Somatic Worlding: Sensing kinship as early childhood educators

by
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Abstract

Educators need time and space to explore the interconnectedness of the world. Using autoethnography, I trace my encounters with other-than-human beings and attend to relational ways of understanding the world through the sensorial experiences with Others. Experiencing the world through the senses while experiencing the world as an agentic being, that senses in ways beyond our human fathoming, pushes the boundaries of our ability to know, inviting axiological questions that disrupt colonial ways of teaching and learning. Blurring dualistic positioning of human/nature, and decentring the mind as a site for knowing, somatic worlding suggests a constant becoming through ongoing encounters that disrupt individualistic ideas of the self. Through this disruption, meaningful relationships with other-than-human beings deconstruct developmentalism’s logics of belonging. Arts-based research centres Lichens as a co-author in this research.

Keywords: early childhood education; somatic; arts-based; mutualism; ecological education; other-than-human
Dedication

To Lichens.

Particularly, to the Lichens I have come to know as Lobaria Pulmonaria. Thank you for breathing life into me.
Acknowledgements

This collection of stories is a part of my educational journey, exploring how my knowledge fits into the tapestry of the world. My stories are composed of multiple voices, both human and other-than-human. I give great thanks to the many authors who have had the courage to publish their work, so that I could hear their stories. Their voices provided soil for me to work with and to cultivate my own stories. In particular, I acknowledge the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), Shawn Wilson (2008), Mary Oliver (2008), and Daniel Heath Justice (2018). Their books were particularly grounding for me as a passionate writer, and a timid academic.

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Glossary and Notes on Terminology

Latin names for Lichens
Throughout this thesis I have used the Latin names to identify Lichens. My knowledge of Lichens, and my amateur capacity to see their nuances and distinguishing features is informed by the work of Irwin M. Brodo, Stephen Sharnoff, and Sylvia Duran Sharnoff shared through their 2001 publication, *Lichens of North America*.

Notes on capitalization
Following Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2013) writing about the animacy, I capitalize the names of plants, animals, and minerals to acknowledge my relationships with these particular beings. The capitalization acknowledges this being by name.

Other
The capitalization of the word Other suggests, in dialogue with the Sharon Todd’s (2001) article, *Bringing more than I contain: Ethics, curriculum and the pedagogical demand for altered egos*, the role of the Other in illuminating spaces to extend ideas of self. Drawing on the work of Levinas, Todd argues that pedagogy demands encounters with the Other, to rupture ideas of self-containment. In using capitalization for Other, I intend to draw attention to the encounters occurring in which the recognized agency of the Other ruptures a way of knowing and being in the world. In this thesis, the capitalization of the Other indicates an encounter with the unknowable, which illuminates the limitations of self-situated perception, and creates conditions for multcentric experiences with/in the world.

other-than-human
I have chosen to use this term, brought into my awareness by Daniel Heath Justice (2018), to acknowledge the agency of the infinite lives and life logics that exist beyond the human realm. The term “more-than-human” is also used in research and literature to engage with these beyond-human life-logics. While both terms allow a conversation of multcentrism, the word “more” invites something quantitative for me that doesn’t fit for the relationship I hold with such beings in the context of this thesis. I acknowledge that the term “other” suggests “othering,” which holds something that supports the disruption that I am calling upon in my thesis. This othering makes visible pedagogical practices that center humans as the normative measure of agency, while discounting infinite realms of life-logics (including the microbial galaxies flourishing within and beyond the individual human). Other-than-human worlds within early childhood education are largely kept separate, fringe, and are largely omitted from ethical considerations that guide pedagogy. In this way, the term “other-than-human” most
accurately reflects my aim, which is to make spaces for decentring humans in part by drawing attention to the “otherness” which reinforces human/nature binaries that I hope to disrupt. I have chosen not to capitalize this to note its distinction from a particular Other.

Somatic Worlding

Inspired by Lichens, this idea suggests that we have access to ways of knowing that not only extend beyond our minds, but beyond our bodies, through an ongoing relational process with the Other. For my work in my thesis, Lichens became somewhat of a co-author, guiding my research, and through this relationship I came to further know myself and my place in the world through my relationship with them. Somatic worlding decentres thinking from the brain and considers the ways that we come to know through relationships with Others beyond our selves, in ways that are predominately felt, experienced, and perhaps (or perhaps not) articulable through language.

Worlding

Donna Haraway (2016) uses this term to describe a way of becoming-with, world-creations through ongoing encounters and relational understandings generated through those encounters.
Chapter 1.

Introduction

Inquiry.

Ink-wire-y, in-queer-ry, or ink-were-y?

To inquire; an English word evolving from the Latin, *quaerere* “to seek, look for; strive, endeavor, strive to gain; ask, require, demand” (Harper, n.d.). What was I seeking, looking for, endeavouring to know?

As a part of the course requirements for my thesis, I enrolled in a research methodology course. I learned that to write a thesis, there is a formula. You are supposed to begin with a question that fills a gap in current literature. Your writing is a representation of facts, a collection of answers, or data, gathered from the results of your question. Your writing is an analysis of the data. This data shares a verifiable, replicable truth, generated by that question. Research must demonstrate rigor. Good questions lead research.

I had questions and yet they seemed unaskable in such a formal process. I was aware that my decisions around what to ask, would influence how the answers revealed themselves. Prior to focusing my research, I had spent months tending to Soil in a forested area alongside the Colquitz River. I frequented this place weekly to lay belly-down, fingers curling around Ivy vines, allowing my hands and body to interpret my place in it all. I give great thanks to that Soil, to those particular Ivy vines, and to that one particular Spotted Towhee, all of with whom I shared an experience and gained a deeper sense of how research can be an act of reciprocity. I began pulling Ivy with an intention of demonstrating reciprocity, interpreting that it was my responsibility as a “good” settler to deal with the problem of invasive species. I emerged from that time and place with new questions about reciprocity; who decides what is appropriate to give? What is a measurable exchange and to whom? How have I come to understand myself as a species? What is the role of imagination in research? I had philosophical questions, epistemological questions, and questions that emerged from the gap that existed in the slightest space between my lips—and Soil. Questions that emerged from the experience
of feeling most whole, when my sense of self included the space between myself and an Other. What we question and how we pose questions, is shaped by the stories that lead us to questioning. Good stories can also lead research, and precede questions. The stories that we have access to, and thus the ideas that we are able to think with, are situationally bound by a culture’s notions of value, and are thus caught up in ongoing struggles for power.

My educational background is in early childhood education and I have been practicing as a post-secondary instructor in the department of Early Learning and Care for three years. In both roles, I understand that it is my ethical responsibility to attend to the stories I offer students to think with, knowing that these stories establish particular conditions that inform/invite/charm/fertilize the questions that may emerge. Good stories don’t always claim to start at the beginning, some do not even to claim to know when they actually began. Good stories can lead us forward and backward, simultaneously. Good stories can lead us inward and outward, simultaneously. Good stories can be a home.

As an educator/post-secondary instructor, my responsibility is to work with stories: to call them by name; to situate ourselves amidst these stories; to illuminate whose stories have been amplified; to stay curious about whose stories have been omitted; to acknowledge the fertility of stories as a place from which futures emerge. For there to be an earthly future at all, education must acknowledge the myopia of human exceptionalism and must commit itself to ongoing pedagogical quaereres of seeking to create mutualistic relationships, including with other-than-human agentic kin. The stories that I invite students to think with, as emerging early learning and care providers, need to include encounters with other-than-human beings. These encounters reveal spaces (gaps in the literature, if you will) between the ways we understand ourselves as a species and, the ways we understand our relationships with Other species. This way of knowing ourselves as parts of the whole, is critical for taking up questions of how we may contribute to more liveable worlds.

In Jo-Anne Archibald’s (2008) *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body and spirit*, she articulates how Indigenous teachings are communicated through the art of storytelling, illuminating how the work of stories is to “let our emotions surface” (ix). There is not only space for emotions, but they support the discernment of which
teachings are meant for the listener during the oral telling. While storywork may be offered in a group context, the embodied interpretations from the heart, mind, body and spirit are unique to each listener. Storywork is a way of receiving and of transmitting knowledge. Archibald’s descriptions of storywork render it separate from a colonial understanding of what is meant of a story. Through Archibald’s framework, a story is something that works you, that has the capacity to shape and strengthen you even beyond your knowing. This is decidedly different than a story as a tale, a narrative, or as a sequence of events—and this definition of a story supports me to articulate how stories, whether visible or not, invite or deter questions.

Storying as research, invites the reader/writer/teller/listener on a journey without guaranteeing either a destination, or necessarily a way back. I am not meaning to speak in riddles, or to avoid the rigor demanded of academic writing. I am trying to invite the reader into this process of inquiry through stories that are alive, inconclusive and infinite—these are the stories needed for what I am seeking, looking for, endeavouring to know—which is, how to attune to knowledges that exist beyond my questions to contribute to mutually beneficial research.

