, pushed over by child hands. And then—something! Eight legs and two pincers – a crab. Small in size, a light sand color, maybe a baby. Hands place it in a hat to look after it – what might the crab show us? Child hands move to lift more rocks. One crab, another, and another. Crabs in the sand, in the hat, on a hand tickling. (p. 160)

Iorio et al. found that with a provocation of place, the children and teachers found meaning in what they did, and experienced and encountered differently. The expected practice of looking at and
observing children first changed to including not only the more-than-human within pedagogical decisions, but also resituating the educators and their relationality within the place. The project challenged anthropocentric assumptions about meaning-making and drew attention to the complexities and importance of place-child-teacher relationships.

Blaise et al. (2017) further explored a conceptual turn in early childhood pedagogy and documentation towards paying attention to learning within the context of human-induced climate change. In contrast to traditional research in early childhood that focuses on child development or learning, Blaise et al. explored the possibilities of paying attention to children’s engagement with place. Drawing from van Dooren’s (2014) concept of “lively stories”, the authors experimented with the ethical implications of multi-species inquiry and delved into the ways in which early childhood observation could be reworked to become political and contextualized. The paper combines two lines of ethical inquiry initiated by Haraway (1997) and Bird Rose (2004, 2013, 2015a, 2015b) to re-envision the ways in which early childhood educators can respond to ‘matters of concern’ they encounter in practice (Latour, 2004). Blaise et al. (2017) saw lively storytelling as a way to activate a paradigm shift in ECE -- to move away from developmental notions of early childhood observation that focus solely on how children develop, towards the surfacing of stories that respond to and constitute ways of responding to, with, and in a living common world. This article not only is informed by a theoretical orientation inclusive to the intricacies of human-place relationships, but also introduces practical approaches to inform early childhood educators’ pedagogical perspectives.

In light of the findings, limitations and inspirations outlined in the preceding literature review, and informed by moments and encounters of boundaries, limitations and inspirations within my experiences of early childhood educational settings, my research sought to address and disrupt artificial nature/culture binaries embedded in ECE practices, to re-examine the ethical
responsibilities of early childhood educators in the 21st century and to expand common notions of well-being to be inclusive to more-than-human worlds. The specific guiding research questions are:

- From a common worlds perspective, how are child-place relationships enacted?
- In what ways do more-than-human community members engage children in building relationships with(in) place in ECE settings?

By exploring the pedagogical possibilities of enacting place-conscious practices, it might be possible to make visible ways of living and learning in the Anthropocene. The following chapter outlines the questions that emerge from the above concerns and that will guide this study. An overview of the methodological approach is also provided.
Chapter 3: Method

Overview

This chapter outlines the processes involved in this qualitative research study. It describes the methodological approach, theoretical framework, and methods of the project. First, narrative inquiry methodology and pedagogical narration are introduced and their suitability for addressing the research questions of this study are discussed. Next, the theoretical framework of the project is described in order to contextualize the research questions and methodology choice. This is followed by a rich description of the study setting and the criteria used to select both the setting and participants. The research process is then discussed, including the types and procedures of data collection, ethical considerations relevant to the study, and my approach to data analysis.

Purpose and Research Questions

The overarching purpose of this study is to generate possibilities for understanding how place-conscious pedagogies in ECE support reciprocal child-place relationships. The main research question and sub-question addressed in this project include:

- From a common worlds perspective, how are child-place relationships enacted?
- In what ways do more-than-human community members engage children in building relationships with(in) place in ECE settings?

Methodological Approach

Given that the present study seeks to investigate the perceptions and experiences of young children and generate rich data, a descriptive, interpretive and experiential qualitative methodology is appropriate (Boudah, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2013). A fundamental aspect of qualitative methodology is the absence of an assumption of one singular objective reality or knowledge. The objectives of this research project are guided by an interest in understanding and interpreting, with a
deep respect for the existence of multiple versions of reality. Thus, ontologically and epistemologically, this work falls into a relativist, contextualist paradigm (Boudah, 2011).

**Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is a relational methodology that is attentive to how experience unfolds over time and in diverse places, beginning from and unfolding through relationships (Clanadin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience—that a present experience is the result of the interaction between one’s past experiences and the present experience—is largely cited as the theoretical and philosophical foundation of narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin (2013), “Dewey’s two criteria of experience—interaction and continuity enacted in situations—provide the grounding for attending to a narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality” (p. 12). Framing Deweyan theory of experience as central to the epistemology and ontology of narrative inquiry brings into focus not only the richness of individual experience, but also the larger social, cultural and institutional mosaic in which said experiences are enacted, thus complementing research questions exploring place and relationships (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

According to Clanadin and Rosiek (2007), narrative inquirers “study the individual’s experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another” (p. 42). Narrative inquiry is collaborative and relational, distinctive from other research methodologies in which “researchers” study “subjects.” Conversely, narrative inquiry positions relationships at the forefront of the methodology and encourages a collaboration to gain insight into experience, rather than a detached, clinical approach. This type of methodology is suitable for the present research questions as it positions children as capable, competent and fully engaged as partners in the research process. Rather than researching ‘about’ children, narrative methodologies are supportive of researching ‘with’ children.
(Waller & Bitou, 2011). From this approach, the importance of making visible children’s storytelling and meaning-making is centred. Narrative methodology allows for inclusivity, mutual engagement and participants’ autonomy in the inquiry. It invites collaborators to “share stories of experience, and inquire into the lived and told stories in order to understand ourselves, places we are/have been, and past, present, and future contexts” (Huber, Caine, Murphy, Lessard, & Clandinin, 2018, p. 48). Narrative methodology is appealing to researchers looking to focus on subjective meaning, and for this reason is a powerful tool for educators and practitioners in the field of ECE in 21st century contexts.

Given the findings of the literature review noting problematic aspects of “greening” ECE, this project was informed by Taylor and Guigni’s (2012) common worlds conceptual framework. According to the Common Worlds Research Collective (2019):

The notion of common worlds is an inclusive, more than human notion. It helps us to avoid distinction that is often drawn between human societies and natural environments. By re-situating our lives within indivisible common worlds, our research focuses upon the ways in which our past, present and future lives are entangled with those of other beings, non-living entities, technologies, elements, discourses, forces, landforms (para 2).

This conceptual approach adds a layer of depth to a typical narrative methodology and situates place as both collaborator and impetus in meaning-making. A common worlds approach recognizes that all narratives are enacted with(in) place, and are a result of engagement with both the human and more-than-human worlds. It is uniquely suited to the study because it invites an active noticing and attending to the entanglement of people, places and experiences, deepening and enriching the narrative inquiry.

**Pedagogical Narration.** Pedagogical narration is a pedagogical process used in many early childhood settings by educators in British Columbia, the term first being included in British
Columbia’s Early Learning Framework in 2008. According to Berger (2015), pedagogical narration refers to the “process through which early childhood educators document and share narratives about significant pedagogical occurrences” (p. 130), with an active intent to engage in critical dialogues which challenge or disrupt assumptions about childhoods, meaning-making and pedagogy. Pedagogical narrations are created to make visible the complexities of children’s learning, as well as resurface context, reconceptualize universalized approaches to childhoods and reconsider the collaborative identities and agencies of children and educators (BC Ministry of Education, 2019; Berger, 2015; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

In British Columbia, pedagogical narration is a local and contextualized adaptation of similar pedagogical tools used widely in New Zealand and Italy (Berger, 2015). In the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, pedagogical documentation has been explored to make visible the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning, and to re-envision the image of the child (Rinaldi, 2006). Children’s perspectives and inquiries are documented in myriad ways to encourage sharing, dialogue, reflection and re-interpretation (Waller & Bitou, 2011). Central to the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach is an orientation towards the democracy of education; that children have autonomy and agency in their learning and early experiences (Malaguzzi, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006). Pedagogical documentation in this context applies a paradigm shift that resists traditional observational tools and assessment methods, historically used by researchers and educators to understand individual children from a universal child development lens. The notion of having the ability to articulate objective facts or convey direct representations of children’s experiences is disrupted. What is important from a Reggio Emilian perspective is making pedagogy visible (Rinaldi, 2006; Waller & Bitou, 2011).

The pedagogical tool of ‘Learning Stories’ from New Zealand has acted as another strong source of inspiration that shaped the emergence of pedagogical narration (Berger, 2015; Carr, 2001;
Learning stories are similar in spirit to pedagogical narration, in that they aim to foreground children’s voices and thinking. The process of learning stories was activated out of response to Te Whāriki, a national curriculum document first published in 1996 which outlines a distinct approach to early childhood pedagogy that is enriched by a sociocultural lens. The document is framed biculturally, honoring local Māori ways of being, epistemology and ontology. Learning stories are “structured narrative documentation based on critical incidents of children’s learning, including the child’s own comments” (Carr, 2001, as cited in Waller & Bitou., 2011).

Pedagogical narration maintains the democratic and ethical integrity of both pedagogical documentation and learning stories, activating a reconceptualist dialogue in the context of British Columbia. When engaging in the process of pedagogical narration, educators notice and collect ‘traces of practice.’ Traces are artifacts that make visible a moment of practice and bring attention to meaning-making (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). Educators can collect traces in the form of materials created by children, photographs, journals, audio recordings, video recordings or other forms of digital data. The collected moments or ‘traces’ become the focus of engaging in critical reflection, as they continuously inform pedagogical choices and invites a living inquiry and collaborative dialogue (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). Importantly, the traces are made visible or public; they should be shared with children, families and colleagues. However, pedagogical narration is not simply a record of what happened, or the act of displaying images of children or artifacts. According to the BC Early Learning Framework (2019), “documentation of practice becomes pedagogical narration only when brought to life with questions, thoughts, and the interpretations of different people” (p. 56). The spirit of pedagogical narration is to collaborate, share, challenge, disrupt and debate. Indeed, pedagogical narrations are ‘lively invitations’ to confront assumptions, enrich understandings and consider multiple perspectives; to acknowledge and welcome subjectivity and multiple perspectives; and to make visible and public the importance of relationality (Dahlberg
The active process of pedagogical narration (represented in Figure 1) is ongoing and is meant to be placed alongside multidisciplinary inquiry. There is a continuous return to practical settings and an experimentation with reconceptualized pedagogical intentions, initiating a new cycle of inquiry (Hodgins, 2019).

Pedagogical narration has most often been used by early childhood educators to strengthen practice; however, Hodgins (2012; 2019) advocates for its use as both an educational research method and methodology. She sees potential for pedagogical narrations to disrupt modernist assumptions about science, knowledge and childhoods that perpetuate educational research. Ultimately, Hodgins sees possibility for enriching both research and practice through paying attention to the complexity of lively entanglements. Hodgins used the term ‘entanglements’ from a feminist materialist perspective, which focuses on intra-action or the agentic relationality between

Figure 1. Overview of the process of pedagogical narration. From The BC Early Learning Framework (B.C Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 53).
materials, humans and more-than-humans (Barad, 2007). In contrast to the term ‘interaction’, which implies that materials, humans, and more-than-humans bring into relationship separate, individual agencies, intra-active entanglement recognizes that “distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action” (Barad, 2007, p. 33). Key to this perspective is the emergence of a lively ontology which reworks the nature of relationality, vitality and agency by paying attention to entanglement.

Activating pedagogical narration as methodology in this work supports a connection between research and practice, and is aligned in essence with the disposition of the BC Early Learning Framework (2019). Blurring the boundary or divide between researchers and educators initiates opportunity for closing the theory-practice gap (Hodgins, 2012). Activating this project through the process of pedagogical narration was important to me given my positionality. That is, I approach research informed by my interconnected experiences as early childhood educator, researcher, student, and human. From these woven experiences, I oriented myself within a relational and common worlds perspective. In essence, it was pertinent that my methodological approach maintained and connected to how I understand and relate to the world through the aforementioned roles. Ultimately, using a methodology that is embedded in and in engagement with practice served to make my work accessible and inclusive for educators and researchers alike.

Pedagogical narration ensures that children’s voices are actively listened to, represented and accessed in safe, ethical ways. According to Berger (2010), pedagogical narration is a process by which children’s stories can be collaboratively and inclusively told, as “through the practice of collective narration, the educator becomes a collaborator with the child and others to generate knowledge with the world” (p. 68). The BC Early Learning Framework (2019) also described how early childhood educators can collaboratively collect traces of moments they encounter in their practice with children. Traces “make visible a moment of practice and bring attention to learning,
thinking, the connections and relationships” (p. 54), in order for an educator to critically reflect, engage in collaborative dialogue and make pedagogical choices.

