



The emergence of early childhood education outdoor programs in British Columbia: a meandering story

Hartley Banack & Iris Berger

To cite this article: Hartley Banack & Iris Berger (2020) The emergence of early childhood education outdoor programs in British Columbia: a meandering story, *Children's Geographies*, 18:1, 58-68, DOI: [10.1080/14733285.2019.1590527](https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2019.1590527)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2019.1590527>



Published online: 15 Mar 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 838



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



The emergence of early childhood education outdoor programs in British Columbia: a meandering story

Hartley Banack^a and Iris Berger^b

^aFaculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada;

^bFaculty of Education, Early Childhood Education Programs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the emergence of early childhood education outdoor programs in British Columbia, Canada. The story told follows paths not dissimilar from how one might observe children on a walk to the park. While the park is the destination, it is the journey to the park, of picking up pebbles, looking at flowers, and finding sticks, that enlivens and binds the journey. Through our consideration of stories from a number of outdoor programs, we weave patterns that join their emergence and consider how their stories might sustain and encourage educational action.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 19 July 2018

Accepted 28 January 2019

KEYWORDS

Early childhood education; outdoor learning; outdoor education; ecology; ethos

I love the walk to the park with the two-year-olds because it is the walk to the park, pick the pebbles ... climb on things. It is always the walk to the park where everything interesting happens. It is the journey. And if you were to map it [the walk to the park], it would never be a linear line ... pick up a pebble here, went over there ... The kids are actually walking three times as far as a direct line. The walk is a web of webs.

~ Kate Dawson, Terra Nova Nature School, Richmond, B.C., 2016

This paper aims to map the unfolding story of the emergence of early childhood education (ECE) outdoor programs in British Columbia (B.C.), Canada. Musing about storying as an ethical practice, van Dooren and Rose (2016) urged us to 'tell stories that draw audiences into other's lives in new and consequential ways' (89). They added that this approach to storying is 'grounded in attentiveness to the evolving ways of life (or *ēthea*; singular: *ethos*) of diverse forms of human and nonhuman life and in an effort to explore and perhaps re-story the relationships that constitute and nourish them' (89). The story told above about children's meandering on-their-way to the park had a profound effect on us. This story was shared with us by Kate Dawson, an early childhood educator from one of the emergent ECE outdoor programs in B.C., and in many ways the story's vibrancy and ethos reverberate through the writing of this paper. In particular, the meandering walk holds, for us, an approach to life and pedagogy 'from the perspective of emergence and potentiality' (Dahlberg and Moss 2009, xxi). In listening to stories that are attentive to children's ways of encountering the world, we find wisdom and possibilities to (re)think/live relationships with children and the outdoors; we also find novel ways to challenge pedagogies that promote linear ideas of progress, because learning, when experienced as meandering, is unpredictable and heterogeneous; requiring careful attentiveness to rich potentialities in unexpected pedagogical and ethical encounters.

We invite meandering as a philosophical concept that supports movement (in relation to emergence) likened to Ingold's (2009) notion of *wayfaring* in his discussion of place. Not unlike children's mode of walking to the park, Ingold postulated that dwelling is 'not the occupation of a world already built but the very process of inhabiting the earth' (31), and that knowledge emerges as we journey

through the world, *along* paths of travel, yielding 'practical understanding of the lifeworld' (41). This process of inhabiting means that lives are led through, around, to, and from places and that places are delineated by an embodied experience of movement – Ingold's *wayfaring*. It is this movement that we wish to illuminate in our mapping-storying of evolving ECE outdoor programs in B.C. Thus, we too meander through this paper with curiosity and openness, pausing to examine *pebbles* that call our attention or dwelling on possibilities that may emerge for ECE through these relatively new outdoor experiences. As with the walk to the park, this paper is not in a rush.

We position the story of the emergence of B.C. ECE outdoor programs within a broader story of ecology and action. For us, ecology is a shifting field of non-linear (and linear) connectivity that is bound (and un-bounded) in a weave that Bateson (2002) referred to as 'the pattern that connects' (7). Using Bateson's notions of ecology and ethos, this paper takes a political stance towards ecological connectivity through outdoor ECE programs. In this sense, we consider Arendt's notion of *action* and its relation to storytelling. For Arendt (1998), to act meant to initiate innovation in the world, to set something in motion. Arendt claimed that actions – which are often fleeting – are in danger of disappearance if not noted by spectators and narrated by storytellers. We suggest that those initiating ECE outdoor programs in B.C. are engaged in action and our intention in sharing these stories is to invite readers to be moved by potentialities that these actions offer in creating encounters for/with young children in what Ingold (2008) called an *open world*.