I began my thesis with a yearning to spend more time with Lichens. As a part of my coursework for Sean Blenkinsop’s class, “Developing Educational Programs and Practices for Diverse Educational Settings,” I was assigned to a group tasked with learning through land-based teachings of a particular “kinfolk” (2020, p. 8). I was assigned as a member of “The Unusuals, the often forgotten: lichens, fungi, and the inanimates (rocks, minerals, the sun, etc.)” (Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 2). I began the assignment begrudgingly, wishing that I had been placed in a group that would allow me to continue learning from Ivy, or would allow me to spend time amongst Nootka Rose, or a some other being that I perceived to be more enchanting. Toward Ivy and Nootka Rose, I had extended romantic metaphors grounded in my understanding of the world. Lichens pulled me beyond my understanding of the world. At the time, I had no idea what Lichen was/were, nor how to pronounce it/them. Litch-in? Liken? Grumbling, I set out across the Oak field across from my home. I vividly recall my first conscious encounter with Lichens—many of them, some scaling, some protruding, greyish-blues and pastel greens on a rotting fencepost. From that moment onward, my sight acquired new depth, and I saw Lichens everywhere!
They intrigued me enough that I stepped off of the path of my educational plan and willed myself to linger, or allowed myself time for what David Jardine (2012) calls “whiling”. My encounters with these kin, so unlike myself, intrigued me to attend to Lichen-stories in beyond-languages with wonder and curiosity. I knew that I needed something beyond semester-time, and that allowing for longer stretches of time to be with Lichens before formulating any questions about them was one of the conditions necessary for this way of coming to know. I worried that asking a question too soon would limit what I was able to attend to. I knew that I needed time, and I knew that I needed Lichens, but I could not yet conceive of why. I switched from an MEd to an MA to allow myself more time to be in relationship with wonder, trusting that a question would emerge.

For my research to be a contribution to the future, I needed to include other-than-humans as citizens with tools/gestures/languages/stories/questions/understandings required to dialogue with those of us committed to living more just worlds on, what Anna Tsing calls, a damaged planet (2017). Vygotsky, furthering Marx’s historical materialism theory (which argues that changes in consciousness and behaviour are made possible through tools that are available to society), argued that language is a culturally-produced tool that enables behavioural transformations of individuals and cultures (Vygotsky, 1978). Other-than-human languages and voices are required in experiences claiming to be educational. If education is to participate in the pedagogical pursuit of altering human consciousness and behaviour in response to living in an ecological crisis, we have to take seriously where educational experiences occur, and whose voices are made audible in those spaces.

Humans use language to gesture, to interpret, to express our experience the world. Language shapes, and is shaped by cultures, making tangible particular values, ideas, indeed, worlds. We can create language, words to bring into focus a perspective that allows us to collectively attend to an idea. Once named, an idea becomes more vivid, alive, and reflexively shapes culture. Language is one way that humans bring the invisible into being. This argument is not to suggest that an idea needs language to be illuminated.

Historical-materialism, as an idea, resonated with my experience of somatic worlding. It suggests a way of imagining language as a tool to make worlds possible.
However, as a product of time and place it is situated within worlds. In picking up language, we inherit its histories, associations, and reverberations. Historical-materialism is useful, kin perhaps to somatic worlding, and yet the languages needed to shape and be shaped by our current culture resist associations with tools. Tools suggest that we are building something, constructing something, whereas somatic worlding seeks to surrender to the entanglements/webs/spirals of sacred geometries that we are already a part of.

How might rocks enter conversations required for imagining more just worlds? Rocks, shaped by gestures of water still echoing with the beginning of time, require something underdeveloped in our collective attending. Rocks do not speak, at least not in the languages we tend to include in educational institutions. However, an education that decidedly positions rocks as inanimate resources, limits their purpose to joining the walls of an echo chamber.

The world is alive with gestures. How can we encourage educational experiences that attend to these living libraries?

Other-than-human agentic citizens, and what we might interpret as their voices, are required in conversations toward the creation of more just worlds. The ecological crisis impacts all beings, how do we re-member ourselves as humble members of a whole? How can we acknowledge the reality of multiple worlds, and continue to seek for ways that make space/leave space for our co-flourishing?

Multiple worlds are co-flourishing, with or without our awareness.

Multiple worlds are being destroyed, with or without our awareness.

I spent more time in cemeteries, enchanted by the ways that Lichens slowly embossed tombstones, tracing slow-motion dialogues on epitaphs. I didn’t have the language to describe what I was seeing, nor did it seem particularly necessary. I was learning how to be with Lichens, and through my being, I noticed the Other’s ways of being, their gestures. I became increasingly aware of what David Abrams (2017) calls, “Magic … the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences, the intuition that every form one perceives—from the swallow swooping overhead to the fly on the blade of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself—is an experiencing form, an
entity with its own predilections and sensations” (p. 9-10). These ways of seeing ourselves as a part of a wildly complex system of living, better prepares us to engage in reciprocal relationships with children and the world in the 21st century. Education needs to engage in the ethical pursuit of creating conditions for more just worlds, and needs to include our encounters with the unknowable gestures of other-than-human beings in this pursuit.

Audrey Lorde articulates the function of poetry, and in her words, I find the essence of what I aim to invite into my research:

Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. (Wong, 2021, p. xiii)

There is a namelessness that my tongue extends toward, that my fingers seek in their dancing across the keyboard, attempting to find “the quality of the light” in language that honours the experiencing of kinship. Throughout the process of my researching, poems seemed to find me, and held spaces that I could return to, in order to remember my somatic worlding. These poems created shelter and space for me to do the work of connecting. I felt kinship with poets who too seemed to have shared breath with the ineffable, and who gestured toward its existence. My encounters with Other-than-human galaxies moved me, not to write poetry, but to experience living poetically.

What is critical for me to present in my work are some of the ways that attending to what is imaginable through multispecies relations, kinship, and responsibility can lead us to questions that are unaskable without the Other. My work traces my autoethnographical journey as a human, playing with ideas of multispecies kinship. Lichens had my attention, and a few lines from a Mary Oliver poem assured me that attending with the fullness of my being was enough structure to begin this work. My thesis is presented in three different sections, inspired by a section within Mary Oliver’s poem, “Sometimes,” published in Red Bird (2008):

Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.
Be astonished.

Tell me about it.

May my stories be of good heart, good spirit, and thus, good research.
Chapter 2.

Pay Attention

To whom and to what we attend is of pedagogical significance. I began my quaeerere by attending to influences of: time on education; to the role of stories in learning; and to the ways in which the body can be a site for understanding.

“Did you know that we are just living in space?” a child asked me, long lashes blinking over his bright blue upward gaze.

“Yeah,” another child chimed in, “Earth is just a rock, floating around in space!”

Maybe I had learned this fact in childhood, but it didn’t stick until last summer when I listened to a narrated deep-time walk (Deep Time Walk C.I.C., 2021). The Deep-Time Walk is an app featuring an audio recording by two narrators, the scientist and the fool. Together, these two narrate the history of the planet with each kilometer representing one-billion years in earth time. In this way, time is embodied. Impossibly large numbers, such as the concept of 4.5 billion years, are made relative through experiential measurement. Humans only arrive in the story during the last 30 centimeters of the walk. This experience is one that I now use to begin one of the courses I teach on child development. This situating ourselves as human begins, a species, that have a relatively short history on a richly storied planet, is essential for contextualizing perspectives of child development.

Apparently, the moon is just a chunk of the Earth that dislodged during some kind of astrological storm. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, the moon was much closer, impacting the speed at which the earth turned—time. I live on the unsurrendered territories of Coast Salish Peoples. Here, the WSÁNEĆ Peoples have known time through moons—thirteen of them (Claxton, E. YELKÁTTE & Elliott, J. STOLȻEȽ, 1993). Time can be traced through geological stories of erosion, resistance, and transformation (Carson, 2018). Throughout time on this floating rock, there have been long seasons of deep freezes, and thawing, by which the geology of the earth was shaped—epochs. Epochs mark extensive cycles of time between enormous change. Some people call this epoch, the Anthropocene, pointing to the enormous changes that the Anthropos (human
species) have inflicted onto the planet (Haraway, 2016, p. 30). The stories that we use to
tell time influence our relationship with the concept of time. If time is something marked
by clocks, where twice a year we move the clocks either forward or backward an hour to
adjust the time of day at which daylight occurs, we imagine that time is something that
we can control. When we name an epoch to reflect the impact that we have had as a
single species, we make the story about us. As Haraway (2016) warns, “it matters what
stores we tell to tell other stories with” (p. 12). Educational institutions need to attend to
the ways that they/we construct concepts of time, and how they/we consider the
relationship between time and learning. Attending to time, and attending to other-than-
human relationships with time, may support educators and students to find humility in
the institution and to acknowledge teaching and learning as infinite. Formal education is
an opportunity to develop skills, to gather, to share perspectives, and to hold stories of
collective understandings.

Our collective understanding of the world requires more stories from the world.
Microbes have etched this floating rock for over four billion years, recomposing and
decomposing chemical compositions so that this rock could hold life as we know it. Their
three-billion-year evolution shaped the planet and created the biosphere, making it
possible for larger organisms to begin populating the earth approximately 500 million
years ago (Chimileski & Kolter, 2017). Not unlike Muskrat, and other small creatures in
Land-based Indigenous creation stories, the microbe brought soil. Soil is a site of
constant becoming, through transformative encounters between minerals, mycelium,
water, air, and microbes (Berry, 2017; Simard, 2021; Tsing, et al., 2017). Dipping and
dancing between life and death, soil is composed of the decomposing. Mycorrhizal webs
lace through soil, extending from the roots of plants and create networks that allow them
to exchange nutrients, and information, in ways that mirror the circuitry of synapses
within the human brain (Simard, 2021). These mycorrhizal threads within soil, trouble
definitions of both what it means to be an individual and what it means to have
intelligence (Sheldrake, 2020). These stories are required within a system of education
that engages with creating more livable worlds.