Process

As described in Figure 2, the research process began by my (the researcher) entering the forest setting, observing the children and getting to know them. After this familiarization period, I began to intentionally make visible the children’s experiences and meaning-making by collecting traces: making detailed written field notes, taking digital photographs and engaging in conversive wayfinding experiences with the children. As I revisited and reflected on the collected traces, I began to assemble ideas and think critically about ‘matters of concern’ in relation to my guiding research questions (Latour, 2004) (that is, contextually and relationally situated matters rather than objective truths or clinical facts) articulating and documenting my emerging understandings of encounters. While I reviewed this documentation, I was able to identify generative possibilities to delve further into the human and more-than-human entanglements enacted with(in) place and surface lively stories that respond to and constitute ways of responding to, with, and in a living common world.

![Figure 2. Lively storytelling process with(in) the forest](image)

Setting (Place)

In light of the fundamental importance of place in relation to place-conscious pedagogy, choosing an appropriate site for research was particularly significant to this project. Given the
literature review findings regarding the limitations of place-based educational approaches which position nature as a resource, it was pertinent that a site reflective of pedagogy assuming a common worlds perspective was chosen. The project focuses on a forest preschool located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The program is with(in) a university-affiliated farm, located on unceded Musqueam territory. The preschool was selected due to its rich description of guiding principles aligned with key components of the literature review: a resistance to anthropocentrism in pedagogical practices, a reciprocal and inclusive relationship with Indigenous and other non-Eurocentric communities, a view of children as active and competent in their learning and inquiry, and finally, a desire to look beyond modernist views of child development, in order to reconceptualize curriculum. Further, the program’s engagement of children between the ages of 2.5 and 5 years made it suitable for investigating an age group overlooked within current literature regarding children’s relationships with place.

**Collaborators**

In a narrative approach to qualitative research, it is appropriate to focus on individual experiences with the intent of gaining rich, descriptive data in order to understand how those experiences ultimately affect meaning making and relationship building (Boudah, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Clanadin & Connelly, 2000). This project focused on the experiences of four children attending the forest preschool. Four typically developing four-year-old children (three boys and one girl), who had attended the program since September 2018 and had both parent/guardian consent and enthusiastic self-assent to participate, were purposefully selected, in order to provide rich, narrative insight into their experiences. The children are referred to using pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. Rather than referring to the children as ‘participants,’ in the spirit of the intent of pedagogical narration as put forth by the BC Early Learning Framework (2019), I have chosen to instead term their involvement in the research process as ‘collaborators.’ Of utmost importance to
this project was the children’s enthusiasm and willingness to participate—a consideration framed by the guiding principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990). Article 12 of the convention ensures children’s rights to the freedom of expression, information and to be involved in decision-making. Further, it states that countries such as Canada who have ratified the convention:

> Shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Much of the body of literature regarding research with young children considers childhood and children as objects of research, that is, others to be studied rather than competent, active individuals capable of autonomy. This study strived to be inclusive and intentional and display mutual engagement with collaborators, encouraging their autonomy in the research process. Gaining access to the stories and experiences of children in a safe, ethical manner is crucial (Boudah, 2011; Phelan & Kinsella, 2013; Waller & Bitou, 2011). Therefore, the children involved in this project engaged in the project of their own volition, their informed assent ensured. This process of attaining assent elicited a mutual engagement and reciprocity, helping to establish rapport and trust and alleviating potential power dynamics between children and adult researcher.

**Procedure: Collecting ‘Traces’**

The methodological process of pedagogical narration in this study enacted a particular approach to data collection that is aligned with the process of collecting ‘traces’ described by the BC Early Learning Framework (2019). Data were collected over a period of three four-hour weekly visits to the forest preschool program. Prior to the data collection period, I visited the program on six occasions in order to familiarize the children with my presence and establish rapport and trust. During data collection sessions, I collected ‘traces’ of moments with the children that related to my main research questions. As explained by the BC Early Learning Framework (2019), collecting traces
involves actively attuning to moments that surprise, draw interest or bring tension. This process is oriented within a guiding question, inquiry or direction. According to the BC Early Learning Framework (2019), “noticing and interpreting what children do and why they do it probes the connection between thinking and questioning and shows or make visible the way children are making meaning of their learning or of their interaction with the world” (p. 55). My approach to collecting traces in the context of this study was concerned with documenting the ways in which the children engaged and created meaning with(in) place. What human and more-than human community members did the children notice or pay attention to? The main processes or data sources in this documentation were written field notes, digital photographs and conversive wayfinding sessions.

**Field Notes.** Throughout my time with the children, written field notes supported my ability to pay close attention to specific moments and events that related to my research questions. Using thick, detailed descriptions, the field notes were not running records of what happened, rather their content focused on deepening the what to generate possibilities for the why and the how. I noted emerging questions, surprises, tensions and intentionally brought attention to the children’s relationships with the more-than-human world, the ways in which children engaged in relational meaning-making with(in) place. There was focus on how place was experienced by the children in movements, play, attention and thinking.

**Digital Photographs.** In the composition of the pedagogical narrations in the present study, digital photographs served to complement written field notes as visual anchors. Using an iPhone digital camera, I documented aspects of the forest that children gravitated towards, paid attention to or engaged in playful relationships with. Though there is an inherent anthropocentric power dynamic embedded within the act of looking through a camera lens at the more than human world, I draw from John Berger’s (2008) essays *Ways of Seeing*, which interrogated how seeing
positions, relates and explains our (human) place in the world. Berger (2008) noted that “we never just look at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (p. 9). Photographic traces sought to make visible place-child relationships in an attempt to enliven the connections, frictions and reciprocities emerging with(in) the forest (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013).

**Conversive Wayfinding.** The third type of ‘trace’ collected during this study emerged out of conversive wayfinding experiences between myself, the children and the forest. ‘Conversive wayfinding’ is a term coined by Myers (2010) to describe a type of interview method that grounds conversation within places. Interviews are conducted while walking or moving within a space or place, so as to engage participants in a participatory and embodied mode of responsiveness that allows a researcher to access “attitudes and knowledge of the surrounding environment” (p. 67). Conversive wayfinding builds on ‘walking narrative interviews’ proposed by Lynch and Mannion (2016) as a way for researchers to walk with(in) participants’ “important places” to garner rich insight into how and why certain places are perceived and experienced to be meaningful.

In order to further explore my research questions, the children and I engaged in conversive wayfinding with(in) the forest that took the form of a one-to-one conversational informal interview between myself and each individual child. Each conversive wayfinding experience was audio recorded and transcribed, and lasted for a minimum of 15 minutes. As per a conversational interview approach, I did not enter conversive wayfinding with any pre-determined question, but rather, allowed for the process to be guided by interactions and relationality (Turner, 2010). However, informal prompts were created beforehand to prepare possibilities for conversation initiation with young children that were intentional in encouraging engagements related to the research questions. The questions are available for reference in Appendix A. I used flexibility, creativity and a pedagogy of listening in conversive wayfinding experiences, applying my background as a licensed and registered ECE in Ontario and BC, to remain open, curious and respectful of the
children’s thinking and inquiry (BC Early Learning Framework, 2019). This ensured the children’s agency as meaning-makers and ultimately represents their voices as co-constructing understandings (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; 2010; Dahlberg et al., 1999).

**Data Analysis: Lively Storytelling**

It was an important consideration for this study to use a data analysis procedure that aligned with and maintained the common worlds theoretical framework that guides this project, in order to address the research questions appropriately. Using a traditional analytical tool such as thematic content analysis, which ultimately deconstructs data sets in order to find common patterns and themes, does not align with the critical stance towards modernity and developmentalism that I presented in the first chapters of this work. It felt incomplete and unnatural to deconstruct rather than attempt to describe holistically. By contrast, an analytic approach inspired by feminist, poststructuralist researchers working in the interdisciplinary studies of early childhoods, environmental humanities and philosophy offered inspiration. Motivated by an attunement to the interconnectivity of the forest, and guided by an interest in how things come together holistically in the common, I offer lively storytelling (Blaise et al., 2017; van Dooren, 2014; van Dooren & Bird Rose, 2016) as a way to articulate my experiences and understanding of the children’s engagements with(in) the forest.

**Lively Stories.** Lively stories exemplify a move beyond a superficial recognition of the ‘matter of fact’ that humans are situated with(in) place, towards documenting dynamic multispecies engagements that compose a lively common world. van Dooren (2014) introduced his notion of ‘lively stories’ while exploring the ways in which humans are implicated in instances of animal extinction. While exploring the entanglements between human exceptionalism and disappearing more-than-human communities, van Dooren encouraged the use of storytelling for surfacing intimacy and relationality between human and more-than-human worlds. As recounted by Blaise et
al. (2017), “by telling lively stories of encounters, a space is created not just to view other species by their scientific names, but also for getting to know them (p. 39). van Dooren’s work brings ethical attention to the complex and messy ways common worlds assemble.

In collaboration, van Dooren and Bird Rose (2016) activated lively storytelling within the context of academic research by presenting ‘lively ethnographies’ as “a mode of knowing, engaging, and storytelling that recognizes the meaningful lives of others and that, in so doing, enlivens our capacity to respond to them” (p. 84). Their work recognized the dangers of slipping into the “hubris of claiming to tell another’s stories but rather, to develop and tell our own stories in ways that are open to other ways of constituting, of responding to and in a living world” (p. 85). Core to lively storytelling is an ethical attunement to the ways in which stories can be powerful contributors to relationships, common-world building and reciprocity. Who is telling a story, which story is being told, and the human and more-than-human actors that are a part of the storytelling are integral considerations.

Matters of Fact or Matters of Concern? Inspired by van Dooren and Bird Rose (2016), and drawing from feminism and environmental humanism, Blaise et al. (2017) directly activated lively storytelling within the context of early childhood studies. In their reconsideration of the role of early childhood education in times of human-induced climate crisis, Blaise et al. conceptualized a turn in early childhood observation and documentation. Their work advocated for a paradigm shift within the field of early childhood studies that honed in on lively storytelling as a way to pay attention and respond to matters of concern related to the ethical complexities encountered and experienced by 21st century early childhood educators, children and families.

Blaise et al. believed that Latour’s social critique “helps us to critically interrogate the politics of meaning making in early childhood education” (p. 33). Rather than solely paying attention to objective, developmentally oriented skills, or ‘facts’ as per traditional observational practices of assessment, ‘matters of concern’ means paying attention to these facts in a profoundly different way.
To Latour, matters of fact are embedded within Western-European ways of objectively knowing or understanding the world, and are characterized by a lack of complexity and context. Alternatively, attending to matters of concern offers a way to critically attend to those complexities and pay attention in a relationally inhabited world. Blaise et al. responded to Latour’s (2004) call to pay attention to ‘matters of concern’ and not only ‘matters of fact’ in times of ethically complex climate crisis by using lively storytelling to engage with two lines of ethical inquiry by Haraway (1997) and Bird Rose (2004, 2013, 2015a, 2015b), namely modest witnessing and witnessing, respectively.

**Modest Witnessing.** Haraway (1997) used the figure of the Modest Witness to interrogate traditional Western scientific approaches, criticizing the failures of patriarchal systems in recognizing multilayered contexts of knowledge. Haraway delved into the historical emergence of the Western scientific method, that is, coming to know or understand the world through a recipe of establishing a hypothesis, testing that hypothesis through observation and measurement and uncovering cause and effect relationships -- what is essentially a human ‘witnessing’ the uncovering of ‘truths’ within reliable, replicable data sets. This type of epistemological witnessing was a process traditionally reserved for wealthy, Western European men. What Haraway meant by modesty in this context was how ‘findings’ or ‘truths’ were communicated and replicated in a concise, sterile manner that honed in on decontextualized, observable facts. For example, looking through a magnifying glass or microscope, you can see an object up close and in incredible detail, but an understanding of what the object is as a whole and in relation to other objects is obscured.

Haraway offered the Modest Witness as a feminist figure of response-ability. The Modest Witness surfaces accountability and supports the immersion of subjectivity in science that resists a reliance on matters of facts. The Modest Witness figure brings forward the tensions of the gendered histories of modesty, exploring how modest masculinity conveys refinement and credibility, while modest femininity relates to the invisibility of women’s labour. The female majority within the early
childhood education and care workforce further illuminates this gendered history and surfaces current frictions and tensions in the field. Blaise et al. (2017) saw the refigured Modest Witness as able to bear witness to histories of gender inequality, while challenging dominant developmental discourse in early childhoods. Crucial to the epistemological and orientations of this study was a hesitance towards relying on ‘matters of fact’ while coming to know place, children and the more-than-human collaborators in this research. By activating the Modest Witness figure, the lively storytelling process resisted decontextualization and modesty, instead enlivening accountability and response-ability to common worlds.