Story-mapping

Gathering stories shared by ECE outdoor learning program leaders around the province of B.C. was not undertaken as a scientific endeavor that 'compartmentalized and distills' (Ingold 2009, 42), rather we approached it with Ingold's (2008) notion of *meshwork*. He wrote, 'as every organism- indeed, every thing- is itself an entanglement, a tissue of knots whose constituent strands, as they become tied up with other strands, in other bundles, make up the meshwork' (1806). We invited ECE outdoor learning educators, from around B.C., we had come to know, to share stories with us about the origins and experiences of their programs and, in turn, we share their stories with you. These stories are not discreet events, nor are they being mined for universal nuggets, rather they are *meshworked* in their movement. The approach we take is not intended to represent an 'ethnographic account.' We are following Davies' (2011) lead, when we claim that we do not share elements of these stories as 'empirical data' used to establish an objective truth. Rather the stories provided an entry point into responding to some of the curiosities and questions regarding the recent emergence of ECE outdoor programs in B.C. Permission has been given to use the educators' names and stories as they were shared with us. Our interest lies not in how stories produce representations of an independent reality, rather we focus on the 'consequences, interventions, creative possibilities, and responsibilities of telling our and others' stories' (Klenk 2018, 333). In listening to, telling and re-telling others' stories, we enact an understanding of stories as living. In our writing, we hope to sustain their lives in an ever expanding ecology.

Again, through mapping stories we are not concerned with being prescriptive; as we meandered, singular stories entwined into a woven fabric, this we call story-mapping. Price-Chalita (1994) described Haraway's use of mapping as a 'shift from map-as-taxonomy to map-as-guide, as a record of movement and action, rather than stasis.' She went on to state that Haraway's 'maps are fluid and dynamic, not static' (244). We too suggest that our mapping exercise be understood as 'fluid and dynamic.' For us, story-mapping illustrates patterns threaded from the stories of diverse journeys. Story mapping is not a tool (a map) that we may unfold and follow to reach a final destination (telos). Story-mapping is a way to describe our process of considering these various tales together, layering the stories by shifting scales between individual stories and a province-wide story.

Through the stories shared here, we are reminded that landscape is not only metaphorical, but also physical, *physis*, nature, outdoors, open world. Commonly, educational stories do not emphasize *where* learning happens, and the indoor classroom pervades pedagogical habitus (Banack 2018).

Over the past few decades, scholarship on the relation between being outdoors and their educational implications has increased globally (Chawla 2015), particularly in ECE (Somerville and Williams 2015), producing many ripples. These stories from B.C. ECE outdoor experiences situate a local horizon. Through our act of story-mapping, we invite you to consider the patterns that appeared to us from our meandering through the B.C. ECE *field*.

Of the five stories shared, three came from sites located in cities from the Greater Vancouver Region District (GVRD), a central Canadian metropolitan area in the province of British Columbia (B.C.), Canada. These programs include Fresh Air Learning preschool (aged 3–5 year olds for 2.5 h programs) of North Vancouver (Storyteller: Tricia Edgar, Founder and head owl hooter), Terra Nova Nature preschool (aged 3–5 year olds for 2.5 h programs) of Richmond (Storytellers: Kate Dawson and Emily Vera, Co-Founders and field leaders), and Outside Urban Adventure preschool (aged 3–5 year olds for 2.5 h programs) at Extra Steps in Vancouver (Storyteller: Belva Cole-Stone, Co-Founder and field leader). One site is located on Vancouver Island, the Nature Kindergarten at Sangster Elementary school of the Sooke School District (SD 62) (aged 5–6 year olds for full day kindergarten) in Sooke (Storytellers: Enid Elliot, Co-Founder and field researcher and Frances Krusekopf, Co-Founder and principal¹). The fourth and fifth stories came from sites located in what is known as the *interior* of B.C. (areas with lower human density and vast tracks of forests). To the east of Vancouver, in the Okanagan is the Clubhouse Farm preschool (aged 2.5–5 year olds for 2.5 h programs) of Kelowna (Storytellers: Audrey Hystad, Co-Founder and field leader and Caroline Noga Co-Founder and Executive Director) and to the Northeast of Vancouver is Scout Island Nature Kindergarten of the Cariboo/Chilcotin (SD 47) (aged 5–6 year olds for full day kindergarten) in Williams Lake (Storyteller: Frances McCoubrey, field leader and resource teacher).

In part, the decision to invite these particular colleagues to share their stories considered geographic representation from across B.C. The province of B.C. is a fairly large physical territory, spanning 944,735 km sq/364,764mi sq, an area greater in size than the state of California. Since 2010, when Fresh Air Learning began in North Vancouver, there has been exponential growth in ECE outdoor learning programs around B.C. To catalogue this growth is well beyond the scope and aim of this project. As we reached out to these various programs from around the province, we invited our colleagues to offer their ECE outdoor stories in the spirit of sharing them more broadly. In their description of the emergence of ECE outdoor programs across Canada, Elliot and Krusekopf (2017) wrote, ‘Two notable Canadian forest preschools included Carp Ridge Learning Centre in Carp, Ontario, formed in 2008, and an outdoor preschool program at Kerry Wood Nature Centre in Red Deer, Alberta established in 1987’ (6). The Discovery Children’s Centre outdoor preschool program of Manitoba, under the leadership of Ron Blatz, has long included outdoor learning, however, the outdoor aspect of the program only became a formal organizational priority in 2005. In B.C., Fresh Air Learning preschool, one of the first ECE outdoor learning programs, started in 2010. The Nature Kindergarten program at Sangster Elementary School in Sooke, B.C. was the first public school-district approved ECE outdoor learning program in the province of B.C., beginning in 2013, after almost two years of efforts by champions to establish the program (Elliot and Krusekopf 2017). Clearly, there exists a chronological recount of the development of outdoor ECE programs in B.C., however this is not our intention in this project, we approach through meandering.