Indigenous understandings of this rock floating in space, suggest that this is all
occurring on the back of a turtle’s shell. Lee Maracle (2015) speaks to the power of oral
stories, describing oratory as a “place of prayer; to persuade” (p. 161). Stories of Turtle
Island are not communicated as theories, or beliefs, but rather as understandings
communicated through stories told to re-member the world back to its sacredness. Maracle (2015) defines stories for re-membering as doing the opposite of dis-membering, events that have ended. I do not intend to suggest what Indigenous Peoples know of Turtle Island, nor to perpetuate pan-Indigeneity. Rather, positioning Lee Maracle’s ideas together with the sciences further illuminates the role of stories as offering us ground, and perhaps turtles, to stand on. There are many stories that can lead us to the same place—which is home. Education needs stories for re-membering humanity’s role within a web of interconnectedness. I acknowledge that what we consider to be our homes, or what Wendell Berry (1986) refers to as our nests, are built from the stories that we have been told, those that we tell, and those told through us. Beneath our feet, soil is alive with stories. Our bodies are microbiomes; planets of microbes that, when taken seriously, invite us to rethink “where one individual stops and another starts” (Sheldrake, 2020, p. 16). We are all galaxies within galaxies.

So why then, with all of these stories that invite us to step into our interconnectedness, do we continue to tell stories (in the name of education) that assert illusory narratives of individualism? How is it that the stories that gnaw on the fibers that connect us to our birthright—wholeness—continue to masquerade as education? My quaerere continues to emerge as the Greek concept of Paideia, mastery of my person (Orr, 2004, p. 13). In Chapter 2, I introduce a collection of autoethnographic stories about my own process of becoming-with the world. I reflect on how my experiences reveal pathways for learning about our species in relation to other-than-human beings, and why this is crucial in this ago of ongoing ecological crises.

I do not think that we have reached a point in sociopolitical history that early childhood education can do away with conversations about developmentalism; its hidden authority requires language and critical thinking to make it visible so that it can be questioned. What is required is that we situate stories of development, we need stories from multiple perspectives and disciplines, a diversity of understandings of how development occurs and why.

While a focus on pedagogy is shifting how early learning and care are practiced in British Columbia (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019), much of curriculum, including the tools of historical materialism that we offer children to think with, are based
on developmentally-appropriate ideas of childhood that privilege a Euro-Western definition of a child. The concept of curriculum as being age-appropriate privileges clock-time. Industrialization included the prominence of clocks, changing the relationship between time and citizens of industrialized cultures (Pinsker, 2021). This relationship with clock-time correlated with institutions separating children into grades based on their age in the 19th century (Pinsker, 2021). Educational institutions continue to separate groups of children based on their age, their clock-time, and, often before meeting those particular children, make curricular decisions that limit what children will learn based on ideas founded in developmentalism. We create monocultural learning environments based on monocultural ways of understanding the role of time in development. Education bound by clock-time becomes dis-membered, categorized, and divided into controllable and regulated pieces. This sorting of children based on their age in clock-time suggests that development, like clock-time, is something that we can control. How else might we imagine groupings of learners? Quickly now, the clock is ticking.

Decomposing the structure set by curriculum and assessment in education and recomposing learning spaces that promote and value collaborative pedagogical processes, positions knowledge as alive, responsive, messy, and often indeterminate. This revisioning of education imagines spaces for learners to experience themselves as symbiotic beings (Gilbert, et al., 2012). With an understanding of oneself as a symbiotic being, we are better able to contemplate the concept of reciprocity, and the role of reciprocity in research.

Post-secondary studies within early learning and care need to begin with, and continually engage with, stories of situated child development that attend to rich histories of local Indigenous knowledge to engage with place-based understandings and questions of knowledge. Students need experiences to think with, beyond colonial axiological possibilities, that suggest other purposes of being human. From where I stand, the Soil, the Wind, the Salt, the Ocean, all contain the stories, knowledge, and culture of lək̓ʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples of the Songhees, Esquimalt, Tsartlip, Tsawout, and Tseycum Nations. As a non-Indigenous person teaching within an academic institution constructed on colonially-occupied territories, I grow increasingly aware of my ethical responsibility to include local knowledge to invite pedagogically responsive practices in early learning and care. I am grateful for the late Dave Elliott Senior’s, *Saltwater People* (1990) as a publication that supports a situated
understanding of how children were (and continue to be) regarded as citizens who are integral parts of the community, and who are children of these territories.

It is through living on these territories for the past seven years that I have felt supported to begin my own journey of decolonization/reclamation, seeking to understand the stories that I walk with and curious about whose stories might become audible when it is quiet enough to hear my own blood pumping. My blood connects me to British and German ancestry on my father’s side. My blood connects me to Salvadoran ancestry on my mother’s side. My blood connects me to my four children who live beyond temporal understandings of life, in beyond-worlds. My blood connects me to this body, this temporary vessel, living here in this place, alongside of innumerable beings and their histories beyond knowing, places for wonder, places for somatic worlding.

Somatic knowledge is not skin-contained. World as a noun is static, whereas “worlding” as a verb, invites a concept that is very much alive. Somatic worlding suggests that ways of understanding include encounters with the space between the self and Others, and that through that space, what I conceive of as “I,” has opportunities to expand. To imagine the body as both a noun and as a “bodying” verb, imagines that we too are constantly becoming/expanding/contracting in relation to ongoing encounters that extend the experience of a contained self. In Sasha Sagan’s book, For Small Creatures Such As We (2019), she shares that molecules within the air we breathe are as old as time, both forward and backward. To know that our bodies are interacting with parts of everything that ever has been, and everything that ever will be (so long as the Earth exists in this form) reminds us of the myopic thinking of individualism. To see myself as inextricable from the whole, erases my dis-membered responsibility as a part. Somatic worlding explores the ways that we can experience our existence as a part of a whole in a felt sense that is largely untranslatable, and required for education in the Anthropocene.

While largely translatable, I can offer a story of my own experience of somatic worlding which occurred after having spent days visiting a particular Cedar on the territories of the Malahat First Nations. I would arrive with small gifts, often water and song, and we would spend the day together. It was during what has been called the “heat dome” and I was grateful for this place in the forest, and for the canopy that interrupted the eerie orange of the sky clouded by wildfire smoke. I often felt like I was
sitting on the lap of this ancient being, and any previous notions I held about being alone in the woods were replaced by the awareness of the diversity of life that existed here. I was anything but alone. For days, I was held by Cedar in the most intimate and trusting way so that my sensed containment as an individual, released into a blissful state of marveling. The part of my identity which saw itself as fixedly human—which is to say, how I had been taught to conceive of the human species, was blurred. I felt tethered to a new understanding of being. For a fragment of time, that may eternally echo through my experience of being human, I inhabited space with this Other body that was beyond skin-contained and felt deep belonging. Experiencing ourselves as parts of the whole is a spiritual experience, largely void in educational curriculum. Learning outcomes in post-secondary early learning and care programs talk about the spirit as a part of children’s holistic being—but there is an omission, a gap in the literature, to prioritize necessary practices for understanding this in our programs.

The pedagogical implications for such an experience are that I know it exists. There is a responsibility to knowing that something exists. As Thomas King says, “don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story” (2003, p. 29). In curriculum, this means advocating for time and space in programs that create conditions for potentially meaningful experiences with other-than-human beings that can illuminate our place in the whole; this means creating opportunities to know that we are not only breathing but that we are being breathed (Kimmerer, 2013). There is no prescribed way for experiencing this felt sense of belonging with/in the world, but it is a place for further quaerere. What stories and experiences can be incorporated into the educational journey of those becoming early childhood educators that seeks, looks for, asks, requires, demands, to include multicentric pathways toward well-being and belonging? To disrupt the human-centric narrative is to question whose stories have been included in our understanding our humanness, and to examine the implications of those narratives.

Within Ramsay Affifi’s (2020) article, Anthropocentrism’s fluid binary, he describes experiencing the world through “Magpiemorphisation” (p. 1445). He articulates the ways that his encounters with Magpie influenced his thinking about Magpie, he began to attend to the world as he had observed Magpie doing. There are connections here to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s (2017) Land as Pedagogy, and the ways that Binoojiinh learned about Maple syrup from observing Ajidamoo (p.146-149). By
attending to the world with altered predilections, we are invited to new ways of 
experiencing, which can be a pathway for mediating understanding. While we cannot 
escape our humanness, we can shift centrism along a fluid binary between 
anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric motivations. The more of you I come to know, 
the more I realize the infinite ways that there are to knowing. The more stories I know of 
you, the more questions I can ask that relate to you.