**Witnessing (Bird Rose, 2015).** The second line of ethical inquiry explored by Blaise et al. (2017) in their response to Latour (2005) and activation of lively storytelling as pedagogical documentation process is one initiated by Bird Rose (2004, 2013, 2015a, 1015b). Bird Rose offered an approach to witnessing that is both activating and embodied. She envisioned witnessing as being comprised of three major elements: ‘listening with attentiveness,’ ‘being called into connection,’ and ‘responding.’ As an ecologist and a feminist scholar who has worked closely with Australian Aboriginal communities for over 25 years, Bird Rose saw connections with more-than-humans as integral to witnessing. Thinking with Bird Rose’s feminist and ecological explorations of witnessing might support early childhood educators consider the ethical and political potential of pedagogy and practice. Blaise et al. (2017) brought together the figure of the Modest Witness and witnessing to inform their approach towards early childhood observation and documentation in the act of lively storytelling. Similarly, in the context of the present study, witnessing as conceived by Bird Rose (2015) was integral in generating lively stories that are neither politically nor ethically netural. This idea is particularly important given the ways in which the current climate crisis contextualizes the purpose and questions orienting the research process as described in Chapter 1.
Lively Storytelling and Pedagogical Narration. Blaise et al. (2017) saw lively stories as a deepening of pedagogical narration, and traced an evolution within early childhood studies from observation to pedagogical documentation, to pedagogical narration, finally examining lively stories as a way to pay attention to matters of concern in early childhood education. Guided by Iorio et al. (2018), I combined lively storytelling with a provocation of place so that my own anthropocentric tendencies and assumptions might be challenged. As mentioned in the literature review, Iorio et al. presented an inspiring critical engagement with pedagogical narration, wherein teachers and a researcher collaborated to revisit, disrupt and revise their human biases by recasting place as impetus. Writing lively stories that hesitated to centre human actions and voices is a challenging process, but has meaningful application when conceptualizing common worlds.

Lively stories are powerful tools for connectivity thinking, which allow for the existence of multiple meanings, possibilities, relationships and interpretations (van Dooren & Bird Rose, 2016). Lively storytelling is a way to unravel the relationships, connections and reciprocities that exist in the forest between children, more-than-human beings, researchers and place. This approach to qualitative methodological analysis offers rich description and insight into how the children made meaning, what they paid attention to, and how they formed relationships with(in) place, while resisting the trap of anthropocentrism or indulging the artificiality of human-nature binaries. van Dooren and Bird Rose discussed this further: “Unlike many other modes of giving an account, a story can allow multiple meanings to travel together; it can hold open possibilities and interpretations and can refuse the kind of closure that prevents others from speaking or becoming” (p. 85).

Digging deeper into the active and ongoing raveling and unraveling of lively storytelling is an effort to be open and accountable to more-than-human narratives that are often ignored in the context of research in ECE. By being open and accountable to these narratives, space is made for
attuning to matters of ethical concern, that is, matters that contextualize child-place engagements in times of climate crisis and that offer a spiraling way forward together (Latour, 2004). Through lively storytelling that brought place and more-than-human actors to the forefront when responding to my research questions, lively forest stories emerged. Lively storytelling is a way to respond to the purpose and guiding questions of the study, while maintaining the integrity of the common worlds theoretical perspective within which I have oriented myself and my work. Paying attention to matters of concern with(in) the forest offers possibilities to disrupt traditional observational methods, pedagogical choices and curriculum, to revisit our ethical obligation to challenge anthropocentric tendencies and romantic notions of the redemptive wilderness, and to reflect critically from a common worlds theoretical perspective.

**Trustworthiness and Collaborative Dialogue**

To address issues of rigour in data analysis, this project employed methods of researcher reflexivity; prolonged engagement in the field; member checking; and thick, rich description, as per Creswell and Miller’s (2000) procedures of determining validity, or trustworthiness, in qualitative inquiry. Researcher reflexivity is the process by which a researcher self-discloses their biases, beliefs and positionality. Narrative accounts incorporate researcher reflexivity, as they allow for interpretive commentary in discussion of findings. Positionality is disclosed early in the research process in Chapter One, so readers can understand clearly potential researcher biases and pre-existing beliefs.

Prolonged engagement in the field allows for repeated interactions with a participant, enabling a strong establishment of rapport and trust. Rapport is essential to the validity or trustworthiness of qualitative analysis, as a relationship built on trust supports research collaborators in their disclosure of experiences and engagement with the project. Ultimately, this form of validity assurance leads to a holistic data set. When conducting research with young children, establishing trust and rapport is especially important, as mentioned in the data collection section. In order to
ensure children’s participatory rights and continued assent to participate, prolonged time at the research site is essential (Waller & Bitou, 2011). Finally, in final project outputs, as is the norm for narrative approaches to research, thick and rich description will be used to describe setting, participants, themes and narratives in great detail—in order to provide as much context as possible to embody lived experiences. The use of the aforementioned three processes to address rigour and trustworthiness accounts for the credibility, dependability and transferability of the study (Krefting, 1990). Further, the study will employ a collaborative approach to member checking to ensure credibility (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Throughout the data collection period, I reviewed and discussed pedagogical narrations with the children to ensure the narrations were representative of their experiences. Comments were noted in my field notes and incorporated into lively stories. The follow-up sessions with the children were incorporated into the beginning of the second and third sessions, so as to allow time for experiences to be remembered, ideas to re-emerge and to generate collective interpretations. A brief written summary of the study findings will be sent to each participating child's parent/guardians for their interest and information.

The forest educator and program director were invited to provide their comments on lively storytelling, in case there was a point they thought the researcher should elaborate upon, interpreted differently, or wished to share their perspective. Collaborative dialogue is key to the process of pedagogical narration described by the B.C Early Learning Framework (2019). As pedagogical narrations are a relational, living process, it is essential to generate dialogue with others to elicit multiple perspectives so that I can be mindful of my “assumptions, values and unquestioned understandings” (p. 50). Though entering this work from a certain positionality and orientation, I sought to be open and receptive to critical reflection that might bring a new dynamic or reconstruction to my perspective and understanding. This process ultimately adds to the credibility
and trustworthiness of the study by further encouraging collaboration within the community (Krefting, 1991).
Chapter 4: Lively Storytelling with(in) the Forest

Overview

The following chapter presents lively stories that emerged from the pedagogical narration process with(in) the forest. Building on the work of Blaise et al. (2017), van Dooren (2014), and van Dooren and Rose (2016), this chapter takes a lively storytelling approach to making visible, enlivening and responding to relationships, connections and reciprocities that were documented in the forest between children, more-than-human beings, researcher and place. Through the pedagogical narration process, traces collected during the pedagogical narration process, such as ordinary moments, matters of concern, ethical inquiry, conversational exchanges, noticings, wonderings, and sensory experiences assemble as lively stories in the following chapter. The lively stories offer rich description and insight into the purpose and research questions guiding lines of inquiry within this project. Namely, the lively stories generate possibilities for understanding how place-conscious pedagogies in ECE support reciprocal child-place relationships. The following research questions are explored in this chapter:

- From a common worlds perspective, how are child-place relationships enacted?
- In what ways do more-than-human community members engage children in building relationships with(in) place in ECE settings?

Spiral of Attunement

As an attempt to resist the trap and cognitive bias of anthropocentrism or indulging the artificiality of human-nature binaries, I made an intentional turn to foreground place and more-than-human community members as both collaborators and impetus in lively storytelling (Blaise et al., 2017; van Dooren, 2014; van Dooren & Rose, 2016). By being open and accountable to common world narratives, space is made for attuning to matters that contextualize ethical place-conscious
engagements in the contexts of 21st century childhoods that might offer a spiraling way forward together (Latour, 2004).

The following lively stories trace a spiral pattern of attunement illustrated in Figure 3. Spirals were an intentional and generative choice to depict the way in which the act of attunement was articulated in both the process of pedagogical narration and the assembling of lively stories. Spirals assist in lively storytelling, as they articulate a disruption of linear, modernist ways of thinking while providing readers with a conceptual tool. Spirals convey expansion and movement, but their curves imply revisiting and reflecting without a pre-ordained finish point. A Spiral of Attunement is active, in motion and continuous. My choice to use spirals in this context was inspired by two separate contemporary inquiries by Canadian early childhood researchers, Monpetit, Land, and Black (2019) and Kind (2016).

Figure 3. Spiral of Attunement
Spiral energy, as conceived by the Climate Action Childhood Network researchers Monpetit et al. (2019), is a way to reclaim and revisit problems, tensions and orientations. They looked particularly at problematizing Western European epistemological hegemonies and activated new possibilities for curriculum making in ECE that might generate more livable 21st century worlds than currently exist (Monpetit et al., 2019).

I see possibility for generating and reconceptualizing methodological analytic approaches to research in ECE by connecting spiral energy as articulated by Monpetit et al. (2019) with Kind’s (2016) process approach to material encounters, as described in a chapter of Encounters with Materials in Early Childhood Education (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2016). What is salient in connection to the Spiral of Attunement conceived in this work is that Kind (2016) thought pedagogically with materials. Her work focused on the pedagogical possibilities that emerge out of encounters between human and nonhuman beings. Using the example of charcoal, she considered “what happens, what is set in motion, when forces meet-touch-attend-open-respond” (p. 35). Kind saw encounters as a way to decentre individual experiences and pay attention to relationality.

In activating a common worlds theoretical approach to respond to my research questions and describe the data collection and analysis process through lively storytelling, a Spiral of Attunement makes becoming aware and responsive to and with places possible. The Spiral of Attunement begins with attunement, moves into noticing, listening, colliding and responding, before returning again to attunement. A Spiral of Attunement encourages an open and relational interpretation of experiences, while holding space to honour diverse knowledge systems that are non-linear and potentially oriented outside of western-European notions of truth and objectivity.
Through the Kaleidoscope

Returning to Greenwood’s (2016) metaphor of place composing our carried (human) mandalas, with(in) the forest and the farm, four lively stories emerged from encounters between more-than-humans, children, researcher and place. If modernist or developmental approaches to research and the ‘knowing’ of truths are seen as magnifying glasses—tools that enable humans to inspect closely individual and objective aspects of objects, knowledges or meanings—lively storytelling with(in) place is akin to looking through a kaleidoscope. Kaleidoscopes are a way to see patterns and repeated reflections. With each movement or rotation of the lens, what one sees changes, reacts. In essence, by being place-conscious through lively storytelling in research, carried mandalas act as the patterns within a kaleidoscope by meeting, diffracting, reflecting and entangling to offer a way to enmesh and encompass the stories, actors, feelings and senses that were experienced and embodied. Through this metaphorical kaleidoscope, human and more-than-human mandalas reacted and responded to and with one another. From this kaleidoscope, we can create and generate lively stories that pull out the threads of relational tensions, reciprocity and common worlds kinship.

The lively storytelling that follows in this chapter presents pedagogical narrations intertwined with relational reflections, ethical inquiries and passages that aim to bring more-than-human place actors to the foreground. When necessary, I turn to the work of feminist, post-humanist common worlds researchers to inform, structure and guide my narrations and inquiry. By situating the lively storytelling firmly within the theoretical framework and academic literature by which it was inspired, methodological accuracy and depth were ensured. The stories are, furthermore, guided by Iorio et al.’s (2018) pedagogical provocation of place-as-impetus discussed in the methodology section and in the literature review. My process of lively storytelling with(in) the forest looks to challenge anthropocentrism, reject redemptive wilderness dialogues, and reflect on the experiences of the
study from a common worlds theoretical perspective. Research questions are holistically addressed through descriptive storytelling and narrative accounts of the goings-on in the forest. With Somerville et al. (2011) in mind, this thesis takes seriously her statement that “changing our relationship to places involves changing the stories we tell about place” (p. 5).