One of the prevalent narratives of B.C. is a place of wild, pristine outdoors. For example, the banner on the official tourism website for B.C. uses the motto, ‘Super, Natural British Columbia’ (Ministry of Tourism 2018). *Outdoor Activities* is the first link to click under the Things To Do heading. The website goes on to describe B.C. as ‘a wild place where Mother Nature creates the boundaries. Not man.’ (Ministry of Tourism 2018). This meme of B.C. as *nature-rich* is pervasive through the tourism industry, and is strong in the imagination of the citizens (automobile license plates carry the slogan: ‘Beautiful British Columbia’).

However, this narrative of B.C. as wild, pristine wilderness, is also shrouded in innocent. It is inscribed with a history of colonialism and present-day neoliberal ideologies that espouse, for example, to land exploitation. To this story, ECE and outdoor learning stories are hinged. In a

province with a strong outdoor-centric ethos, most ECE education and primary school grades still follow practices predominated by the indoor classroom that prepare students for twenty-first century skills of the global economy. Indigenous plights over land claims are pervasive in B.C., and illustrative of tensions that exist. ECE programs often take place on contested lands (Pacini-Ketchabaw 2013). Emerging literature examines the notion of *colonization* in educational situations (Somerville 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw 2013; Derby, Piersol, and Blenkinsop 2015). These works suggest that the 'ongoing process of colonization absolutely includes silencing, dehistoricizing, and violently dislocating indigenous and other marginalized populations over the course of its historical development, but it also includes a similar kind of suppression of the more-than-human world' (Derby, Piersol, and Blenkinsop 2015, 379). While there is a lengthy, albeit intermittent, history of outdoor education opportunities throughout B.C., mainly as field trips to outdoor facilities or backcountry destinations, local ECE outdoor learning programs (i.e. forest schools and nature kindergartens) are relatively new, and within this shrouded innocence of pristine, uninhabited wilderness, we are sensitive to questions such as what is the responsibility of ECE outdoor programs to respond ethically to a locality mired with colonialism and neoliberalism.

Ecology and ethography

Along the path of writing this paper, ecology and ethics became two *pebbles* we picked and dwelled with. These two became increasingly relevant to our weekly discussions around this text, its ethos, and the stories that were shared with us. As we surveyed these two concepts, we began to consider ways in which ecology and ethics intersect. This section attempts to trace lines of ecology, ethics, and ethos, surveying knots that emerge as their lines cross.

As we alluded to above, we suggest ecology might be understood as a diverse and unknown (unknowable prior to its emergence) 'field' that binds us all (human/more-than-human) at each instant. In this sense, ecology is not *easy* or *correct*, however it is omnipresent as a *pattern that connects*. In the introduction to *Steps of an Ecology of Mind* (1972), Mary Catherine Bateson wrote that her father, Gregory Bateson, 'argued that the ecology of mind is an ecology of pattern (x)'. We urge that ecology be conceived of as the breadth of an ontological 'field', an ever possible and unknown horizon that emerges in/through movements and encounters. The place-based environmental education scholar, Gruenewald, (2003) stated 'one of the meanings of ecology is that, ultimately, everything is connected' (648). van Dooren and Rose's (2016) discussion of ethography described patterns of connection as sustaining diverse ways of being and living. This may be analogous to what Abram (1996) described as being in the living field:

Despite all the mechanical artefacts that now surround us, the world in which we find ourselves before we set out to calculate and measure it is not an inert or mechanical object but a living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphoses. (32)

These connotations of ecology weave with Ingold's *meshworks*: we are all in an ecological field through which we can be traced by the lines we make as we travel and the intersection of our lines with those of others. Ingold (2008, 1807) wrote,

An ecology of life, therefore, must be about the weaving and binding of lines, not the hammering of blocks. As an ecology of threads and traces, it must deal not with the relations between organisms and their external environments but with the relations along their severally enmeshed ways of life. Ecology, in short, is *the study of the life of lines*. (Ingold 2007a, 103)

Lacing these sentiments, we asked, 'how may ethos and ecology connect?' Bateson (1972) described ethos as analogous to a river and its banks—The river molds the banks and the banks guide the river (83). This relational sense of ethics in tension between river's bank and water suggests how the two mutually in-form, and what may be a relationship between ecology and ethos. Perhaps, ecology is the entire field that everything is part of, at all times, and ethos emerges as grains or particles of the field

that interact with one another (river's water and bank). The Batesonian sense of ecology and ethos inspired van Dooren and Rose (2016) in the development of their practice of *ethnography*, an entanglement of ethnographic practices, storytelling, and ethics. In *Lively Ethnography* they wrote, 'Ways of being are not formed and sustained in isolation. Each ethos is also a style or way of being and becoming with others' (80). Binding ethos and ecology gave us opportunity to reflect on how B.C. ECE outdoor stories inform (ethos) emergent patterns (ecology) and how these stories connect to action.