In this way, my experiences with Lichen have led me to experience 
Lichenmorphisation. In Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds 
& Shape Our Futures (2020) Merlin Sheldrake argues that Lichens are always in the 
process of “lichenizing; they are verbs as well as nouns” (p. 88). From a perspective of 
Lichenmorphisation, it is apparent that our human-made categories omit multispecies life 
logics, inviting pedagogical attention. Within our current human-centric logic systems, 
Lichens are considered both autotrophic (photosynthesizing to produce nutrients) and 
heterotrophic (consuming other organisms for nutrition). While this may appear to be a 
fun fact it invites inquiry, particularly in regards to mutualistically-trophic quaerere. How 
is it that we uphold taxonomies that do not include this species? What, besides the 
existence of these lives that defy our sense of order, would be necessary for our 
regulations of order to change? Which stories make particular questions possible, and 
which stories do we attend to? Which stories make research possible? Which stories 
garner attention, and thus funding for research? As compositional beings sustained 
through mutualism, Lichens offer a counter-narrative to Darwin’s evolutionary theory of 
the survival of the fittest, and as such, disrupts other Eugenic narratives arising from this 
postulation. Lichens, by existing, demonstrate survival as dependent upon mutually 
beneficial relations.

The categorical understanding of ourselves as separate from nature, with the 
possibility of further sorting based on race and gender, has limited the ways that we are 
able to become (Plumwood, 1993). As a post-secondary instructor teaching early 
learning and care, I have become increasingly interested in the stories we tell about child 
development and how these stories are both rooted in, and contributing to, narratives of 
universal “normal” development. As a statistical term, “normal” describes a distribution of 
scores on a bell curve, graphically depicting the mean and standard deviation. While 
statistics can illustrate normal distributions of development within a certain scope, it is 
problematic to refer to these statistics as objective and to apply these statistics as a
universal measure for “natural” development. These statistics need to be put into context in which their truthfulness can be tied to sociopolitical histories and values. While statistics measure data, they are also mediating intellectual tools that reflect axiological truths specific to people, time and place which should be included within conversations about child development. In consideration of child development, it is essential to ask whether sustaining “normal” is useful? Returning to historical materialism, humans continue to adapt in response to the tools available to us in the environment. Language evolves with culture, with words emerging to make life logics visible. Until 1973, homosexuality was classified as a mental illness in the DSM—it was abnormal, and thus seen to be unnatural (Drescher, 2015). What was omitted, and invisible to statistics was the cultural climate, the violence and punishment for homosexuals, and thus the lack of statistical data to support homosexuals as anything other than abnormal. Numbers support us to track trends, and require critical analysis from multiple disciplines to accurately consider the implications of those trends.

The quest for human behaviours to fall within the range of normal invites quaerere about belonging, and to the limitations to the categories we have in which to belong. If we, as a species, continue to pursue belonging limited to our species, we remain continually vulnerable to the limitations of our situatedness. While researchers continue to gather data to track patterns of development, an area for further focus remains largely unanswered, how do these particular areas of development contribute to mutual flourishing? As Sean Blenkinsop notes, “we have adults who understand themselves to be independent/autonomous/mature beings and understand themselves to be healthy and normal” (personal communication, September 7, 2021). When these “healthy and normal” adults govern society at large, we confront an axiological opposition—for which of these “healthy and normal” adults would support a model of education that depends on recognizing and questioning the conditions that have led to our collective faltering, misguided objectives, trauma, and limited understanding of ourselves? What would compel these “healthy and normal” adults to abandon the ongoing privileging of developmentalism that asserts their success as “independent/autonomous/mature beings” and instead, invites the questioning of whose stories have been validated, whose stories have been omitted, and how these stories factor into a multispecies flourishing?
Somatic worlding reimagines developmental education as a storied pursuit of human belonging, and invites an expansion of this scope by engaging with the complexities of interdependence in other-than-human worlds; recomposing and decomposing ways of knowing and being and opening to the significance of these encounters. Somatic worlding invites new places for educators to seek mediation that bring us to encounter the limitations of our knowing.

Take this paper, assuming that you are holding a printed copy. Whatever it is able to “say” is limited by our shared understanding of what knowledge is worth knowing. I draw on the work of other authors, reflect on my own experiences, and grapple with whether or not there is any way to change the educational institution from within. I can only ever talk about somatic worlding.

Now, if you take this paper and discard it in a compost heap. Watch the moons. Turn the compost each time the moon is full. Feel the rain on your face. Soak in the sun. Step on the pile. Dance on the pile. Kneel. Add onion skins, coffee grinds, the last piece of your birthday cake. Add tears. Lay, cheek-to-cheek. Observe the beings that crawl, fly, eat, defecate, mate, birth, and die near this heap. Eventually, this refuse will begin to look like soil. When you cannot wait any longer, plunge your hand deep into the pile. Heat! A surprising amount of heat such that you might first pull away. Plunge your hand back into the pile and hold it there. Heat radiating as though from a body. Bodies? Some body? Somebody. These somebodies are needed to move from speaking about, to storying somatic worlding.

Through the process of writing my thesis, I became increasingly aware of the other-than-human influences on my writing and the ways in which their voices would be flattened/fragmented/dissected through the traditional structures of academic papers. I needed poetry as a structure for formatting my thesis, drawn by poetry’s encounters with space. Stories of somatic worlding begin with spaces between. There are spaces between how little we know about the world alongside of how much we claim to know. There are spaces and incongruencies between celebrated narratives of human intelligence alongside the violence and devastation of mass species extinction. There are spaces and omissions in who “we” consider within our understanding of the worlds that compose the world. Stories of somatic worlding dance in the spaces between multicentric ways of knowing and being.
My research emerges from a collection of storied experiences alongside of other-than-human voices and the *quaerere* they invited. My experiences apprenticing Lichens, both alone and through symbiotically thinking with others, continue to inform what I am able to imagine—this is of pedagogical significance. To imagine something is an artistic endeavor of reconfiguring elements from known experiences and using them to stretch toward possibility in the unknown. To imagine is an act of courage, it is a risk that offers your perspective as a thread for co-composing the tapestry of the world, without knowing what that could look like. Egan, quoting Mary Warnock, offers, “Imagination can stretch out towards what imagination cannot comprehend” (1998, p. 123). My research traced my process of *quaerere* while committing to extend beyond my own comprehension. Using story and poetry I hope to suspend language, bend time, conduct cadence, linger, and play with pause in a way that resounds of somatic worlding.

My thesis is a story about education as relational, and as alive through infinitely recomposing and decomposing inquiries.
Chapter 3.

Be Astonished

The etymology of the word, “astonish” is a combination of the Latin words for “out” and “thunder” (Harper, 2021). Within this section I describe experiences that astonished my ways of knowing the world—out-thundered my internalized sense of understanding the world filtered through the conditions of my own historical materialism. Within this section, I begin to notice the gestures of Others. This is pedagogically significant to disrupt human-deemed humanness, and other human made categories of division that continue to disconnect us from a species within a whole of wider logics. This pursuit, or preservation, of wholeness is required in education. David Orr (2004) argues:

The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. In needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world habitable and humane. And these qualities have little to do with success as our culture has defined it. (p. 12).

Education has a responsibility/response-ability to support the conditions necessary for living on the planet in the 21st century. One of these conditions is recognizing the ways that we have repressed, or illusorily severed, our connection to the planet through our privileging of stories of human exceptionalism. In Val Plumwood’s (2012) *The Eye of the Crocodile*, she laments, “We are victors and never victims, experiencing triumph but never tragedy, our true identity as minds, not as bodies. Thereby we intensify and reinforce illusions of superiority and apartness” (p. 13). Theories of developmentalism need to contextualize narratives of exceptionalism to consider if and how celebrated achievements contribute to multispecies flourishing. Our actions must be evaluated by our impacts, not only our intentions (Crinchlow, 2022).

Lichenmorphisation (or, like-kin-morphisation), is useful in this pursuit to be astonished. Astonishment and being out-thundered by other-than-human worlds, creates conditions for interdisciplinary (if we can imagine multispecies knowledge as other disciplines) imaginings of education and expands possibilities for responding. Sheridan and Longboat (2006) engage with Haundenosaunee concepts of imagination to unsettle the limitations of imagination as imposed by humanism. Within Haudenosaunee ways of
being, the mind is a part of everything, and everything is a part of the mind (Sheridan and Longboat, 2006). As such, the imagination is a language, or frequency, that moves through ecologies that include human and other-than-human beings. In this way, humans are a facet of the imagination of the world. To conceive of humanity as a part of the imagination of the world is astonishing.

Collective imagination is at the heart of pedagogy—we must be willing to enter into a co-composed space that invites what we cannot singularly comprehend.

Imagining the role of education within the cultural response-ability toward more livable worlds, requires us to envision pedagogical spaces as reclamations projects possibly entangled with grief, healing, unexpected pause, unpredictability, and humility. The ultimate intention of such a project would be to imagine our species into our wholeness.

I cannot decidedly claim that I know where this part of my education began, this reacquainting myself with the astonishment of the world. Perhaps it began with encounters with microbes, sediments transferred through deep inhalations of the forest as I lay on my stomach, elbows-deep in Ivy. However, it was Oceanspray that first drew my multi-species attending, and thus sharpened my attention so that I was open to such an encounter with Ivy. Or perhaps it was the Ocean itself and the way that the scent of Salt reminded me of somewhere I had never been, but already knew, which led me to move to this side of the continent in the first place. There are many polyphonic beginnings that continue to unravel, merge, contradict, surround, fill, distract, and encourage me toward the many paths that continue to lead to the same place—which is home.