In pulling from the threads of the previously mentioned metaphors, I have manipulated the photo traces of my pedagogical narrations to transform them into kaleidoscopic mandalas. Each lively story is accompanied by a mandala that represents an aspect of place that was attended to or was involved with the children’s meaning-making. In a sense, the mandalas created are a collaboration between place, child and researcher. Photographic traces of place that attuned to what

Figure 4. Mandala creation process
the children paid attention to, made meaning with or wove into their storytelling patterns were
digitally manipulated through Adobe Photoshop (see Figure 4 for process details and Figure 5 for an
example of a kaleidoscopic mandala). The manipulations themselves followed a spiral of attunement.
By attuning to particular triangles in the photograph, copying them, manipulating the angle to create
360 degrees of a circle, the attunement spiral continues. Child-place mandalas are visual
representation of the spiral energy lively stories use to think with(in) and attune to place. They
courage us to pay attention to patterns, connections, reflections and relationships.

Figure 5. Treemarksings
Lively Storytelling with(in) the Forest

*Walk (Attune)*

![Image of sticks]

*Figure 6. Sticks*

The 90-year-old hemlock forest where we walk is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The forest is a part of a unique, 24-hectare integrated production farm, comprised of crop fields, pasture, orchards, teaching gardens, and forest. The forest is a kaleidoscopic assemblage of hemlock, Douglas fir, cedar, ants, potato bugs, crows, bald eagles, moss, strawberry, banana slugs and robins. It is a place of shelter, of relationships, of learning and of growing.
The human children and human researcher walk, they stop. They walk, they stop. The movement is continuous, steady. Each visit, steps are retraced and the ever so slight changes in the forest are noticed. The familiar contours of the trail guide us to our favourite spots to pause. To share stories, nourish ourselves with snacks and water and to be still, taking in the calm that the trees breathe.

Nancy: “Do you want to go on a walk with me?”

Quinn: “Sure?”

I’m met with some hesitation... this is not a part of the routine.

Nancy: “Where do you want to go?”

Quinn: “I don’t know.”

We make our way away from the group, towards an unknown destination. I consider that it might feel unnatural to Quinn to leave her peers and venture to a place that she has, on her own, chosen. Quinn answers my questions with mostly guarded yes’s or no’s. Our conversive wayfinding isn’t feeling so conversive to me. I fight the urge to keep asking, trying to unravel my questions, but instead decide to just ease into the space, to relax into the sounds and try to pay closer attention to the engagements that I might normally miss. After a few walks and stops, I notice that Quinn is eyeing a pair of robins that are having a similar walk and stop pattern to us. Quinn is guarded; it is only one of our first “walks” together, but I see her eyes light up when a bird begins to hop closer and closer to us. We sit still...Will it come closer?
Minutes of silence pass by. We soak in the sounds. It dawns on me that, though we aren’t following my interview prompts, or having an intricate worded exchange, we are interacting and in an active engagement. We are listening. We are attending. We are attuning. Together.

“To attend is to notice the world around us, including its heterogeneity. Practicing attunement requires awareness of the in-between, attending to the relations between things” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017, p. 39)

Paying attention opens us up to the world we are a part of (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017). I was attuned to the sounds that Quinn was paying attention to, the robins to us and Quinn to me. We reacted to each other by following the other’s line of sight, tracking movements. We were walking with our eyes and with our ears. Distant construction noises clanged, woodpeckers drilled above our heads, and robins called to one another. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nelson (2015) asked about what it means “to share space with other creatures? What might paying attention, experimenting, and taking world relations seriously mean? What might paying attention teach us about living well together? And well for whom?” (p. 3).

I am reminded of Abram’s (2010) prompt to engage in the sensory act of listening to uncover place relationships and entanglements. Likewise, Bartos (2013) believed that children identify with and emphasize special places within their everyday environment through sensory engagement. Quinn and I attended to a polyphony of sounds, and in that active listening, became entangled with(in) this forest place. The spaces between our words held meaning, giving room to the more-than-human actors with whom we share the forest -- with whom we are the forest. Quinn’s relationships in the forest were more than just a conversation. They were embodied and sensuous – characterized by smells, sounds, touches and noticings. She told me stories from home, how the
birds wake her mom up in the morning, but don’t disturb her family in the nighttime when she was camping.

In this forest, there is room for noticing in the pauses. “To attend to something means to pause. To linger with, dwell in, take time with” (Kind, 2016. p. 39). Attentiveness is a way to reconfigure and re-compose encounters, situating relationships outside of a drive to know, to understand, to extract (Springgay, 2012). Attentiveness is not about looking through a magnifying glass at decontextualized details, or documenting children’s actions through a running record (Kimmerer, 2013). It is about pausing in the in between, the chaotic and vibratory spaces of moments and attention and relation that activate attunement (Springgay, 2012). To attune is to linger, to open ourselves up to seeing connections (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017). There is an embodied assemblage inherent to attunement - the feeling of belonging to something together in a pause. I sensed it in the way the children moved about the forest. Their movements were calm, steady, purposeful. We stayed close to each other, reactive to the movements, the sounds and the smells around us – contained but not trapped.

The concept of the ‘wayfarer’ and ‘wayfinding’ in the forest had steered my thinking to a walking or moving experience. However, in between movements were unpredictable moments of stillness, which I had not accounted for in my original approach to wayfinding. These moments made me think differently about the possibilities for what a pause or stillness might convey. During moments of stillness, the children and I became intimately sensitive to, connected and engaged with the more-than-human movement in the forest. Movement to which we may not have consistently been attuned. What has emerged is the possibility that a pause was an intentional movement. Stillness requires attention, attunement, engagement and purpose; it requires actively stopping a motion. This realization pulled on the threads first unraveled and raveled by Greenwood (2016) when writing about the paradoxes of place. Reconceptualizing moments of stillness as active speaks
to interconnection, to the ways in which place invites us to meet or to contest. “While we can think analytically about place, places offer us something different: the experience of being wholly alive in this world. (Greenwood, 2016, p. 11)

Figure 7. Stick mandala
The children notice the change in smell. As child feet, adult voices and clanging water bottles meander their way past blooming fields of onion, kale and collards, we encounter a rusty farm truck. The truck was covered with a faint film of dirt. The wheels of the truck had rolled over the worn dirt path that winds between the greenhouse and the garden, spitting up dust and fumes. “Yuck. It smells dirty in my nose,” exclaims Quinn. Holding her nose with a pinched index finger and thumb to block the perturbing smell. We stop, taking a moment to let the group catch up with us. Some time passes, and the smell is forgotten. Cars are not a frequent encounter.
during our walks. Is the smell more affronting because it “doesn’t belong”? What type of smells “belong” in a forest?

The forest greets us in its usual way. The scent of fir and cedar fill our nostrils as we move together across the small bridge that connects the farm to the forest. The forest is announcing itself, reminding us of the who’s and what’s we will encounter on our walk. What other smells let us know where we are? Where is this sweet, musky aroma coming from? Noses press up against the stately hemlocks and leaning Douglas firs. A pause, while Avery breathes in deeply, searching to connect the scent.

“Not here. It just smells like nothing”.

Is it nothing, though? What does smelling like nothing mean?

Over to a cedar tree.

Avery: “I smell the cedar, but only a little.”

We can’t decide what makes up this forest smell.

Anna Tsing (2015) discussed how “every encounter with materials involves decisions about what, and in what way, to notice” (p. 37). In their choice to seek out the source of the smell, the children were attuning to and noticing scent messages and information. An active noticing corresponds with an active meaning-making. It encourages connection, brings about reciprocity and builds upon a cultivation of attunement. Tsing used the musical metaphor of polyphonic assemblages in her advocacy for the art of noticing. Polyphony is a type of musical texture that
involves multiple melody lines occurring simultaneously. According to Tsing, to be able to appreciate a polyphony, one must actively notice the various melodies individually while at the same time acknowledging when they come together in moments of harmony. The polyphonic assemblage metaphor can be used to understand the many sensory experiences the children noticed in the forest. For the case of smell, the children noticed the individual smell of the cedar and of the fir, while at the same time noticing the difference in smell when moving from the farm to the forest. The smell melody of the cedar came together with the smell melody of the fir to create a harmony of “nothing” – the moment when the children couldn’t discern a particular smell.

Recent research has indicated that the smell that is so distinctive to forests is an assemblage of biologically generated volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (Wang, Shugart, & Lerdau, 2017). In other words, plants are able to emit chemicals that, when released into the atmosphere, become the source of most scents or odours. According to biologists Blande and Glinwood (2016) plants are rooted organisms that are not able to move in search of food or to escape from danger. As such, plants have developed complex sensory response techniques to help them survive. They can communicate and share resources with one another by means of releasing VOCs when interacting with other plants, insects or animals (Blande & Glinwood, 2016). Through smelling, we were noticing activity, communication and relationships in the forest. We were engaging with the trees, listening to their messages not through our ears, but through our noses.

The smell wondering dissipates and transforms into a new encounter, and more wonderings evolve as the familiar smell reminds us where we are going. Our eyes are drawn to the carpet of ferns that occupy the floor of the forest. Why are they everywhere?
Backpacks thump. Thump. Thump. Stop. A banana slug! Crossing the trail. Children and educators gather around excitedly, making sure to leave a space between ourselves and the slug “so that it can see us, and we can see him.” Concern for the slug’s space is echoed among the group.

“Don’t touch his skin! The slime keeps him warm.”

“I want to see, I want to see.”

A chorus of voices are challenging a nearby crow’s volume. We take a step back; a decision to see where the slug goes and say hello on our way out has been made. Will the fox’s hole still be there? What about the foam that the spittlebugs left on the branches of the plants, little clues that the forest isn’t home only to the trees, but also to the bugs and the birds and the squirrels? Why do they make the foam? Are the bugs having a bath? Can bugs take baths?

Again, movement. Tips of child and adult fingers graze the plants that are growing on either side of the path our feet walk on. We carefully navigate which plant to touch, and which one is spiky, moving our hands up and down in conversation with the thorns. The conversation is not one spoken aloud, but one that springs up from memories of the thorny raspberry bush contrasted against the smooth ferns, and the fingertip pricks of walks past.
Figure 9. Fern mandala
**Figure 10. Stump**

*Stump is a gathering place, a meeting ground (Greenwood, 2016). Hollowed out, with openings on three sides that are the perfect entrance for curious child bodies. It is the first stop for many of the children after they finish up their snacks. It is somehow a magnet, drawing us in.*

*To the children, it is not a stump. It is “the place where we play elevator,” Bowen’s favourite part of the forest. “We can only play elevator there because of the doors,” adds Quinn. The children have been re-enacting a situation that happened weeks ago, where some were*
briefly stuck in an elevator. They take turns acting as the door, controlling who comes in and who goes out. I am curious about this separation. Most of the other aspects of the forest are what we can see on first glance, but somehow a transformation has occurred in this stump. It makes me think about how materials and objects are changed when we begin to make meaning with them. I realize I type that I have done the same thing to my desk. A tree turns into a log, which turns into a plank, which turns into plywood, which turns into a table. A table is decidedly not a tree. But we lose the context of transformation when we focus on functional meaning-making. Because of the function, I forget that this wood once stood tall in a forest. Part of a very different eco system than my kitchen.

To the children, this stump is the same. Its function has shifted the perspective in which the children view it. I try to ask them about the tree that the stump used to be, but they return my questions with confused looks. To them, this is their playground, not the bones of a previously alive aspect of the forest. Their play has transformed it from a stump to an elevator. A place for doors, and for walking through and singing and arguing and problem solving…but an impetus for their imagination, not for my adult questioning. I back off this line of questioning and begin to listen.

In her common worlds microblog What can we learn from hanging out with rocks? Taylor (2019) grappled with the “epistemological bedrock” of the foundations of education within Cartesian subject-object dualisms. Such an approach takes seriously the solidity of objects, but labels them inert, with a tendency to do nothing. According to Adams (2011), this familiar discourse of objects
forces us to disengage from sensuous experiencing, view the world as though we are impartial observers, blocking our ability to discern and attune to “the perceptual interplay between ourselves and our surroundings” (p. 64). In a sense, if I really listened to what the children were saying, they were viewing the stump as the opposite of inert, as active. The stump had agency in their play and was acting as elevator. Hackett and Rautio (2019)

re-conceptualize the relationship between young children’s entanglement with the world and their multimodal meaning-making by drawing on Tim Ingold’s (2013) notion of correspondence. Ingold describes a ‘dance of animacy’ between humans and non-human actants, in which each takes a turn to pick up the baton and run with it. (p. 1019)

Using a dance of animacy perspective, the stump offered the children a baton, and the children picked it up and ran with it. They made meaning by creating an elevator ‘costume’ for the stump, inviting the stump into their processing of events and experiences. Or, is it possible that the stump invited the children in a way not visible to my human perception? Was I looking at the stump through the lens of a magnifying glass or a kaleidoscope? Thinking about what might be obscured in this instance is important. The relationship that was emerging between the stump and the children was nuanced, intricate and full of possibility. The question of who invited who to this dance did not matter. It was the engagement and interaction that generated possibility for meaning-making and connection.