Ethical and ecological movements in the ECE field

In this section, we continue our story-mapping exercise by contextualizing (or mesh-working) the emergence of ECE outdoor programs with ethos and ecology. Our purpose here is *not* to establish causal relations between the emergence of ECE outdoor programs to particular movements in the ECE field and beyond (given our thoughts about ecology discussed above, this would be impossible), but rather to follow some vertical, horizontal, and *alongly* (to use Ingold's 2009 term) trails where we have observed *dense knots* of entanglement of ECE outdoor programs emanating from the field's historical and contemporary movements.

The field of ECE is 'a living field, an open and dynamic landscape' (Abram 1996), by which we mean that *ēthea* (pedagogical ways of being with young children in particular times and places) emerge as an ever-evolving weave in response to, and in relation with, a multitude of ideas and world happenings (e.g. philosophies of knowledge, discourses, political and economic shifts, scholarly contributions, policy trends, technological innovations, and global and environmental issues). In other words, the field of ECE is ecological, sustained through countless flows of relations and complicated conversations about contested matters (what Ingold (2009) referred to as *alongness*). As these relations are affected by, and affect, multiple forms of lives, they are inherently ethical and political. Rinaldi (2006) expressed this well,

Pedagogy ... is not neutral. It takes sides, it participates in deep and vital ways in the definition of this project whose central theme is not mankind, but his relations with the world, his being in the world, his feeling of *interdependence* with what is other than himself. (170)

Examples of the complexity of the flow of ecological relations among diverse traditions and *ēthea* in ECE (specifically those attending to nature and childhood) was discussed in Taylor's (2013) book, *Reconfiguring the Natures of Childhood*. Taylor (2013) mapped nature-child pedagogies in the ECE field through historical and contemporary figurations in order to *re-configure* nature relationships with childhood. Discussing Rousseau and Froebel, as the originators of ECE nature-child pedagogies in 17 and eighteenth centuries, Taylor acknowledged that those conceptualizations of nature in relation to ECE were enmeshed within a passion to create an ideal society in which nature acted as a benevolent moral authority. Taylor problematized Rousseau's and Froebel's romantic ethos of Nature as the child's best teacher, arguing that those pedagogies contributed to a nature-culture binary thinking through which nature (and childhood) became objectified and reified. She explained how in Rousseau's attempt to create a nature-child 'free to explore nature and learn through physical experiences without adult intervention' (Taylor 2013, 37), he created an image of a vulnerable child in need of protection from society and the 'education of Man.' Similarly, in Froebel's effort to create a *kinder garden* (children's garden), children's learning became constrained by guided interactions with man-made materials reflecting nature's orderly structure, such as his famous wooden blocks.² Taylor was able to demonstrate how Rousseau's and Froebel's nature-child ethos is entangled (as a dense knot) with current understandings of ECE outdoor programs' ethos. Elliot and Krusekopf (2017), the leaders from the Sooke Nature Kindergarten in B.C. expressed this well when they wrote,

A Nature Kindergarten is a romantic idea. Young children in nature conjure up images of wide-eyed innocence or trigger nostalgic memories of childhood hours spent in trees or at the beach. Nostalgia may be part of the appeal and motivation for creating this type of program. A memory of play outdoors as a young child has a nostalgic pull for many people, who often mention the freedom and the lack of adult surveillance as some of the attractive aspects of this type of play (Louv 2005). (380)

Threading her arguments with strands from transdisciplinary fields (e.g. human geography, eco-feminism, childhood studies), Taylor (2013) called for unraveling knots of the sentimental childhood-nature idealized ethos, and moving ECE along a new path towards *common world pedagogies*. Common world pedagogies focus on the *messy* and ecologically entangled ways in which children (and educators), as well as nonhumans (plants, animal, matter) and places, are co-implicated within mutually formative encounters in an emergent world, which we co-inhabit with others.