In selecting stories for the purpose of my research, what astonished me was that I became decentered as the protagonist as larger traces of entanglement with other humans, and multispecies beings became visible. I was influenced by authors who have written of the earth’s ways of knowing and being, and of the importance of an educational system that includes reading the world as being as valuable as reading the word (Abram, 2017; Berry, 2017; Carson, 1998; Gruenewald, 2003; Orr, 1998). The world is richly storied in ways that we continue to discover, but that exist with or without our discovering. Sometimes, the astonishment finds us. There are emotional responses
to experiences of being out-thundered—gratitude, fear, disbelief, humility, relief, suspicion, to name a few. This worlding is not guaranteed to be pleasant. Worlding brings us to face how little we know for certain, constantly revealing galaxies within galaxies, stories within stories, turtles on top of turtles. Through worlding, there exist possibilities for education to become, astonishingly, a process of becoming-with the world.

In the following section I offer three stories that have astonished me: “Mangoes in My Bones;” “Measuring Time Through Relationships;” and “What Doing?”. Inspired by the Carl Leggo’s (2020) work on narrative inquiry, these stories are intended as narratives, not artifacts. The original stories have been significantly edited in dialogue with one another and have been modified by the nature of their inclusion in this larger body of work. “Mangoes in My Bones” and “Measuring Time Through Relationships” were written in the months before I began my studies at Simon Fraser University. The stories are included as necessary traces that preceded my quaerere.

The first story uses autoethnography as a research methodology. In “Mangoes in My Bones,” italic font is used to indicate the story, followed by a section of analysis and critical reflection. This methodology most closely reflects a process for writing pedagogical narrations, as described in the British Columbia Early Learning Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019). As such, I intend that my research will be accessible and relative to those working in the field of early learning and care.

“Measuring Time Through Relationships” plays with the formatting of autoethnography, merging story and reflection to illustrate a more fluid concept of time. The intention is to explore the ways that the present carries experiences and knowledge from the past. The way that I experience the moment is informed by stories that accompany me in the present. This story is entirely in italics.

“What doing?” returns to autoethnography to interrogate myself as a researcher. My storying is internal, with a question from a child echoing into the present. Following the internal reflections, I reflect on the quaerere leading to a decision to deviate from autoethnography and to introduce multispecies ethnography.
3.1. Mangoes in My Bones

“Our lives are incarnations of the stories we tell, the stories told about us, and the stories we inherit. They are both the process and the consequence of the transformations into the fullness of humanity” (Justice, 2018, p. 34).

The mangoes had stories to tell. I grabbed a pen, fingers dripping with nectar, scrawling furiously as I continued slurping ripe mango flesh into my mouth. There was an odd sense of urgency as my senses flooded as the stories that called me home. I wrote:

…These memories seem to be in my heart, more than in my bones...

…I longed to have belonged to the forest...

…Instead, I belong to mangoes...

…Foods from far away forests...

…I can smell my grandmother...

…I imagine her hands and the curvature of her fingers shaping pupusas...

...The flavours mingle...

...The corn, the mangoes, they are in my bones...

... They offer me a place to belong...

As an early childhood educator working with children in an outdoor program, I would occasionally have this moment while watching a child playing with the ocean waves, or grinning through a face full of mud, or peacefully enveloped within a nest of grasses when suddenly this sense of loss would hit me.

I would recount my own childhood, scanning memories for anything I had missed, any memory of playing in a forest, any connection to a sense of place in the larger world. While I could recount a handful of memories, they were exceptions, adventures, encounters with the “wild” more than a sense of my place in the whole.
Mine was a childhood largely spent indoors, largely sedentary, largely watching eighties sitcoms. Instead of the ocean, I could remember my family’s bathtub. Instead of the mud, I was playing with my mother’s makeup. Instead of the grasses, I could visualize hiding in the middle of a rack of clothing in a mall. While there was nothing particularly cruel or traumatic about my childhood, I was not raised to know a sense of connection to the larger world—which is its own sort of cruelty. This is not to blame my family, for they each come from their own delineated lineage. I grew up with a very clear sense of places where we were not welcome. While I didn’t understand why, I knew through my parent’s bodies—their posture, their fidgeting, their gaze. The lines mapped for my family were foraged by their encounters with their worlds, and the encounters of those who had come before them, encounters that told them to “sit down and to take your place”. I am not certain how useful it is to include the details of these encounters; they are not my stories to tell. However, the threads of importance derive from my family being uneducated, and working-class poor. I was a part of a world, my family’s world which meant that we understood ourselves as a piece of a puzzle, rather than claiming our place as an essential part of the whole. Same, same, but different.

Then came mangoes… they told me stories of the ways that the world had always found me. There, at my kitchen table, with mango nectar streaming down my wrists, sliding down my forearms, I burst into tears. While mine was not a childhood spent outdoors, it was a childhood that centered around food and the hands that prepared the food.

I live with the sense that the world is somehow out there, when it has been here all along. Undoubtedly my education contributed to this sense of the world being “out there.” Education was delivered through books, in classrooms, and seemed to be a collection of facts, identical crafts displayed on a bulletin board too high for me to see, and tests. Content rarely connected to the body or experiencing our place within the world, and the world within us. Coloring sheets, written facts, and regurgitation about people we have never met—people and places worth learning about, and none of them lived in Woodstock, Ontario. Aside from a few teachers that I met in high school, there was this overwhelming sense that curiosity was a distraction, something that would lead us off topic—which was a place that we dare not travel. Education was fragmented by time, and disconnected from place.
I am composed of my bones. My bones are of the Land and they will return to the Land. In my time in this flesh, I am being-human, an endless process fed by stories. In “Where Are We From?: A Critical Community Autoethnography of Place, Space, and Belonging,” the authors argue, “As a human-being-under-construction, my discourses, relationships, and actions speak to the nature of who I am and who I may become” (Zilonka, R., et al., 2019). In education we need stories that trouble our representations of this categorical human being and stories/discourses that push the boundaries of our individuality as a path to fuller belonging. I am of Mangoes. To which orchards do you belong? With these stories, we invite the blurring of lines between where I begin and end, which is a pathway to somatic worlding.

My grandmother, Victoria, still makes corn tortillas by hand. There is always a stack of them on the counter in the kitchen, wrapped in a cotton towel. There are refried beans on the stove. There is sour cream in the fridge, and salt on the counter. When I go to Mama and Papa’s house, I know the door will be unlocked. I know the flecked handle of the door, and the sound of the screen door as it squeaks open. I know that I can come in, fix myself a plate, and find company at their table. We don’t all speak the same language, but we share the language of food. This food makes a home.

My late-grandmother, Mary Edith Brown, was a key matriarch in my life. I can picture her cleaning beneath her nails with a paring knife on her back porch. She taught me how to make pie crust, and to pinch and twist the crust to edge the pie in a perfect wave. She grew strawberries and rhubarb that tasted like summer.

I am just beginning to understand other-than-human stories. Perhaps the first one I have ever really understood was the story told in Mango. The sticky, sensorial encounter, there at my kitchen table activated stories that extend beyond my identity. I am here, and I am always elsewhere. I know that I am sitting in this room, and that the sensorial memory of mango pulp between my front teeth returns me to my grandparent’s dining room table, where the past exists as a layer of the ongoing present.

Taylor and Giugni (2012) argue that relationships are generative encounters with others through which we have become, and continue to become who we are. We need stories that support children and educators to see ourselves, to feel ourselves, to know ourselves as vital pieces of the whole. How might we think of the power of stories in
education as intersecting places to belong. As Daniel Heath Justice (2018) reminds us, “If our humanity is defined in large part by the stories we tell, then the storytellers have a vital role to play in bringing us back to healthier relationships with ourselves and with one another” (p.60) Humanity needs humility to pause and to listen for voices, like Mango, to welcome us home. To limit our belonging to our being human continues the fragmentation of time and place. Stories can hold complexity and illustrate the ways that we sprawl beyond time and place. Educating in this way, through inviting the parts of ourselves beyond the classroom, and by engaging with the worlds that compose “here” engages with the expansion of self/cell-f, and makes space for encounters of somatic worlding.

“Stories can be good medicine, too. They can drive out the poison, heal the spirit as well as the body, remind us of the greatness of where we came from as well as the greatness of who we’re meant to be” (Justice, 2018, p. 5).

Figure 1  My hand holding a Mango.
June 23, 2019
This reflection was written for a course that I was taking as a part of my infant and toddler certification in early childhood education. This course was offered through a pilot project in Work Integrated Learning through Camosun College. Aligning with the college’s commitment to decolonization, this pilot project was being conducted largely in community. My instructor would visit me once a week at the child care centre where I was working. In addition to these visits, our cohort would meet for a weekly community of practice on Land. Learning was inquiry-based, whereby I would develop questions that arose from within my practice, and my instructor would support me to develop assignments that allowed me to follow these questions. The learning outcomes called for reflection on our own beliefs, and critical thinking about the ways that our values and beliefs influenced our practice. Many of my chosen assignments were in the form of pedagogical narrations, a form of narrative research, informed by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, adapted to meet the pedagogical declarations within the BC Early Learning Framework (2019). While many of the pedagogical narrations focused on my observations with children, some of them were more personally reflective, exploring my own connections to children and Land. “Mangoes in my Bones,” is a personally reflective piece that invited an ongoing inquiry about the ways that food can be a pathway for coming to know Land.