My own biases as a researcher and educator at first prevented me from truly listening to what the children were saying to me about their experiences with the stump. I was consumed with my perspective -- that the stump had once been a tree -- and the pedagogical potential of learning why a tree becomes a stump, of the history of that place, that I perhaps had closed myself off to a different way of seeing. What might have happened if I had listened differently without being bound by what I already knew, or thought the children should know? What might have happened if I had
been open to being affected? (Davies, 2014). Davies suggested that active listening (to children, to more-than-humans, to ourselves) is not just a matter of good pedagogy, but is integral to life itself. Might opening ourselves to being affected through listening be a way to relate reciprocally in a common world?

Figure 11. Stump mandala
Moss (collide)

Figure 12. Moss-tree

A woodpecker drills noisily in the treetop. But the knocking sound does not have our attention. The forest floor feels soft and damp on our knees as we kneel to peer closer at the base of a tall, stately cedar. Hayden’s fingers trace around a lush patch of moss, poking at the occasional bug that skitters away from us on the bark.

“I see a clue,” states Hayden.

“You see a clue?” I echo, a question curling out of my intonation.
Hayden: “Clue means...this bark doesn’t match this bark.”

Hayden is motioning to the bark of a nearby tree. It is smoother, shinier than the cedar. And it bears no moss. We have had conversations like this before. The puzzle of why some trees have “green stuff” has had a tendency to be pushed to the forefront of our early interactions.

Hayden: “You remember why it’s there.”

Hayden has excitedly told me before about his theory. He has articulated a sort of reciprocity between the moss and the tree – a story that changes slightly each time he retells it, but at the core maintains a sense of entanglement. I ask him to help me remember.

Hayden: “Um. Because it keeps the tree warm and because...So the tree doesn’t get cold in winter.”

Previous versions were more intricate – a dance between the potato bug and the tree around the sharing of resources. Each part of the story, Hayden is looking for me to recount it with him collaboratively. I am hesitant. The weight of a possible intrusion that might shift his narrative, his storytelling, gives me pause. I’m torn. Do I engage in the game, or should I encourage him to tell me what he sees and intuits? He’s waiting for me.

Nancy: “Ohh...Right. And does the tree make the green spots?”
**Hayden:** “No! You remember!” He laughs. “The potato bugs!”

It is not always clear to me which bugs are potato bugs and which are not. Some bugs are “hundred leg crawlers” and some are “centipedes.” The names don’t seem to matter to Hayden. He chooses which to call by name in the moment, based on their activity and what they might mean to the story he is telling, or the game he is playing.

In their work in Australia and Canada, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2019) noted that it is relatively easy to emotionally engage with charismatic mammals, but harder to relate to invertebrates and small insects. Their work with worms and ants was echoed in the farm-forest. Children were very attuned to the goings-on of the potato bugs, of the slugs and of the beetles. Insect-child-plant associations in the forest were common and consistent. It is possible that the attunement was due to a lack of charismatic mammals present in the particular forest in which we spent our time. It is also possible that, from walks retraced and re-encounterings, and pauses, the children became more and more attuned to the goings-on that required an extra focus to notice. With a prod of a stick on a log, an insect lodge might be disturbed, small ants adjusting to the change in their environment. Many minutes were spent tracing the paths of the slugs, and wondering what made them come out that day, as we had not seen them before. Through the repeated act of retracing, re-attuning and revisiting, the children noticed small movements and minute reverberations in place that they may not have, had their routines been different. This makes sense: knowing a place engages more nuanced and vibrant storying of a place.

In *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucune*, Haraway (2016) described insect-plant associations between ants and acacia trees that sounds strikingly similar to Hayden’s thoughts about
the moss and potato bugs. In a passage describing the reciprocal relationship between Kenyan Whistling Thorn acacias and the ants that seek shelter inside them, Haraway described a process of symbiosis, of mutual benefit. The acacias provide shelter to the ants, and the ants provide protection to the acacias by attacking other insects or animals that attempt to invade. Where acacias flourish, so do ants. Where ants flourish, so do acacias.

It matters that Hayden was interested in a potential moss-tree-potato bug symbiosis. It matters that, of all things in the forest, this was what he was paying attention to. As Dietrich (2003) mentioned, moss has been colonizing land for 400 million years. A single tree in the Pacific Northwest can host fifty different kinds of moss. But the relationship between moss and tree is not extractive or appropriative. It is symbiotic. Moss is a type of epiphyte, a plant that lives on another, but does not rely upon their host for food. Moss gets most of its nutrients through rain. In a moist environment like the Pacific Northwest, mosses help other plants grow by harboring certain types of bacteria that convert nitrogen from the atmosphere into usable nitrogen for plants in need (Dietrich, 2003). Insects are also known to factor in positively to the ecology of forests. According to Proesmans et al., (2019), insects act as pollinators, herbivores, carnivores, decomposers and food sources for other organisms in the forest. What Hayden was referring to as a potato bug was likely a woodlouse, which is actually not a bug but a crustacean (Sutton, 1972). Woodlice feed largely on decomposing plant material, making them useful composting agents in forests.

Hayden-tree-moss-potato bug symbioses articulate lessons of learning to live together, sharing resources, being with(in) together. These were lessons of decolonization, through reciprocity and mutual engagement, rather than appropriation and destruction. The human and more-than-
human actors collided, but they shared, assembled and learned from and with one another. Attuning, noticing and listening led to an impact being made, a collision of meaning-making.

*Figure 13. Moss-tree mandala*
**Crow (respond)**

**Part One: Speaking Crow.**

![Figure 14. Treetops](image)

**Cawwww, cawwww, cawwww.**

*It seems the group has encountered a lively conversation. There is movement up high in the tips of the trees. Our human eyes can barely see who is making the sound – but our ears hear and recognize the piercing “caw” immediately. Crow voices often punctuate our conversations, putting pauses into our questions, our stories and our playings. Are the sounds greeting calls? Do they know why we are here?*
Encounters with crows are common in the Pacific Northwest. Crows are corvids, belonging to the same family as ravens, jays and magpies. They are social, living in family groups and using at least twenty-three distinct caws to communicate with one another (Dietrich, 2003). Crows follow routines. They gather together to roost in the evenings, leave their nests in large flocks during the daytime, and are highly attuned to particular locations dependable for food (Kummen, 2019). I ask Hayden what he thinks the caws are. After a few moments of consideration, he responds confidently: “Kids.” I’m puzzled at first, but realize he’s right. Though I am paying attention to the sound of the crows above, there is a noisy chorus of children walking ahead of us. The crow and child voices are mingling-responding-creating forest soundscapes, polyphonies (Tsing, 2015). We continue walking. Soon, Hayden speaks again.

“Usually, I speak crow. [Coughs three times]. That means hello”.

I ask Hayden if the noises we are hearing are greetings.

“Yeah. It’s saying hello.” He elaborates that the crows are saying hello to “US!”

Hayden: “Do you know how to say us in crow?”

Nancy: “No. How do you say us in crow?”

Hayden: “CAW”.

Nancy: “CAW? So should we say it back to him?”


It matters which animals draw children into relationship, which animals invite a response. initiate conversations. (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019). Meaningful human-corvid relations in the Pacific Northwest have been documented and expressed through oral tradition and storytelling in First Nations communities in British Columbia throughout their histories. Raven is a central and
transformative character, depicted as both a creator and a trickster who is associated with major changes in cosmic, earth, and local ecological systems (Kummen, 2019; Thornton & Thornton, 2015). According to Musqueam artist Susan Point, “raven symbolizes transformation” (as told to Vesta Giles, 2000). In her prolific work, Point uses imagery of the Raven and creates an assemblage with the human form to reflect the need for “humans to transform themselves, to embrace and value the natural world.”

As the forest place we are attuning, noticing, colliding and responding with(in) is located on traditional Musqueam territory, attuning to this mythology is a part of building respectful reciprocity with place. Marker (2006) wrote that respectfully engaging with Indigenous knowledges in a way that is reciprocal honours how human engagement with(in) places defines cultures and community. He asserted that the oral traditions and narratives of local Indigenous communities in B.C and beyond are “not simply one of a plurality of cultural perspectives on the environment. They are local points of reference for engaging in the intricacies of human relationships with the natural world” (p. 496). The association of crow with change and transformation is important to consider here. What are the repercussions from speaking crow? What are the repercussions of not speaking crow?

Hayden and I continue our conversation as we walk through the forest. Every so often, we attune to, notice and respond to an encounter with a more-than-human place-actor. Spittle bug foam lines the low-hanging green leaves, small strawberry buds greet us as we turn a corner on the trail, and we navigate banana slug slime.

Back at my desk, listening to the audio of this conversive wayfinding experience, I begin to wonder about what the crows think of the group of children wandering the forest floor excitedly. Did they notice us like we noticed them? Were they attuned to our trail-stories, our snacks and our
inquiries? My questions keep spiraling. I reflect on the tedious ethical approval process I went
through to get permission to record the children’s voices. Informed consent and assent were secured
for each child before I began engaging in conversive wayfinding with them. But what about the
crows? Their voices are featured on the recordings, and will likely be a part of my storytelling of the
experience. But they were not asked, not informed.

Crows can effectively mimic human speech, similar to the way Hayden attempted to mimic
the crows (Deitrich, 2003). They both do not entirely understand exactly what the other is saying,
but do recognize that the other is capable of expressing themselves directly, inhabiting an articulate
landscape without the mediation of sentences (Abram, 2010). Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019)
wrote

children grow up in more-than-human worlds, not just in human societies. Within these
common worlds, their lives, fates, and futures are bound up with those of other animals. We
have emphasized the productive nature of relations, including child-animal relations. This
infers a relational notion of agency. It means understanding that no being acts alone. It is
relations – not self-contained entities -- that make things happen. It is relations that shape and
reshape worlds. (p. 118)

Of course, I know that procuring ethical consent from a crow is not feasible. Unlike Hayden,
I do not speak crow. But it does make me think about whose voice in the forest matters. Ruminating
When we pay attention, the possibility for ethical responses grow. We can be drawn into relationship
with more-than-humans, and notice more keenly the temporal, synchronistic and mortal
further adds depth to my conundrum. Hayden’s choice to both pay attention to and respond to the
crow is a matter of concern. My wonderings of the ethical implications of recording crow voices for
this project are matters of concern. They are matters of concern because they are contextualized with(in) place, critically responsive and driven by inquiry. I am not setting out to objectively understand crows and human-crow engagements, but to describe and think with them. Hayden-crow relations are material, the co-created engagement transformative.

Figure 15. Treetop mandala
Part Two: “What is that noise?”

Figure 16. Crane.

CLANG. CLANG. CLANG.

Quinn: “What is that noise?”

Drillllllllll. CLANG CLANG CLANG.

Nancy: “It's hard to hear because of the construction. Do you think the birds like the construction?”

Quinn shakes her head. “No.”

Nancy : “No? Why not?”

Quinn : “It’s too loud!”
CLANG. CLANG. CLANG.

DOUUUUP. Screeeeeeeeechhhhhhh.

Our days are not only punctuated by crows, but also by the noisy construction site situated beside the forest. The sound assemblage of caws, and tweets and children’s laughter is answered by loud bangs, whistling horns and mechanical drills. The noises jerk me out of the forest and remind me of the world outside. A world that is not interested in what crows have to say, the smells of the Hemlock or the feel of the moss. But on progress, construction and change for a growing and evolving human population. The children often remark, “What is that?” or reach up and cover their ears when the sounds get too loud. I catch their worried gazes as they look up at me to check if things are all right. If they should continue on playing, or if there is something they need to be alerted to. The sounds startle me as well, even though I have come to expect them. It is an unfortunate reality of being on a university campus. Humans don’t make nests high up on the tips of Douglas firs. They don’t burrow holes in the moist forest floor. We carry in concrete from bobbing ships out in the sea and pave ourselves away from the earth through artificial barriers.