In their literature review on research and practices in ECE sustainability education, Somerville and Williams (2015) also addressed ecology and ethics by pointing out how diverse approaches to studies and practices of ECE outdoor programs constitute a current debate about childhood-nature ethos. The approaches discussed in the review represent a mesh of theoretical traditions, some of which draw on romanticized notions of re-connecting children with nature, as discussed above, while others, focus on human-centred ethos, seeking to employ outdoors pedagogy in support of children's rights. Yet another approach, drawing mainly on post-human theories, argues that re-connecting children with nature is a flawed idea as, nature is seen as inseparable from the human, social world, and therefore, from childhood. The latter, more aligned with Taylor's (2013) ethos, engages and promotes pedagogies of place, complexity, and emergence, with a view of children as inherently and relationally entangled with common world issues. With the emergence of ECE outdoor approaches (ethea), we see potentialities for new experiments *with* and new conversation *about* ECE pedagogies that address the question of *where* learning happens (Banack 2018). In this sense, the story we share about outdoor ECE programs acts as confluence to the ever-evolving and meandering weave of the ECE field, particularly recent conversations about 'recognizing the significance of place as a politically charged,' 'uneven ground' (Taylor 2013, 122–123).

Ethos and actions in patterns that connect

There was a very angry artist once who scribbled all sorts of things down, and after he was dead they looked in his books and in one place they found he'd written 'Wise men see outlines and therefore they draw them' but in another place he'd written 'Mad men see outlines and therefore they draw them.' (Bateson 1972/1987, 37)

In this section we engage with patterning, as we draw attention to *outlines* (i.e. giving shape, *ēthea*) to/around the stories shared with us. The excerpt from Bateson reminds that, like mapping, patterning is always a fraught and dangerous undertaking. We are particularly cautious about proposing patterns that homogenize, colonize, and close conversations. Three constellar patterns arose with the notions of ecology and *ēthea*: (1) chance encounters, grassroots initiatives, and collaboration; (2) (p)reparation and unlearning; and (3) emergence and experimentation. We attempt to map these patterns, as woven threads with our conceptual frameworks.

Chance encounters, grassroots initiatives, and collaboration

The idea of a Nature Kindergarten in Sooke started as a café conversation in January 2011, when Frances shared photographs and stories of her son's Waldkindergarten experience in Munich, Germany with Enid over a cup of coffee. This was the beginning of a partnership that continues as we share this on-going journey while supporting others in their own process of building a Nature Kindergarten (Elliot and Krusekopf 2017, 377).

The emergence of ECE outdoor programs in B.C., as told to us, was inscribed within stories of chance encounters and local, grassroots initiatives that led to collective and collaborative action. Whether it was a conversation over coffee (as in Elliot and Krusekopf's story above), or an encounter at an ECE community garden workshop (as in Dawson's and Vera's story), educators from the various sites attributed the initiation of their programs to an *effect of an encounter*. This notion of an encounter, should not be taken lightly, and we see it as significant as 'picking up the pebble' on the way to the park, as a point of departure, or as a moment that becomes an opening to new potential futures (Davies and Gannon 2009). Linking with Arendt's (1998) notion of action, the stories of chance

encounter and beginning something new with others remind us of the ever-present possibility to act and begin something new in the world.

By suggesting that chance encounters are linked with the emergence of programs, we do not intend to propose that their beginnings were quick, easy or a matter of luck. The stories of the grass-roots initiatives were told alongside stories of sustained effort and invitations for collaboration with various stakeholders, over lengthy periods of time. The different programs leaders created public forums and formed alliances with families, communities, and organizations as well as with other outdoor programs. Dawson and Vera (2017) collaborated with key stakeholders such as the City of Richmond (as owner/manager of the building and public parkland) and Thompson Community Association (owner of the preschool program, equipment, and employers of all TNNS staff). Elliot and Krusekopf (2017) organized community meetings, collaborated with the school district, teachers, parents, university researchers, and others. Supporting, and being supported by, other outdoor programs with generosity became another shaping element of the outdoor programs' ethos. Elliot and Krusekopf (2017) recounted how, since 2012, they have been asked to share their journey towards starting the nature kindergarten as they spoke with local, national, and international audiences. For Outside Urban Adventures, which uses urban outdoor spaces, collaboration unfolded by making 'friends' with community leaders that the educators and children met when they began their daily walks in the neighborhood. Outside Urban Adventures described their relationship with the Strathcona Community Gardens as follows,

We've developed a lovely friendship with a woman who is a part of the Strathcona Community Gardens. When we're at Trillium we meet with her once every few weeks. She always has something wonderful to engage the children with, be it simple games of looking for various colors in the gardens to making musical instruments out of natural materials! We look forward to our time every month with her. (Urban Outdoor Adventures 2017)

McCoubrey's (2017) initiative involved, 'visiting other Nature Kindergartens in the province, looking at the steps they took to get their programs started, developing an advisory committee, looking at research to help with development of a risk management plan and sorting out the logistics.' More experienced ECE outdoor programs, such as Fresh Air Learning, exhibit a clear intention to collaborate and support other outdoor programs by sharing multiple resources on their website, including parent and safety handbooks, and information on other outdoor programs in B.C. and beyond (Fresh Air Learning 2018).