This reflection drips abundance, the nectar of the mango, the sensorial experience of the moment, the way that the senses bring the past into the present—all as the Mango nectar enrobes my skin. To fully attend to a moment is to experience abundance. The BC Early Learning Framework (2019) opens with a quote by Peter Moss:

So my story is about an open-ended early childhood education in a centre that occupies and contributes to an unfinished world, a place of infinite possibilities, giving constant rise to wonder and surprise, magic moments and goose bumps, and a source of hope and renewed belief in the world. (p. 1)

The mention of goose bumps calls my attention for the way that it underscores the role of the educator with the fullness of their body as a condition for this sort of pedagogical awareness. In my pedagogical narration, my skin was an active agent in my encounter, languages of the flesh that demanded attending. I imagine a pedagogy that attends to
goose bumps as a signal to notice, the way the skin expands its surface area to reveal tiny mounds for a heightened awareness of the senses, a way of calling us back to the moment. There is a sense of urgency in my writing, describing how important it was for me to grab a pen in that moment, with ripe Mango dripping and sticking to my skin. The stickiness is notable, this sense that my body is perhaps a host for stories being written in Mango, my forearm wrapped/held/embraced by the other.

In a dominant narrative of early childhood education, engaging with the senses as sites for knowledge acquisition are controlled, removed, and largely justified through other disciplines—a way to learn about math, science, and for developing motor skills. Educators create artificial (and often contained) opportunities for children to learn through sensory play—playdough, a water table, a finger-painting “activity”. While these examples are opportunities for children to learn through their senses, they limit what children can learn—they learn not to put the playdough in their mouth, they learn rules regarding how many children can be at the water table, and that finger-painting is something that can happen in a specific area and in a particular way. Through a lens of historical materialism, these experiences transfer information about socialization, how to behave, and how materials can be experienced. As sociocultural tools, these materials echo a cultural understanding of the child as innocent and removed from the real world—we create artificial landscapes that replicate the human and nature divide. Bodies are regarded as small machines rather than splendidly spectacular sensory conduits capable of truly contributing to knowledge.

These experiences, often deemed as sensory-play, are a place for pedagogical attention particularly in regard to the role of the educator. Our noticing is directed by our own experiences of the world, including the memories that flood our present and influence our engagement with a particular moment. The work of educators is value-laden, and as such, requires ongoing dialogue regarding ethics. The most ethical decision is the one that is the least harmful to the most vulnerable (K. Kummen, personal communication, January, 17, 2022). Vulnerability is complex to quantify, and thus requires ongoing reflection and engagement as a serious pedagogical project.

In the moment with Mango, somatic worlding expanded my experience with the present, layering the moment with a flood of awareness produced by that encounter, the gestures of Mango. Recognized as a moment offering pedagogical significance, the
Mango can be seen as a provocation, or an out-thundering, by other-than-human worlds. Carol Ann Wien argues that a provocation is “something that must be responded to, that we cannot ignore” (Stacey, 2018, p. 107). Provocations make places and possibilities for encounters that can lead us to learn more. Early childhood educators use the word provocation to consider ways that we can respond to children’s thinking/doing/being through materials and environments. It is also key to notice the provocations that are being offered to us as bodied living beings within the learning environment and to again permeate the boundaries of where I end, and you begin, so to further imagine inhabiting situated and temporal places for somatic worlding.

Suzanne Simard’s (2021) *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*, she writes of how her childhood dirt-eating experiences offered her a way of knowing the world that informed her future research. As a child, Simard came to know that Soil beneath Birch was particularly sweet, informing her understanding of the relationships between Soil and Birch (2021). It wasn’t just that trees grew in dirt, but rather, that there were zones of encounters through which both Birch and Soil composed something unique between them.

Sylvia Kind has written with others extensively on encounters with materials in the early years from a post-humanist perspective (2005, 2014a, 2014b, 2017). Her work explores the ways in which materials beckon to us, inviting and guiding their use. Some of the materials she explores are clay, charcoal, and paper. Kind’s work, grounded in the arts, explores materials as languages for expression. As artifacts capable of making gestures, these materials invite children and educators to engage with other-than-human forms of communication that have invited encounters since humanity’s recorded history.

“Mangoes in my Bones” locates knowledge as something that can be embodied, or known beyond the mind. This idea dances with some of Merlin Sheldrake’s (2020), fungi-led thinking about intelligence which questions classical science definitions of intelligence, acknowledging them as anthropocentric. Plumwood’s (2012) human exceptionalism exposes the way that humans create hierarchies that valuate ourselves as the greatest. For educators, we can use this critical thinking to extend towards which criteria we value in children because it reifies our adult exceptionalism—to sit still; to demonstrate rigor; to study dirt without ever tasting it. To imagine knowledge as
embodied, makes space to consider which other bodied beings may hold embodied knowledge.

As a part of my work as a student, I was being asked to better come to know myself and where I come from. One of the ləkʷəŋən protocols for introducing yourself is to begin by sharing the names of your parents, your grandparents, where they come from, and how long you have been a visitor on these territories. Brianna Bear, a ləkʷəŋən knowledge keeper once explained that introducing yourself in this way is a reminder to be a good ancestor; whether or not your family would be welcomed to a place, generations from now, is dependent upon your living in a good way (B. Bear, personal communication, August 18, 2019). In seeking my ancestors, Mangoes found ways to astonish me. I considered how I was drawn toward a stack of Mangoes, lured by their scent ribboning through the air at the market. David Abrams (1996) argues, “the sensing body is not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world” (p. 49). My curiosity to know my ancestors, to embody my stories of where I come from, opened my senses to the world and permitted this encounter with Mangoes.

The body can experience knowledge as situated, rhythmic, interdependent, vulnerable, sensing, subjective and impermanent. Embodied knowing is a process of feeling, sensing, pleasure, pain, and interpretation. To think in this way, through bodying, is to attend to the multiple intelligences that we live with. Privileging cognition as knowledge is based on “a chain of intelligence drawn up by the ancient Greeks” (Sheldrake, 2020, p. 16) and keeps human intelligence at the top of a hierarchical system. While we may register at the top of our own self-made system of intelligence, what we lose in that proclamation is something worth attending to in the pursuit of a more livable world.

More livable worlds demand what Sharon Todd (2001) calls, altered egos. Todd argues that education requires ongoing alterations our self-concept through encounters with the Other, and such ongoing transformations are necessary qualities of the process of education. Todd argues that identifying the process of ontological violence makes demands of ethical attention. Todd takes up Castoriadis’ argument that education is a process of learning to become in relation to our encounters with Others (2001, p. 433). With a widened aperture, the face of multispecies Others invites what Hans-Georg
Gadamer identifies as voices that arrive “over and above our wanting and doing” (Jardine, 2012). In this way, Todd’s ontological violence of education (as an ongoing disruption of the self as individual through continually unsettled by encounters with the Other) fractures the containment of the individual and, when provided rich encounters with multispecies beings, opens the self into an experiencing being within the fullness of the universe. Astonishing, right?
3.2. Measuring Time Through Relationships

“What time is hot lunch tomorrow?” someone asks.

“The same time that we have lunch every day,” I reply.

“What time is that?” they continued.

I looked around and noticed the sun, rising, about to peak to midday. “Do you see the sun?”

“Yes.”

“When it rises to the top of the sky, that’s around when we eat lunch,” I replied.

Satisfied with that response, they went off to the forest.

I notice a child smirking at me as she holds a cluster of blossoms on the top of her head. I wonder about her playful smile, and the “chase me” invitation that it suggests. I wonder when the flowers bloomed? I look beyond the child, to the bush and admire how the billowing branches seem to hold these blossoming tufts up to the clear blue sky.

I can’t seem to remember them in this form before.

If anything, my relationship with this bush [not capitalized because at that time, this bush was indistinguishable to me] has been one of habitual concern. I often proclaim that I am worried for the bush, and call the children to notice its broken and deformed branches. Certain branches sag almost parallel to the ground, morphed by the weight of countless children that have used this bush to climb.

In this moment, I can see that the bush is stronger than I thought, and that it has been here living, despite my lack of noticing. It doesn’t need me to thrive.

In this moment I can see that the children know this bush in its fullness. They are adorned with gifts from Oceanspray. They come to me, delighted with their discovery that the blossoms of this plant stick to their hair like lace.
I admire the beauty of this moment and rather than my rattle off some habitual reminder not to pick the flowers because the plant is a living thing—I have a sudden awareness that they, Oceanspray, are alive in a way that I am only now noticing.