The contact zone of progress and preservation was tangible in the forest. We were sensuously in the forest, but a nagging reminder clawed at us every few minutes. And it nagged at me when I returned to my desk to reflect on the day. I am a part of the problem. I attend a university, a research university, a university situated on traditional, ancestral and unceded Musquem territory. My tuition pays for the construction of new buildings: new homes for students to live in while they study, new “green” buildings to house researchers who study the communication of trees in the forest. But this progress comes at a cost. Most of the forests that once stood in this learning
place are gone – our forest is one of the few remaining on campus. Will the cranes inch closer and closer to the forest? What is my response(ability) to this place (Blaise et al., 2017)?

Hayden’s conversations with crows has made this contact zone stickier. I can hear the crow voices so loudly in my recorders, awakened to their presence and to our intrusion into their forest home. What must they think of us? What do they think of the clangs, the saws and the cranes? Whose voice matters in the forest? What will happen to the crows?

Figure 17. Crane mandala
Berry (attune)

Figure 18. Berry blooms

Hayden: “I see something red! Look!”

We move closer. It’s a red juicy berry.

Hayden: “I think that’s...I think these are the ones that Avery was talking about.”

Avery had been telling us earlier about the delicious salmonberries he had found with his mother on the farm. It is the beginning of summer, and with the change in season, the children are attuning to insects, plants and animals that they had not paid attention to before. It seems as though in the time between our last visit, the forest has burst into action. The thorns the children so often avoided had been protecting small strawberry and raspberry blooms. The thorns
protected the plant, so they would grow and transform into berries. When we began our visits together, it was spring. The children noticed slugs and moss and puddles and tree smells. The shift in seasons called for us to attune again. To resituate ourselves with(in) place and for more-than-human actors to make more visible the roles they play in the becoming and being of the forest.

The children notice a new flurry of activity on the farm. So much has changed in the past month. What started as small pink flower buds are now juicy, delicious salmonberries. We are attuned to each other’s attention. Berries are picked by child hands, to be tasted, to show their ripeness, colour and potential for eating. Hayden is telling me about how the different types of berries taste. Some are good and sweet. Others are more sour...“but not too bad.” He confidently explains how we do not eat “green ones” or “yellow ones.” Before he has a chance to elaborate, a bumblebee flies low, circling the flowering plant and hovering near Hayden’s shoulder.

Hayden: “Oh a bumblebee! That’s the biggest bumblebee at the farm!” Hayden notices that there is a berry that has been partially picked off the branch. We wonder who could have eaten it. Hayden thinks it was a person. He doesn’t think an animal would eat it like that.

Dragonflies soar around the tips of raspberry bushes, between the growing kale stalks and among the bright red poppies that have begun to bloom. “Dragonflies like to garden,” Hayden tells me. “They like cranberries.” Hayden has connected the dragonfly movement with the changing ecology of the forest and farm. What role do the dragonflies play in the carrying of
seed? In the pollination of flowers? Hayden is making sense of the relationship he has noticed between the dragonflies, the blooms and the berries.

Our walks feel more hurried. The children rush to inspect new blooming wildflowers and budding apples. Their movement is less meandering. I, too, feel as though my system has been shocked by the influx of new colour, scents and sounds.

It is difficult and tense to bring up the collision of the past, present and future in the forest. I struggled with this fact often while wayfinding with the children. As I asked them questions, I was eager to hear their perspectives about what might have happened before on this land. Situating these conversations within the context of changing seasonal ecology was a starting point. Could we think about what the forest was like last week? What about in winter? Might there be possibilities to engage in dialogue about Indigeneity and the traditional and ancestral carers of this land? Within the farm in which the forest is located, there are Indigenous gardens cared for and with by Musqueum community members. Though not always directly in engagement with each other, I noticed reciprocal interactions in moments of sharing space and attending or attuning to one another. On one of our last walks together, Bowen and I passed by a large cedar in process of being carved into a pole. I asked Bowen if he knew what Indigenous meant. “No,” he replied. Not with dismissal or rejection, but perhaps he hadn’t connected my question with where we were. I could think of informal past conversations between us where we discussed why this particular place was meaningful during the relationship-building phase of my time with the children. I paused for a few moments to come up with a response. Should I explain? But I came up short. I felt an urge to “stay in the trouble” of that moment, but was also torn in my role of researcher (Haraway, 2016). I was to ask, not tell. Before I was able to follow through with the conversation, Bowen’s attention had moved to the arrival of some friendly faces on the farm. He ran towards them – leaving me feeling
It is our last day with(in) the forest farm. I ask Hayden if he thinks the plants and animals of the forest will miss us. If they will notice we are gone. “The potato bugs don’t really know,” he replies decidedly. In my musings of attunement and the spiral process of re-attuning in order to be conscious with(in) place, I begin to think about the forest’s attunement of us.

This forest has had to adapt and change depending on the humans who lived with(in) it overtime. Prior to the European settlement of the area, the Musqueam people lived with(in) this forest in a much more reciprocal manner than European settlers, using forest resources mindfully and respectfully. According to the Musqueam First Nation (2014),

Tall, cedar forests used to surround our ancient villages and provided for us in many ways. Cedar trees continue to be important in our daily and ceremonial lives. The wood can be split using mauls and wedges into long planks for house boards and roofing. Skilled carvers create canoes, boxes, house posts, carvings, and tools using cedar. We travel into the c̕aɫ̓qʷ (inland) to strip bark from living cedar trees in May and June. sl̓aw̓q̓ (inner cedar bark) is separated from the outer bark, dried, and later softened for use. We use these materials to create belongings such as hats, capes, baskets, and ropes. Look around Vancouver today—where are our forests? (p. 11)

Marker (2006) noted how many Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding are inseparable from relationships and rapport with land, place and community. His work is a layer in the vibrant and emerging assemblage of engagements in academic research by Indigenous scholars regarding the
importance of upholding Indigenous traditional cultural values, ways of knowing and ways of being and living well (Battiste, 2013; Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007).

What an adjustment it must have been for this place to re-attune to humans who are not motivated by rapport or reciprocity, but by capitalism, industry and corporate greed. Curiosities continue to spiral on to my page. Why don’t the potato bugs know? Do we as humans give place room to attune? What lessons can we learn from thinking-with the forest in this way?

Taken together collectively, through the kaleidoscopic lively storytelling coupled with a spiral pattern of attunement, the forest stories offered a useful lens to delve into the ways in which the children made meaning with(in) the forest. Further, a spiral of attunement led to a conceptualization of place inclusive to the more-than-human actors so often ignored in the context of early childhood research. The following chapter will further discuss the meanings of the lively stories and suggest possible implications for theory and practice.
Figurue 19. Berry bloom mandala
Chapter 5: Matters of Concern with(in) the Forest

Overview

The concluding chapter of this work is comprised of three parts: first, I return and reorient to my original guiding purpose and inquiry, situating the lively stories presented in Chapter 4 within the context of the research questions. While critically reflecting on the ways in which the lively stories enlivened, responded to, or collided with the research questions, and maintaining an ethical orientation of paying attention to ‘matters of concern’ (Latour, 2004), I explore both the tensions and generative possibilities for place-conscious pedagogies in ECE. In doing so, I activated a form of pedagogical response-ability (Blaise et al., 2017, Haraway, 2008) in order to galvanize dialogue and explore the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of this work.

Next, I consider the strengths and limitations of my work, providing an in-depth description of their interconnected nature given the methodological and theoretical orientations of this project. Finally, I offer an engagement with the implications for future research, practice and policy. In this discussion, I suggest how this work contributes to and deepens existing common worlds theory and practice; explore the potentiality of lively storytelling as a dynamic enrichment of the pedagogical narration process described in the BC Early Learning Framework (2019); and describe lingering questions that might inform future research, practice or policy in early childhood studies.

Attuning to Matters of Concern with(in) Lively Stories: A Return to the Research Questions

The overarching purpose of this work was to generate possibilities for understanding the ways in which place-conscious ECE pedagogies might support reciprocal child-place relationships. In order to both align this inquiry with the theoretical orientations and attend to gaps in the literature explored in Chapter 2, the following research questions were chosen:

- From a common worlds perspective, how are child-place relationships enacted?
In what ways do more-than-human community members engage children in building relationships with(in) place in ECE settings?

In the ensuing sections, I connect what was generated, disrupted and assembled as lively stories to the research questions, with the intention of making visible matters of concern (Latour, 2004). What emerged from my time with the children and the forest was that place stories are matters of concern. Place-child entanglements in British Columbia are contextualized by colonial histories, narratives of extraction, and the messy frictions of loss, capitalism and greed (Nxumalo, 2018; Nxumalo & Cedilo, 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013). Looking through a metaphorical kaleidoscope in the forest reflects and re-attunes to these histories and to possibilities for pedagogical response-ability in the forest. Blaise et al. (2017) viewed lively stories as a way to not just name or notice more-than-human aspects of a community, “but also for getting to know them” (p. 39), to get to know what places know. Lively storytelling deepened my attunement to young children’s meaning-making and relationality with the more-than-human word. It also ignited in my research and pedagogical disposition an attunement to what this place and other places know. Pacini-Ketchabaw (2013) wrote that forests know stories:

They know about practices of deforestation; they know about settlers’ insistence on marking their boundaries; they know about progress; they know about violence, conquest and more.

The stories forests know are never final, nor do they exist without friction. (p. 355)

In the same vein, the lively stories presented in the previous chapter are not final, nor do they exist without friction. I now return to the orienting research questions.
From a Common Worlds Perspective, How are Child-Place Relationships Enacted?

Attunements to the ways children formed relationships with(in) place were processual and dynamic. In the lively stories ‘Walk,’ ‘Forest,’ ‘Stump,’ ‘Moss,’ ‘Crow’ and ‘Berry,’ the spiral of attunement made visible particular moments, conversations which can be interpreted as generative possibilities for responding to this research question. Further, as described in Chapter 3, matters of concern make possible ways to critically attend and pay attention to the complexity that is inherent to seeing the world through a relational and kaleidoscopic lens. What follows are the ways in which the lively stories both individually and collectively enliven and illuminate the matters of concern that were activated by the research question.

‘Walk’. ‘Walk’ initiated the analytical spiral of attunement, introducing the lively storytelling process. Quinn’s hesitance in our interactions allowed us to pause, dwell and linger in forest moments. Noticing the incongruence of my chosen method of conversive wayfinding and the way Quinn wanted to move through that forest in the moment was a moment of tension, but it spoke to an immersed and emerging theme of this work: the illumination of the possibility of paying attention to common worlds relationality (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017). This lively story made visible a moment which articulated one of the ways in which the children connected to and established relationships with place -- through their senses. The process of documenting traces of the myriad ways the children paused in and noticed place initiated an important curve of lively storytelling. Being comfortable with pauses, with silence, and intentionally holding space for mutual attention is an important impetus for the generation of lively stories, as stories do not always come out of action. Lively stories can dwell in moments, in pauses, in the in-between. To situate oneself wholly in place requires an attunement. In order to begin to interpret the goings on, we had to stop and pause.
Savransky and Stenger (2018) discussed the art of paying attention and the necessity of ‘slowing’ science. A slow spiral of storytelling is how I experienced the children building relationships and engaging in meaning-making with(in) the forest. Attuning to the forest place involved noticing, listening to, colliding with, responding to and attuning again and again. Through the spiral of attunement, the children engaged with(in) place in a way that cultivated their and my response-ability (Blaise et al., 2017; Haraway, 2008). Cultivating response-ability is a collective experience that takes into account places, animals, forests, trees, crows, moss, atmospheres, contexts, materials or histories. It is not a singular, universalized framework of action, but one that is embedded as responsiveness within ordinary moments, pedagogies, relations and attunements (Blaise et al.). What lively storytelling enabled in the forest was a process of deepening attunement to how children get to know place, and the more-than-humans with whom they are engaged and entangled.

‘Forest’. Documenting traces of the children noticing smells was a catalyst in the creation of the forest lively story. Smells, or lack thereof, were a way that the children situated themselves with(in) place. The children noticed changes, sought out sources and sensuously tested theories. Using Tsing’s (2015) polyphonic assemblage metaphor, I attempted to unravel how a forest could both smell like something and like nothing at the same time. Pulling from biology, I was familiarized to the liveliness of plant communication, and noticed how smelling was in fact, conversational. Reframing smelling as conversation generated possibilities for how children build relationships with(in) place. The polyphony was further useful to interpret the goings on in the forest, as the place as a whole (histories, contexts, weather, climate) is important, but so are the smaller, intimate engagements.