These *ēthea* of initiation and collaboration connect not only with Arendt's (1998) notion of *action* (as setting something into motion), but also with her contention that *action cannot happen in isolation*. Action, for Arendt, is inherently relational. We wish to acknowledge how by creating public forums and bringing outdoor programs to the attention of citizens and organizations, these program leaders generated the possibility for communities to *act in concert* (Arendt 1998) and to set into motion new pathways for what ECE programs might be.

Unlearning and (P)reparation

In this section, we continue to *meshwork* threads from ECE outdoor initiation stories that connect with ecology and ethos through the concepts of unlearning and preparation as a mode of reparation. In particular, we wish to highlight how venturing outdoors might be entangled with a pedagogical approach wherein being a teacher (or a pedagogue) is related 'to a voyage outside' (Masschelein 2015, 4). Metaphorically, Masschelein, resisting standardization of schooling, explains pedagogy as the journey through which educators lead children towards unknown places – where worlds can be encountered and reinvigorated with meanings and relations. How might one prepare for such a journey?

Over the course of a life, ways of being are incorporated into our ontology, sometimes in ways so deeply engrained, that we are no longer able to notice them. Reay (2004), thinking with Bourdieu's notion of habitus within the field of education, wrote, 'the operation of the habitus regularly excludes certain practices, those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individuals belong'

(433). Teachers have been accustomed to thinking that indoor is the de facto place where learning happens (Higgins 2008). In the stories that were shared with us, we found the educators' engagement with the notion of preparedness as it was entangled with processes of unlearning, or reparation. Hystad and Noga (2017) stated,

One of the biggest challenges we have is to teach the adults to prepare, and how to allow and encourage children to safely explore the natural environment. Some adults do not start out as comfortable in the nature play space – they are concerned that the children will get hurt, and react to mud and bugs as *gross* which children can often pick up on. Some staff do find it difficult.

In her paper about learning and unlearning in teacher education, Cochran-Smith (2003) wrote that part of the task of teachers is to confront themselves and their assumptions, noting that this, 'process involves both learning new knowledge, questions, and practices, and, at the same time, unlearning some long-held ideas, beliefs, and practices, which are often difficult to uproot' (9). In ECE, one of these long-held beliefs is associated with safety and risk aversion (Brussoni et al. 2012; Lancy 2016). Outdoor environments afforded a reinvention of relations with safety and risk practices. Elliot and Krusekopf (2017) discuss intentionally inviting children to participate in enacting safety outdoors. Safety is connected to care for oneself and others, through a renewed understanding of comradery. Elliot and Krusekopf further observed that, 'Being in charge of a major component of their own safety allowed children to understand their own limits rather than imposed ones, and that their safety depended on everyone's safety.' McCoubrey (2017) also depicted how relations with safety changed:

The Nature K students have become very good at climbing trees, assessing what they think is too risky for themselves and how far they want to push themselves with things like tree climbing. They have also been practicing how to assess the safety of ice.

Part of the challenge educators experience in outdoor contexts may be connected to Freire's idea of *reading the world* (Freire 1985). In learning to read the world, teachers and children found themselves in a heightened relational state with place and others, where they assessed, reassessed and responded to situations as they emerge. For example, Dawson and Vera (2017) shared,

Learning to 'read' the land for hazards; letting children feel uncomfortable, but not too uncomfortable. These things require less attention within a fenced, designed yard. We are far more attuned to the children: reading and responding to their energy is constant.

There is humility that seems to emerge in outdoor programs' decision-making. Stone-Cole (2017) from Outside Urban Adventure succinctly captured this sentiment well when she said: 'One feels very humble while being battered around by the rain.' Repercussions from decisions taken about outdoor contexts are distinct from those taken indoors; where one is protected from the elements (e.g. temperature, lighting, and bathrooms needs have mostly been taken care of within the building's structure). Being outdoors for long periods of time, throughout the year, gives a new meaning to preparation. Dawson and Vera (2017) described it as follows,

We are outdoors regardless of the weather; we carry backpacks of safety equipment and pull wagons of gear. We cut back brambles, clear the snow, and dig the garden. We have to keep ourselves warm, dry, energized, and healthy in order to care for the children.

Moving with children towards 'unknown places' and unexpected outdoor encounters gave new meanings to the notion of preparation, understood both pedagogically and as a mode of living, educators engaged with ongoing processes of reparation – the action of repairing, or unlearning and re-learning, ways of being in the world that constrain what might become possible.

Experimentation and emergence

Venturing outdoors invites (one may suggest that it *imposes*) pedagogies that dare to experiment and face uncertainties. This was powerfully articulated by Hystad and Noga (2017) from the Clubhouse Farm,

We took a big risk in doing this: using resources on a very different type of program that the children might not like, that the parents might not like. The purpose was to get children outside as early in the morning as possible into an environment that they could call their own. (Hystad and Noga 2017)

In a similar way, Elliot and Krusekopf's (2017) described the notion of beginning the nature kindergarten program with a sense of stepping into *uncharted territory*, implying that how the program might unfold was in many ways unknown, as it has not been tried in their context. There are two aspects of experimentation that we saw in the stories. One was about taking initial steps and beginning an outdoor program without knowing *how* to do it; and the other was about opening up and working with the unpredictable, emergent occurrences that outdoor learning contexts inevitably generate. In both cases, we saw how educators from outdoor programs moved to respond with an emergent approach, as Dawson and Vera (2017) stated, 'Our work is far more emergent. We have a plan, but something invariably calls our collective attention. The greatest challenge is knowing what "threads" to follow, and what to notice, but then set aside for another day.'

There has been much discussion of emergent curriculum in ECE contexts (Jones 2012). Understood most commonly as an antithesis to a rigid outcome-oriented school curriculum, the emergent curriculum, as one that is responsive to children's emerging interests, theories, and ideas, has gained prominence in contemporary ECE ethos. Edgar (2017) from Fresh Air Learning, noted the plan of what to do outdoors changes as the children become interested in various occurrences, and 'this can extend from everything from watching Cooper's Hawks nest and raising young to becoming interested in restoration and adding plants to the places where they play.' In the Clubhouse Farm, openness towards emergence was created by allowing 'space to roam with extended periods of time' (over five or six hours). While the adults working with the children 'have more opportunity to focus on the emergent part of what child's play could be' (Hystad and Noga 2017).

Listening to these stories, we want to make a gesture towards an understanding of emergence that is perhaps more radical. We wonder, with Taylor's (2013) provocation, how we might think differently the generative potentiality of place, when it is not conceived 'as a static stage on which our actions take place' (122). Ingold (2008) pushed us to think about being in/of an *open world* as a place of radical emergence,

where inhabitants, may experience wind and rain, sunshine and mist, frost and snow, and a host of other conditions, all of which fundamentally affect their moods and motivations, their movements, and their possibilities of subsistence, even as they sculpt and erode the plethora of surfaces upon which inhabitants tread (1802).

Here emergence is no longer understood as curriculum, it becomes an ontological and ecological matter, because everything moves (along path) and participates in 'weaving the texture of the land' (1804). With this notion, we note that the *open world* not only makes emergence more expansive, but that *open world* also invites an emergent logic that moves towards a new ethos, one that inquires about how places *occur* (Ingold 2008) with ECE outdoor programs.

Open world possibilities

By situating B.C. ECE outdoor programs within a larger ecology, we hinted toward how emergent outdoor ECE programs are knotted in a wider woven fabric constituting ECE's *ēthea*. Our focus specifically explored *emergence* of B.C. ECE programs, giving visibility to their *actions*, which we found to be daring in the sense that they 'stepped into uncharted territory,' creating novel pathways of entanglement for their communities. We propose that the increase in ECE outdoor programs signifies changes in ECE *ēthea*, yet, we question conventional ideas of change as a linear and predictable process. Instead, we suggested that the ECE field may take inspiration for thinking about changes from young children's mode of walking to the park,

While for us, as adults, walking becomes an automated, purpose-bound activity, supported by an illusion that we actually know where we are going, for a child, walking is not necessarily about stepping forward with a clear

destination in mind. What keeps children moving is a constant desire for experimentation through which new worlds are discovered and new relations are generated. (Berger 2013, 55)

As with any meander, we have not charted a course to guide our walk, and therefore we may not know where this story may go next. Through the stories shared in this paper we wish to invite you too, reader, to amble about your 'neck of the field', to engage with the question *where* learning happens in your context, as an ethical question and as a reminder of unexpected possibilities. We also wish to inspire an emergence of an ethos that invites you to be a daring and *seasoned* educator, seasoned to, 'know how to read the land as an intimate register of wind and weather' (Ingold 2008, 1803). Ingold (2008), in asking the question 'what it means to live in the open' (1808), resolved, 'in an open world, the creeping entanglements of life will always and inevitably triumph over our attempts to box them in' (1809). Thus, we shall not reach a destination (or a conclusion), but perhaps let this meander act as (p)reparation for future walks.