‘Stump’. ‘Stump’ expressed the relationality between a cedar stump and the children. The lively story is layered, and speaks to both research questions. In relation to the ways children build
relationships with(in) place, I witnessed intricate interactions between the stump and each child, both as a group and individually. The stump was often a touchstone of conversation, a landmark to orient from and a participant in play. Interpreting the stump-child interactions through Ingold’s (2013) dance of animacy perspective made visible the intentional and relational engagement between stump and child. It was interesting to note the ways in which the children brought to the forest stories from home and invited the stump into their recreations of being stuck in an elevator. The way I interpreted child-stump encounters was that the stump was a place of safety. The children seemed to be experimenting with their sense of agency and control as they took on the varying roles of door, elevator riders, and the people waiting for the elevator.

‘Stump’ also relayed the tensions I felt between my role as researcher and educator. As an educator, I saw pedagogical potential in conversations about a tree’s transformation to a stump -- but, as a researcher, my role in that moment was to listen, not to shape. The tone of this story is reflective, and in a sense, self-critical for the purposes of academic and practical enrichment. Reciprocity was, and is important in the forest. The reciprocal relationship between the stump and the children was one that maintained longevity throughout all my visits. The children often spoke about the stump, and gravitated towards it in their play. In listening to this preference and noticing this tendency, rather than following my ‘pedagogical impulse,’ I was able to think about some of the ways that place materials are encountered by the children. That the stump was not a stump, but an elevator to Bowen, Quinn, Avery and Hayden enabled me to see my own biases. The stump had agency to the children. It invited, responded. But I could see only how the stump was a tree, could only think of it in its past tense.

The emergence and addition of listening to the spiral of attunement is crucial. Often, as educators, we listen to children, but we don’t always necessarily hear what they are saying. According to the B.C Early Learning Framework (2019), a ‘pedagogy of listening’ is part of the process of
pedagogical narration, and one that spurs critical reflection, and in turn, pedagogical choices. Documenting the traces of this lively story was incredibly important in intentionally and actively attuning to my own biases so that I could be more immersed in interpreting the richness of child-place relationships.

‘Moss’. The word collide connotes intensity. It conveys a noticeable and lasting impact. Metaphorically, I picture this lively story as the energetic push of a seed emerging from the earth. ‘Moss’ was where my spiral of attunement began to curve, to flow, to move and shape a possibility for response, for action. The way Hayden noticed and paid attention to reciprocity in the forest was a collision of inquiry and meaning-making.

Central to ‘Moss’ was Hayden’s focus on moss-tree-potato bug symbiosis. Hayden often paid attention to the small insects that lived in the dark, moist areas he would examine by rolling over a log or peering into a hole. He noticed how some of those bugs were also explorers of the lush carpets of moss that covered the base of many of the trees in a particular clearing we often spent time in. Hayden made meaning of these noticed connections by telling stories about how and why these more-than-humans engaged with one another. Moss is a colonizing plant, in that it grows in ecosystems that are already biodiverse. However, when moss grows on a tree it establishes a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship. It does not feed from the tree, or extract resources, but provides it with benefits through bacteria that support the conversion of nitrogen into something plants can use. By paying attention to the stories of reciprocity between moss, trees and insects, in my lively storytelling, I was able to unravel possibilities of decolonizing pedagogies.

Lively moss stories can challenge educators in British Columbia to acknowledge and to interrogate and unsettle the colonial places and spaces of early childhoods (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). Moss situates itself on an already living, diverse and rich ecosystem, but is not extractive, assimilatory or harmful. It breathes nitrogen into the plants with which it shares place, so they are
able to photosynthesize and grow. Similarly, educators can actively decolonize pedagogies by attuning to a perspective oriented with\textit{(in)} matters of concern rather than matters of fact. Educators can ‘stay in the trouble’ of power relations, ethics and politics and respectfully and reciprocally engage with multiplicities of ways of knowing. Haraway’s (1997) figure of the Modest Witness is helpful to encourage situated, engaged and immersed accountability. We can be situated, and breathe reciprocity into pedagogy, practice and living inquiry.

\textbf{‘Crow’.} In another example of the ways in which the research questions were illuminated throughout the lively storytelling process, ‘Crow’ encompassed two curves of the spiral of attunement: listen and respond. Central to ‘Crow: Part one’ was my documentation of Hayden conversing with the crows. He actively engaged with the corvids, and interpreted their caws as invitations to dialogue. In communicating to me that he not only understood what the crows were saying, but also was able to speak back to them, traces of a relationship emerged. Hayden’s casual certainty of his fluency in crow encouraged me to think about the pedagogical possibilities of human-crow conversations. What does it mean to be in conversation without speaking the same language?

In ‘Crow: Part two,’ I discussed a terse and timely situation that unfortunately, far too many forests in British Columbia know. What is important in this story is to pause with the discomfort of resisting an image of child and forest as innocent and what it means to contest the nature/culture binary. The notion forests need ‘protection’ from humans is one that is contextualized by capitalism, development and industry. The tension here is ripe with conflict, uncertainty and discomfort. Writing ‘Crow’ was sticky and difficult, given the common worlds lens through which I was looking at child-place relationships. Quinn was aware of and attuned to the disruptions that stemmed from nearby construction, and thought about the impacts the birds were experiencing. Hayden’s encounters with crows were relational and intra-active. What does this mean in the context of
climate crisis and pervasive deforestation? The tension of caring about the forest, of having empathy for more-than-human community members and falling into ongoing settler colonial patterns of making decisions about what or who is protected in a forest is intricate and nuanced.

‘Berry’. A shift in seasons introduced a new way that children got to know place sensuously: through taste. The children noticed and attuned to more-than-human community members they had not previously noticed, listened to, collided with or responded to earlier. New matters of concern emerged from reverberating frictions that were encountered. The possibility of tasting encouraged children to get close to the thorny berry bushes they had avoided earlier in the season. The children began thinking about what other more-than-humans might also be tasting the berries. The way Hayden thought about the berry preferences of dragonflies made visible the importance of spiraling back to attunement when engaging with and being pedagogically conscious of place.

In What Ways Do More-than-Human Community Members Engage Children in Building Relationships with(in) Place in ECE Settings?

Intentional attunements to the ways more-than-human community members engaged children in building relationships with(in) place were brought to the foreground through the lively storytelling process. As an attempt to be open and accountable to common worlds narratives, careful attention was paid to avoid anthropocentric language while creating the lively stories ‘Walk,’ ‘Forest,’ ‘Stump,’ ‘Moss,’ ‘Crow’ and ‘Berry.’ Pairing this intentional use of language with a spiral of attunement made visible generative possibilities for responding to this research question. Further, as described in Chapter 3, matters of concern make possible ways to critically attend and pay attention to the complexity that is inherent in seeing the world through a relational and kaleidoscopic lens. What follows are the ways in which the lively stories both individually and collectively enlivened and illuminated the matters of concern that were activated by the research question.
‘Forest’. While writing ‘Forest,’ I followed Iorio et al. (2018)’s provocation of place to guide my phrasing. Careful attention to detail was undertaken, so that more-than-human actors were foregrounded. Instead of stating “we walked through the forest,” phrasing was intentionally changed to “child feet, adult voices and clanging water bottles meander.” Emphasis was placed not on the human experience, but on how the forest might experience the group of children. This pedagogical provocation has application for early childhood educators as they critically reflect on their own documentation processes. What might be uncovered if stories are re-framed and re-worked? This point of view is a departure from many child-centric approaches to early learning. Emphasis is not placed on the child, but on the place and the relationships contained within. In the context of climate precarity, this type of documentation is useful to borrow from in order to resist anthropocentric tendencies and to avoid environmental stewardship discourse. The impact of situating pedagogical practice with(in) place instead of centering it around children disrupts the nature/culture binary described in Chapter 2.

‘Stump’. ‘Stump’ was complex and layered with both tension and possibility. Drawing from Ingold’s (2013) dance of animacy perspective enabled me to see more clearly the ways in which more-than-human community members engaged children in building relationships with(in) place. Ingold looked to describe how human and more-than-human bodies correspond and take turns to lead and to be led. Thinking with a common worlds framework draws out the possibility that the stump had agency in this play as well. How might the stump have invited the children into play? Ingold’s (2013) dance of animacy perspective is complimented by the ways Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2016) approached and thought about material encounters. In resisting instrumentalism, or the idea that materials are merely resources for learning or development, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. investigated the possibility that “materials “speak back” to children in agentic ways” (p. 3). Drawing from Lenz-Taguchi (2010), Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. reconceptualized relationships as intra-active engagements.
between living organisms and the material environment, rather than intrapersonal (relationship to human self) or interpersonal (relationships between humans).

Indeed, intra-active matters of concern were generated from the common worlds attunement activated in the lively storytelling process (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). We can think differently about the stump as not an inanimate material passive in the children’s meaning-making but as animate material active in relationality, entangled in reciprocity (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al.). Living inquiry, experimentation and meaning-making ravels and unravels differently from this lens. A twist of the metaphorical kaleidoscope makes visible the more-than-human agency of the forest.

*Crow*: “But again, the question intrudes: whose stories are these?” (Haraway, 2019, p. 4). It matters that crow stories emerged with(in) the forest. At this point in the Spiral of Attunement, the spiral curved in a way that activated a collision of meaning-making that required a response. Conversing with crows activated an attunement to the relational agency of crow-child engagements. From a common worlds perspective, neither being acts alone. Their relations are intra-active. Crow and child act upon each other and upon their meeting ground (place) (Greenwood, 2016; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). The voices of crows were and are a matter of concern in the forest. As Haraway (2019) stated, “it matters what stories tell stories; it matters whose stories tell stories” (p. 1). Becoming conscious and attuned to place necessitates an exploration of the ethics of storytelling. As I noted in the crow lively story, cawing crow voices were often recorded during conversive wayfinding. Crow voices were entangled with traces that informed pedagogical narrations and provoked lively storytelling and, thus, generated dialogue in this discussion. But the crows were not invited to consent, or to assent, or to even tell their stories. I echo Haraway (2019) again to ask: “what is at stake and for whom in making their stories our own?” (p. 4). There are no simple answers.
In the context of the Anthropocene, responding to ethical questions about matters of concern is necessary. Climate crisis coupled with a capitalist drive towards ‘progress’ contextualizes all place experiences. I returned to the forest while writing this chapter and encountered a solitary bald eagle sitting high on a western cedar tree. I tracked the eagle’s movements as he gracefully maneuvered around a crane that was hoisting material from noisy machinery up into the heights of a newly built condo development. The juxtaposition was wrenching. It is not only the stories of crows that invoke response, and invite response(ability), but that of all the more-than-humans that share our common world. Who lives and who dies in the age of Anthropocene? How do we reconfigure pedagogies to deconstruct human/animal dualisms and nature/culture binaries? How do we challenge human exceptionalism? How can we live well together in a common world?

‘Berry’. Disrupting the notion of forest as a pedagogical ‘resource’ with a vision of place as agent of intra-action is important. Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019) envisioned the coupling of common worlds and childhoods as having “nothing to do with harmony, purity, and innocence -- either in the form of bucolic pastoral idylls or essentialized wild nature fantasies. It is much more pragmatic and down to earth” (p 13). They encouraged researchers and educators thinking-with common worlds to see the places children and more-than-humans “co-inhabit as messy and mixed up rather than pure, as damaged rather than utopian, and as prosaic rather than sanctified” (p. 13). Surfacing the frictions and tensions of ‘greening’ early childhoods is an aspect of modest witness(ing) that reconceptualizes forest pedagogies (Blaise et al., 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013). This instigates a dual effort of resistance towards dialogues of place and child innocence and purity that is ultimately aligned with a common worlds theoretical perspective. By ‘staying in the trouble’ and bearing witness to the contextual intricacies of places through lively storytelling and paying attention to matters of concern, place is re-envisioned as agentic (Blaise et al, 2017; Haraway, 2016).
The lively stories that emerged with(in) the forest defy uniformity and hold space for uncertainty (Blaise et al., 2017; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019). This, coupled with spiral energy, encourages us (myself, the children, the reader) to slow down, to reconceptualize how we can be accountable to one another, and to locate and orient ourselves in pedagogy that is responsive, living and attuned with(in) 21st century childhoods.

**Strengths and Limitations**

In my work, I am resisting objectivity and uniformity. As such, the limitations and strengths of this thesis are interconnected. In order to make consistent my positionality, theoretical perspective and methodological approach, I actively engage my subjectivity and ensure the enmeshment of myself, the children and place in my writing. Ensuring this assemblage is vital to my approach. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I entered this research with my own positionality and subjectivities; however, I made sure there were opportunities for collaborative dialogue that elicited multiple perspectives from the children and educators throughout the pedagogical narration and lively storytelling process. Doing so opened up my perception of encounters, so that there was an aspect of collaborative response within work (Ingold, 2013). For example, during the member checking process and after reading a draft of Chapter Four, the forest educator suggested a change in the display of the mandala. It was important to her to be able to see the original photo, so that the spiral process of mandala creation was felt by the reader once they reached each story’s end. The educator also commented on how interesting it was to step into the conversive wayfinding moments, as she mentioned she does not often have the same type of ‘one on one’ time with the children. This speaks to a challenge many educators face: balancing the needs and safety of the group while also paying attention pedagogically to individual interests and conversations. Continuing communication beyond the data collection period strengthened my relationship with the educator, and ensured the storytelling continued to be ‘lively,’ months after the stories’ conception. This
collaboration and relationality both strengthened the trustworthiness of my work, and became an opportunity for the involved educator to reflect on her practice.

The ‘golden standard’ in much scientific research is reproducibility. As mentioned earlier, I do not expect this work to be able to be reproduced, as the lively moments and encounters are unique. Though traditionally, this is a ‘limitation’ to my work, the matter of fact that entanglements are not reproduceable is not a matter of concern. I do not seek to produce scalable and reproducible accounts of the goings on with(in) the forest – they are individual and distinctive, characterized by the particular actors and the entanglements of moments and place. The fact that these recounted entanglements are not reproduceable does not mean they do not contribute to a body of research, nor does it take away from their applicability to practice and future inquiry (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019; Tsing, 2015). The learnings untangled from and with the forest, the kaleidoscopic lens from which they were recounted and my retelling of embodied experiences can serve as pedagogical provocations.

A limitation of this work is the amount of time that I was able to spend in the research site. This thesis presents a snapshot of encounters and experiences over a four-week period, but the inquiry could have been further enriched had I spent more time with the children. The time frame was of course, a product of the realistic feasibility of this Master’s level writing, but for pedagogical narrations and lively storytelling to be truly generative with the children, I would be embodying spiral energy and continuing on with this recursive, cyclical process. If an educator were to use a spiral of attunement to co-create lively stories with children, they might use such stories to inform curriculum choices, or to attune to contexts and situations that deepen, provoke, or animate curiosities and place engagements. Further, the application of lively storytelling for early childhood educators can be a re-envisioning of pedagogical narration and other documentation processes. The
work in this thesis is a call to action, an illustration of the possibilities of paying attention to place and foregrounding matters of concern inclusive to more-than-human ethics and needs.

An important limitation to note is that data analysis is, in its nature, reductionistic. Representing what was experienced, embodied, tangled and untangled in the forest in writing automatically detracts from the rich, lively nature of the experience. However intentional and careful my storytelling was in the avoidance of human exceptionalism, there lies an inherent anthropocentric bias in the act of writing, or re-telling stories through my human perspective. As Haraway (2019) noted, “it matters what stories tell stories; it matters whose stories tell stories” (p.1). It matters that human hands wrote these words and human eyes are reading them. However, small and purposeful readjustments of the ways stories are retold and convey more-than-human presence are meaningful engagements in allievating this power dynamic. This work is an important contribution to this process.

A strength of this work is my approach to challenging the artificial boundary between research and practice. In my experience of the field of ECE, I have encountered educators who are weary of new trends in research, and feel as though they have limited time and resources to stay ‘up to date’ with what is going on in institutions. Furthermore, some educators feel as though research is conducted in a way that is unrealistic to maintain in the field, due to factors such as a lack of access to professional development activities or concerns regarding the accessibility of academic language or theoretical constructs. The pressure to conform to ideas generated out of theories and books, rather than from relationships, is draining, and has at times in my own practice, made me feel pulled in different directions, seemingly attending to everything and nothing. By foregrounding in my methodological approach the use of a pedagogical tool that has been conceptualized in relationship with practicing early childhood educators, I hope that other researchers might adopt pedagogical narration or lively storytelling in their research in the early years and contribute to a more accessible
and inclusive language shared by professionals in the field. If researchers and practitioners can come together in attunement, the divisive disconnect that is so pervasive in the field of ECE might be lessened. A spiral of attunement as lively analytical tool holds promise to reconceptualize the way early childhood research is conducted; it offers a new way forward to conceptualize meaning-making with(in) place.

My resistance towards developmentalism, conventional scientific inquiry, or other western knowledge systems is not a rejection. I, along with many posthumanist and postmodernist scholars acknowledge the necessity of viewing the world objectively in certain circumstances, particularly when acknowledging and recognizing the scientific realities of climate change. Rather, I am suggesting that there might be possibility in slowing down, paying attention and following a feminist inquiry of “understanding how things work, who is in the action, what might be possible, and how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently” (Haraway, 2016, p. 99) I am not advocating for a rejection of science, objectivity or the existence of universal truths. I am advocating for holding space for uncertainty, tension; slowing down and paying attention; for attunement, for a slow collision. My research suggests that there is generative possibility in attuning to place. As a result, if practitioners, researchers, policy makers and leaders practice place attunement, and stay in the trouble of the tensions, politics and ethics of 21st early matters of concern, we may be able to co-construct more livable, relational and reciprocal worlds for future generations.

Implications for Future Research, Policy and Practice

Common Worlds Theories, Methods and Methodologies

This thesis makes theoretical, practical and methodological contributions to the field of early childhood studies. It complements and extends current conceptual views and educational applications in early childhood. This work contributes to a lively and innovative body of work that is
thoughtfully carried out by the members of the Common Worlds Research Collective. I am
immeasurably inspired and motivated by the ongoing inquiry done by the Collective, and must note
that common worlds research is gaining momentum in diverse international contexts. A benefit of
this community is a collective willingness to engage in dialogue, share methodological approaches
and intra-act to reconceptualize early childhood pedagogy and research.

Theoretically, I used a common worlds lens to approach and guide the research process,
contributing to the body of work established by other common worlds researchers. Common worlds
thinking is rich in theory, pulling from an interdisciplinary assemblage of research concerned with
human and more-than-human relations. Distinctive to a common worlds approach is how each
individual inquiry builds and shapes the assemblage. Common worlds researchers call for localized,
situated engagements that look to challenge human/nature binaries and dwell in the tensions of the
indivisibility of earth-dwelling creatures. As such, lively storytelling with(in) the forest offers a
unique, un-reproducible account. It is an extended act of paying attention to place that enriches
understandings and relationalities in our common world.

The combination of lively storytelling and a spiral of attunement created a unique
contribution methodologically. Throughout the research process, it became evident how, in order to
follow my curiosity and intentions for inquiry, existing analytical tools did not suffice to align
theoretically with a common worlds approach. While thematic content analysis may have been
appropriate for a traditional narrative approach, decontextualizing the traces of my inquiry in a
systematic and linear scheme was not in alignment with my positionality and criticisms of
Eurocentric approaches to knowledge synthesis. As such, it was pertinent to find methodological
grounding within common worlds literature to ensure my positionality and theoretical orientation
was maintained. Lively storytelling through a spiral of attunement combined inspirational threads
from early childhood pedagogists, common worlds researchers and my own experiences in the forest
to assemble an aligned and lively methodological lens. I conceptualize the use of spiral of
attunement and lively storytelling to approach my research as looking through a kaleidoscope.
Instead of using a magnifying glass, as a traditional analytical tool might, which zooms in on
particular experiences or characteristics and decontextualizes, a kaleidoscope replicates and reflects
patterns, enabling research to attend to a contextualized polyphony of experience, place and
meaning-making. The value of this type of approach is a contribution to the literature, research and
ultimately, it is hoped, practice. It is a fresh compliment and extension of innovative conceptual
views and pedagogical applications in early childhood.

**BC Early Learning Framework**

By framing this inquiry through a common worlds theoretical framework, I was able to both
untangle and create new knots from some of the ethical complexities and pedagogical possibilities of
living and learning in times of climate precarity. Attuning to, surfacing and assembling rich, detailed
and relational insight into child-place relationships enabled me to reflect critically what it means to
be place-conscious in ECE. This thesis elaborates on the BC Early Learning Framework,
experimenting with the pedagogical dispositions and inquiries put forth in the document. Both the
BC Early Learning Framework and this thesis are concerned with “the ethical questions of living in
the world together” (BC Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 13). While engaging with local, situated
complexities, the work in previous chapters takes inspiration from certain pedagogical tools such as
pedagogical narration and expands upon them in order to attune to and align with a common worlds
theoretical lens. This type of expansion aligns with the BC Early Learning Framework’s (2019) image
of the rhizome, a term borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) that portrays approaches to
early childhood that continuously creates movement, are always becoming and hold space for
multiple trajectories. Rhizomatic approaches to early childhood studies have potential to illustrate
complexity, enact new ways of knowing and illuminate the deep, interconnected relationships
between children, places, more-than-humans and educators (BC Ministry of Education, 2019). Indeed, approaching research through a rhizomatic approach enacted a spiral of attunement, a continuation of ideas told through lively storytelling.

The potentiality of lively storytelling as a tool for early childhood educators in British Columbia to deepen pedagogical narration processes is dynamic. Using this pedagogical tool, educators can challenge their own assumptions of inclusion and attune to more-than-humans in practice. By looking at pedagogy through the kaleidoscopic lens of lively storytelling, educators might deepen their understandings of curriculum as concerned with being and living well in a common world.

**Possibilities for Future Inquiry**

As spiral energy implies, this thesis unraveled possibilities for future inquiry at each curve of the process. Looking through the lens of place encourages kaleidoscopic possibilities. Further lively engagements with a spiral of attunement would attune, notice, listen, collide and respond in unique, local and situated ways – offering distinct perspectives, possibilities and pedagogical implications. I am particularly interested in attuning to and further disrupting the nature/culture binary by exploring child-place relationships in urban settings. Access to forest spaces is a privilege that not all children or educators have access to, and I believe to further critically engage with common worlds thinking, children’s relationships to what we deem “artificial” places is important. I want to lean into the tensions and frictions of how educators and children engage pedagogically with urban spaces, and reconceptualize the potential biases that might exist in dismissing the presence of more-than-human community members within them. Can we challenge our notions of what is alive? What has possibility for liveliness?
**Spiral Attunements in Early Childhood Research, Policy and Practice**

What I hope for early childhood educators to take from this is an idea of how to apply common worlds thinking pedagogically. Further, what I hope for researchers to take away from reading this work is an understanding of how theory translates into practice. Finally, I hope policy makers can be attuned to the matters of concern that are directly activated in British Columbian politics. As such, galvanizing a spiral of attunement within the interconnections of research, policy and practice in early childhoods is pertinent. As we have seen throughout the history of this field, ideas flow, contest, challenge and dominate as they are diffracted through each lens. Working together to share our subjectivities, positionalities and orient together in a common world has potential reverberations for all. As stated by Gibson, Rose, and Fincher (2015):

> we can work against singular and global representations of ‘the problem’ in the face of which any small, multiple, place-based action is rendered hopeless. We can choose to read for difference rather than dominance; think connectivity rather than hyper-separation; look for multiplicity—multiple climate changes, multiple ways of living with earth others. We can find ways forward in what is already being done in the here and now; attend to the performative effects of any analysis; tell stories in a hopeful and open way – allowing for the possibility that life is dormant rather than dead. (p. viii)

The art of paying attention in ECE is ripe with ethical and political frictions, as well as possibilities. Engaging in dialogues of tension ensures we are attuned to one another as we look towards an era of uncertainty. We must navigate the complexities of life, loss, inheritance and healing in times of climate precarity in order to contextualize and respond with concern, ethics and liveliness. We must find a spiraling way forward, together.
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Appendices

Appendix 1. Conversive Wayfinding Prompts

How do you feel when you are on walks in the forest? Do you like going there?

What are the places that you like to go in the forest?

- Why do you like to go there?
- How do you feel when you are in that place? (Do you feel happy, excited?)
- What kinds of things do you like to do there?

Do you ever see any animals while you are on walks in the forest?

- What kind of animals do you see?
- Do you like that animal?
- What about that animal did you like?

Are there any plants that you like in the forest?

- Do you like to touch/feel/smell it?
- What do you like about it?

Do you like to tell stories in the forest? Can you tell me a story about a time you were in the forest?

Where should we walk to in the forest? Why do you want to go there?

- Are there any animals that you want to see or hear? Why?
- Are there any plants that you want to smell, see, or touch? Why?