Notes

1. The story Elliot and Krusekopf shared with us at the time of writing this paper has now been published in *International Journal of Early Childhood* (see citation below).
2. The meticulous order was also applied to the actual children's gardens, see Brosterman 2002/3 for an image of the Froebelian gardens.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Abram, David. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-human World*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published in 1958).
- Banack, Hartley. 2018. "Where STEM Binds, and ST(eee)EM Flows: A Case for Where in STEM Discourse and Practice." *Critical Education* 9 (16). <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186183>.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Chandler Publishing Company.
- Bateson, Gregory. 2002. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Berger, Iris. 2013. "Early Childhood Education in Canada: Are we in Motion or are we Stepping Forward?" *Canadian Children* 38 (1): 54–55.
- Brosterman, Norman. 2002/03. "Fröbel and the Gifts of Kindergarten." *Cabinet Magazine*, 9. <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/9/brosterman.php>.
- Brussoni, Mariana, Lisa Olsen, Ian Pike, and David A Sleet. 2012. "Risky Play and Children's Safety: Balancing Priorities for Optimal Child Development." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 9 (9): 3134–3148.
- Chawla, Louise. 2015. "The Benefits of Nature Contact for Children." *Journal of Planning Literature* 30 (4): 433–452.
- Cochran-Smith, Marilyn. 2003. "Learning and Unlearning: The Education of Teacher Educators." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 19 (1): 5–28.
- Dahlberg, Gunilla, and Peter Moss. 2009. "Introduction." In *Movement and Experimentation in Young Children's Learning: Deleuze and Guattari in Early Childhood Education*, edited by Liselott Mariett Olsson, xiii–xxviii. New York: Routledge.
- Davies, Bronwyn. 2011. "Open Listening: Creative Evolution in Early Childhood Settings." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 43 (2): 119–132.
- Davies, Bronwyn, and Susan Gannon. 2009. *Pedagogical Encounters*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Dawson, Kate, and Emily Vera. 2017. Terra Nova Nature School. Shared Story.
- Derby, Michael W., Laura Piersol, and Sean Blenkinsop. 2015. "Refusing to Settle for Pigeons and Parks: Urban Environmental Education in the Age of Neoliberalism." *Environmental Education Research* 21 (3): 378–389.
- Edgar, Trisha. 2017. Fresh Air Learning Shared Story. Unpublished.
- Elliot, Enid, and Francese Krusekopf. 2017. "Thinking Outside the Four Walls of the Classroom: A Canadian Nature Kindergarten." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 49 (3): 375–389. doi:10.1007/s13158-017-0203-7.

- Freire, Paulo. 1985. "Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire." *Language Arts* 62 (1): 15–21.
- Fresh Air Learning. 2018. <http://www.freshairlearning.org/handbooks>.
- Gruenewald, David A. 2003. "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place." *Educational Researcher* 32 (4): 3–12.
- Higgins, Peter. 2008. "Why Indoors? The Role of Outdoor Learning in Sustainability, Health and Citizenship." Inaugural Chair Lecture (Outdoor and Environmental Education) at the University of Edinburgh, October 18.
- Hystad, Audrey, and Caroline Noga. 2017. The Clubhouse Farm Project Shared Story.
- Ingold, Tim. 2008. "Bindings Against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 40 (8): 1796–1810. doi:10.1068/a40156.
- Ingold, Tim. 2009. "Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge." In *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, edited by Kirby Peter Wynn, 29–43. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Jones, Elizabeth. 2012. "The Emergence of Emergent Curriculum." *Young Children* 67 (2): 66–68. https://www.naeyc.org/yc/files/yc/file/201203/Heritage_v67n2_0312.pdf.
- Klenk, Nicole. 2018. "Adaptation Lived as a Story: Why We Should Be Careful About the Stories We Use to Tell Other Stories." *Nature and Culture* 13 (3): 322–355.
- Lancy, David. F. 2016. "Playing With Knives: The Socialization of Self-initiated Learners." *Child Development* 87 (3): 654–665.
- Masschelein, Jan. 2015. "Why we are in Need of Pedagogical Sciences (as Design Sciences) A Few Brief Notes." *Pedagogía y Saberes* 43: 91–110.
- McCoubrey, Francis. 2017. Scout Island Nature Kindergarten. Shared Story.
- Ministry of Tourism, B.C. 2018. <https://www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/about-bc.aspx>.
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, Veronica. 2013. "Frictions in Forest Pedagogies: Common Worlds in Settler Colonial Spaces." *Global Studies of Childhood* 3 (4): 355–365.
- Price-Chalita, Patricia. 1994. "Spatial Metaphor and the Politics of Empowerment: Mapping a Place for Feminism and Postmodernism in Geography?" *Antipode* 26 (3): 236–254. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.1994.tb00250.x.
- Reay, Diane. 2004. "'It's all Becoming a Habitus': Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (4): 431–444.
- Rinaldi, Carla. 2006. *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia*. London: Routledge.
- Somerville, Margaret. 2013. "The Nature/Cultures of Children's Place Learning Maps." *Global Studies of Childhood* 3 (4): 407–417.
- Somerville, Margaret, and Carolyn Williams. 2015. "Sustainability Education in Early Childhood: An Updated Review of Research in the Field." *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 16 (2): 102–117.
- Stone-Cole, Belva. 2017. Outside Urban Adventure. Shared Story.
- Taylor, Africa. 2013. *Reconfiguring the Natures of Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Urban Outdoor Adventures. 2017. <http://www.extrasteps.ca/urbanadventures>.
- van Dooren, Thom, and Deborah Bird Rose. 2016. "Lively Ethnography: Storying Animist Worlds." *Environmental Humanities* 8 (1): 77–94. doi:10.1215/22011919-3527731.