Robin Wall Kimmerer writes of the language of animacy and the way that English contains and restricts our ways of knowing the world. Within the Potawatomi language, other-than-human beings are acknowledged as agentic beings within the structure of language. Kimmerer (2013) invites questions around how language is taught to children, and the pedagogical implications of such. We celebrate, and thus reinforce the behaviour of, the child who can identify a noun as a person, place, or thing without regard to what “thing-ing” a being does to our mutual relationships with the other-than-human world. To see language as a gesture problematizes the rules of grammar, and illuminates the ongoing violent implications of how we live in accordance with the realities constructed by language. Kimmerer (2013) explains:
Our toddlers speak of plants and animals as if they were people, extending to them self and intention and compassion—until we teach them not to. We quickly retrain them and make them forget. When we tell them that the tree is not a who, but an it, we make that maple an object; we put a barrier between us, absolving ourselves of moral responsibility and opening a door to exploitation. Saying it makes a living land into “natural resources.” If a maple is an it, we can take up the chain saw. If a maple is a her, we think twice. (p.57)

I am aware of how subtly language informs our expressions about plants and animals, and how it both shapes and is shaped by the culture in which it lives. I notice how often myself and others refer to Crow with male pronouns, “I wonder what he is doing?” We collectively assume that our encounter with a lone Crow somehow communicates that they are male-gendered. This disavowing of female gendered pronouns for the lone creature is a place for quaerere, particularly as an early childhood educator, (or through languages from other philosophies, the educaher), as though independence is a gendered role. Often, it is only when we notice animals as mothers that we refer to them as “she”. The “mother deer,” the “mama duck,” the female pronouns are evoked when we notice animals with their young. We reinforce the illusion that caring is a gendered action. Caregiving becomes an identity and expectation for belonging as female gendered beings. I am excited by how language is evolving to imagine a spectrum of gender into being. I reflect on my own understanding of myself in the world and the ways in which my identity could have been/might be awakened through language.

Robin Wall Kimmerer speaks of personhood, which contributes to thinking about belonging. In a world that privileges humans, it makes sense for children to strive to belong to the human realm and to look for ways that Other beings might also be recognized as human. From a phenomenological perspective the pattern that Robin Wall Kimmerer notes moves forward this theory that we are born into belonging to the fullness of the world, and that it is through the use of cultural historical tools such as language (that works for us and on us), we dismember those parts of ourselves that seek to belong to the other-than-human world.

I imagined that I was somehow responsible for this bush, and yet, I had not taken the first step toward coming to know who this bush was. Until this moment, I had only known it as a thing; I called it a living thing, but a thing none-the-less. With language, I had come to consider how I might support the sustainability of this bush, how I might
protect it, or save it, and yet I lacked the cultural historical tools that would make somatic worlding possible here. Human saviorism.

The children had a relationship with this particular plant and they continued celebrating their blossoms, and offered their own songs—dancing beneath their branches, above their roots, within the embrace of this Oceanspray.

I reflected on what I know about the plant, and what these children know about this plant. They have come to a relational-knowing of this plant—plant with blossoms that stick to your head like lace; plant of low-hanging, strong and flexible branches, or bones; plant with clusters of branches to create forts, or dens (Sobel, 2008). They know and continually come to know Oceanspray through a rich language of relationship that responds to seasons, the weather, the life of this particular plant. These relationships develop in a situated context by which I enact the role of caregiver, of noticer of children, as protector of time and space. I am educated in the importance of uninterrupted play, and so I protect time and space for children to create worlds within these places. I am entrusted to support them to develop and through observing the ways that they develop beyond my “wanting and doing” (Jardine, 2012), I am further able to articulate the role of other-than-human beings in child development. When I focus here, and articulate how children develop, I bring their embodied knowing into language and amplify it as a cultural historical tool that in turn shapes my own understanding of development. I learn about development through my own development, alongside of developing Others.

This moment with two children inspired me to begin an ongoing inquiry into Oceanspray, KÁȾEȽĆ (Turner & Hebda, 2012) and to consider that while I was watching the world, worlds were watching me back. Children have been growing and developing on these lands since the beginning of time. To imagine that humans have been the only beings raising these children and inspiring the curiosity that leads to discovery/development is to sustain a dangerous and limiting hierarchy, and to replicate beliefs that construct a permanence of settler colonialism. To attend to the knowledge experienced by Others, such as KÁTELĆ, is to invite possibility for knowledge and intelligence beyond what I can individually imagine.

We need stories that remind us that we are all of this world. This is why I return to pedagogical narrations in my practice, to remind myself of the Others that I am
responsible to—the children, the other-than-human world, and the authors/artists that transform the ways that I see the world. When we share these stories and acknowledge the co-authorship of the stories that we tell, we are reminded that education “comes from being enveloped by land” (Simpson, 2017, p. 154) and from being held within vast networks of interconnectedness where knowledge flows between our experiences.

Oceanspray continues to teach me about respectful encounters that invite children and place to inform my understanding of children and place. Noticing becomes a way of attuning to rhythms and flows that are beyond my control—this is an ongoing invitation to seek engagement that is not dependent upon control. As educators, sharing our stories supports us to develop phenomenological understanding of child development from the ground up. Engaging with beauty, and the astonishment within our experiences are essential gestures to engage with in education. We need to attend to beauty, particularly the beauty of wonder that nourishes care and disrupts proficiency (Noel, 2015) to remind us of delightful uncertainty that is life.

With deep gratitude, I acknowledge the children that have shaped my perspective of the world. You have made it infinitely more beautiful for me to behold. I acknowledge that these stories live on the ancestral territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱ SÁNEĆ peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.
Figure 3  Oceanspray Seasonal-Time.  
November 5, 2019
3.3. What Doing?

“What doing?” the toddler’s head tilted to the side as they looked at me. We were standing in a playground outside of their childcare, beneath a large Oak. In context, the child was pointing to a person standing on top of a roof with a pressure washer. Out of context, the child’s question burrowed into my mind as an existential quaerere.

Months have passed since the child asked this question and I am back in my office, writing this paper and contemplating the pedagogical implications of stories from “beyond our wanting and doing” (Jardine, 2012). The child’s question disrupts my thinking, “What doing?”

“What doing” am I contributing to by writing one more academic paper that argues for serious pedagogical attention to the other-than-human world?

“What doing,” am I calling for within a system of education that is always seeking to do, to strive for, to do better?

“What doing” can resist the formula of a colonial way of speaking for, rather than speaking with?

In their paper, Shut-Up and Listen: Implications and Possibilities of Albert Memmi’s Characteristics of Colonization Upon the “Natural World” Sean Blenkinsop, et al. (2016) argue for pedagogies of deep-listening and attending, with an awareness to the unknowability that exists between human and more-than-human worlds. This contrasts the human desire of wanting to know and ultimately fix, and instead, demands that we “shut-up and listen,” that we resist the internalized voice that insists we know how to do, better. Listening, and honouring the time and space that it takes for deep-listening is a practice of attending. Attending is a pathway toward becoming an ally, in the sense that ally is an action word and a place of always becoming. Blenkinsop, et al. (2016) suggest that this deep listening is not only through attending to what is being offered to us, but attending to the relationships amongst Others, a chorus that connects everything around us. To attend, to listen in this way, is not to seek the doing but rather to revel in the infinite webs of communication. Listening is an action in itself. Listening disrupts this doing-consuming-creating relationship that prevents pause, and limits

“What doing?”

I am doing, listening.

These questions and ideas led me to consider how by using multispecies ethnography, Lichens might become a co-author of my research. Simply through their existence, Lichens deviate from the categories that human biologists have created to support an understanding of life—domain, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species. Lichens are currently understood to be part fungus, part algae, and part yeast (Sheldrake, 2020), and yet, to come to know them as a co-author would require astonishment so to be out thundered by my rational knowing, and thus to make space for possibilities of somatic worlding.

“What un-doing” is possible with storying Lichens?

Figure 4 Cladonia Rangiferina through a loupe. November 14, 2020.
Chapter 4.

I said, be Astonished—Out-Thundered

This section takes seriously, Lichens as storytellers and as co-authors of this research. Recognizing the power of language as a gesture that we use to shape culture, and thus history, this section imagines possibilities of incorporating multinarrative inquiry into imaginative research.

Dear reader/viewer, while the following pages include minimal text, I encourage that you spend at least the same amount of time viewing them as you would in reading a full page of text.

You will notice the presence of my hand in many of the photos. Returning to my quaerere which began in storied experiences in the forest along the Colquitz River, my body guided my research. My senses enabled me to encounter Land in new ways, and supported my wondering. I became fascinated by my hands, as a site for knowing.

The captions include the date and the name of the beings and materials I wish to bring into focus.
Figure 5  My first conscious encounter with Lichens on a Rotting Fencepost.  
September 11, 2020
Figure 6  Letharia Vulpina.
September 17, 2020
Figure 7  Parmotrema Perlatum.  
September 19, 2020
Figure 8  Lobaria Pulmonaria.
September 19, 2020
Figure 9  Lobaria Pulmonaria, Usnea, Parmotrema Perlatum in glass. September 19, 2020
Figure 10 Letharia Vulpina, Parmotrema Perlatum, Lobaria Pulmonaria, Usnea in glass with ammonia and water.
October 3, 2020
Figure 11 Lobaria Pulmonaria dye on paper, moved by breath.
August 27, 2021
Figure 12 Parmotrema Perlatum dip-dyed on paper.
August 26, 2021
Figure 13 Overnight soak in Parmotrema Perlatum dye bath on paper.
August 27, 2021
"The world is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we belong. The world is part of our own self and we are a part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing. And, the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature, which is also our sacred nature."

-Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

Figure 14 Lobaria Pulmonaria dip dyed over liquid ink on paper (Macy & Brown, 2014, p. 26).
August 27, 2021
“The entire approach would aim at helping students fall in love with and commit to their beautiful worlds.”

(Affifi, R, 2020, p. 1136)
Figure 16 Lobaria Pulmonaria with salt sediment from dye bath in the sunlight on paper.
August 28, 2021

“I am reminded that I do not know how to listen to the light. Do I listen with my ears, my heart, my spirit, my blood, my bones? I have trained my eyes fairly well to see light … But I am still only seeing. Now I am learning to listen to light” (Leggo, 1999).
Chapter 5.

Tell Me About It

Ink-wire-y? In-queer-ry? Ink-were-y?
Surely, we can remember how to speak across the lines.
In multispecies, multicentric, multi-mother tongues?

Language is not the whole world
language lines the holes
that let us see the world. (Leggo, 2004, p. 154)

Ink, were we?

Were we communicating? In the etymological sense of, “to share, impart, inform,’ literally ‘to make common,’” (Harper, n.d.).

Ink, were we?

You, out-thundering,
Me, allowing myself to be astonished,
Communing, meaning "to talk intimately" (Harper, n.d).
For the last eighteen moons.

For the last eighteen moons I have been apprenticing Lichen. First, noticing it. Photographing it. Reading more about it. Walking while listening to podcasts featuring lichenologists. Studying it as an Other. Watching it illuminating the world that I could have sworn I knew so well, and yet!
Splendidly splattered on sidewalks, fences, tombstones, trees.

My initial encounters with Lichens were largely anthropomorphic. I wondered who was watching who? Who was studying who? Anthropomorphism makes the other, like me. It is associative, and illustrates emerging complexes for understanding. This takes seriously the notion that other-than-humans contain conceptual understanding. Using language, I can describe, and seek to make sense of these encounters and their significance in a multitude of ways, and still, never pass the impenetrable line between us as Others. I can never truly untether myself from my human perspective. This space between myself and the other-than-human is a place beyond myself, and there is great importance in my own stretching toward those places. To extend beyond myself, without ever trying to fully envelope an Other, brings humility. I can learn from being in your company. In your company, there is a we that extends beyond myself. This blurring of lines, where I end and you begin, reminds me that someone drew these lines in the first place.

I encountered a woman that told me about Lung Lichen. She showed me a piece in a brown paper bag. She shared her idea of having students make a quilt of found items in the classroom. She told me where she had harvested it. We both agreed that we could only ever collect Lichens that had fallen in the wind.

I went to the place she told me about. I nearly dropped to the ground when I came upon Lung Lichen, wild gills texturing Big Leaf Maple. Astonished by the tentacular spectacular, I wept.
Somatic worlding extends our ethical considerations, bringing multicentric perspectives into the landscapes of our teaching. What has happened to my teaching is that all courses begin with efforts to situate ourselves—first on Land, and then, philosophically. I invite students to develop an awareness that whatever we are able to teach, is a product of time and place, and that whatever we are able to learn, depends upon sustained engagement. Learning is not a passive process.

To decolonize education requires time for pedagogical encounters on Land, and meaningful integration and mediation to understand these experiences within a variety of courses, or from a range of perspectives. For example, in Early Learning and Care programs, if Land experiences are relegated to the “Environments” curriculum course without implications for the “Professionalism” theory course, or the “Child Development” theory courses, Land is positioned as an aesthetic addition; it risks being depoliticized; and risks functioning to maintaining a status quo. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) argues that education must “rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality and not just ‘dream alternative realities’ but to create them, on the ground in the physical world in spite of being occupied” (p. 153). Settler colonial realities dictate what
is considered within the occupational standards and thus, what are approved learning outcomes in education. Imaginative research is required to develop anti-colonial frameworks for institutions from the ground up.

There is ongoing academic discourse surrounding decolonizing education to the point that it risks being a buzzword. Tuck and Yang’s, *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* (2012) cautions of this, arguing that to decolonization is specifically the “repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 1). Objections to such demands are grounded in racism. While I have focused my research on other-than-human relations, possibilities for pedagogical opportunities with other-than-human relations are strengthened by including anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks in education. Gruenewald, quoting Smith (2001) writes, “Place + People = Politics” (2003, p. 3). Engaging with political histories is necessary for contextualizing the trouble of taking seriously, other-than-human agency in education.

To take up this work is not innocent, and ultimately supports a complete restructuring of education and culture—decomposing and recomposing, if you will. Joanna Macy and Molly Brown (2014) refer to this cultural time as “The Great Turning,” writing that it “entails both the perception of danger and the means to act” (p. 19). From an ecological standpoint, there is certainly danger, and we can hope that the Great Turning will find motivation to act in the desire for survival of our species. Vygotsky, while referring to individual development, refers to critical periods in which “the tension between the dominant mental formation-structure and the emerging formations, which will govern development in the new period, comes to a head and the internal processes in both are laid bare” (Manh, 2003, p. 123). From a social justice perspective, we live in a critical period. Dominant frameworks, by which we use to make sense of the world, are being publicly challenged and shifted by social movements. Vikki Reynolds writes of the importance of “finely tuned attention to acts of resistance and sites of resistance” (Reynolds, 2012, p. 24). These movements are creating tools that, when internalized, shift the ways that we are able to see the world and our power within the world. Claxton, et al. (2021), trace the violent history of colonization on these territories in their book, *Challenging Racist British Columbia: 150 Years and Counting*. Disconnecting Peoples from Place, imposing political barriers to diasporic communities, aimed to intentionally sever Peoples sense of connection and ways of knowing. To critically engage with Land-based learning is also to engage with how and why these teachings have been
strategically omitted from a colonial system of education. Engaging with Audre Lorde’s proclamation that, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” is integral. The work of decolonization is not to enhance current systems, but rather to dismantle them in the name of contributing to more just worlds.

I acknowledge the power of research and I intend to use my opportunities in research to support the LANDBACK movement. For citizens to understand the rippling implications of LANDBACK, Land has to be known as something beyond property—this is a place for education to contribute to reciprocity. There is space for reciprocity in imaginative research, and opportunities to amplify necessary “mediating intellectual tools” (Egan, 1998, p.30) so that students/people can meaningfully experience Land as agentic.

To be human is to be a part of a species that has created systems which privilege itself at the cost of many. Yet, to turn away from those aspects of our species does not support justice, it creates despair. To be humans contributing to more just worlds, will require grieving. To be with our humanity, we will be required to move into deep well springs where the body remembers. Joanna Macy and Molly Brown (2014) identify grief as an integral part of the work required to reconnect. Sobbing, shaking, wailing, this is not a rational place. It requires full-bodied emotive connection that radiates, permeates, the bring-you-to-your-knees sort of grief, where snot runs and drool drips like tendrils back to the earth. Primal.

Refusing to feel the grief that looks back at us when we encounter human-led destruction, numbs parts of our whole. We need all of our parts, to attend to astonishment. “If grief can be a doorway to love, then let us all weep for the world we are breaking apart so we can love it back to wholeness again” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 359). Grief and love, these are dimensions largely absent from colonial systems of education. Again, we may talk about them, but there is little space to engage with them—“to invite them in” (Rumi, 2004).

To suggest how educators/instructors might take up this work is challenging. Offering too many directives risks pedagogy being interpreted as a formula. And yet to suggest nothing, risks this research being disregarded as relativism. As imaginative research, this contribution is largely limited by its scope. (Lichen’s exceptionalism
assures me that all beings work together, and that perhaps people, or Lichens, or Others, are out there synchronously contributing to this work.)

What follows is an invitational framework to engage with imaginative research in somatic worlding.

**Pay Attention:**

For educators/instructors wishing to take up this work in your own learning spaces, the first and critical instruction is to pay attention. For myself, it was useful to have some guidance here. In a world with so much to attend to, having loose instructions to encounter “the Unusuals” mediated my learning. This also encouraged me to seek Others, those beings less-blurred by my projected understanding of the world.

Instructions for paying attention include attending through your body—see, smell, slither—explore ways of encountering the Other that disrupt your habitual ways of coming to know.

Simultaneously, flood yourself with stories of relational ways of understanding your “muse” (Plotkin, 2013). This will include situated understandings, and as such, the political. Seek interdisciplinary knowledge, and be willing to follow these stories when they seem to take you off course.

An essential requirement is time. My imaginative research argues that time provided by current systems of semesters promote fragmentation. If, like me, you work within these perimeters, I invite us to collaborate with our colleagues to seek alternatives. How might we imagine assignments that are messy, incomplete, with possibilities to carry into other courses? How might we develop assignments that “stretch out towards what imagination cannot comprehend?” (Egan, 1998, p. 123).

**Be Astonished:**

There are no real instructions here, just be willing to surrender to the process.

When supporting students through inquiry processes, I share the wisdom of a former professor, Natalia Gajdamaschko. Natalia, educated in the Soviet Union,
criticized North American systems of education for their insistence that learning was supposed to be fun. Natalia asserted, emphasizing Vygotsky, that learning is uncomfortable and occurs during critical points of crisis. “Creation is always based on lack of adaptation, which gives rise to needs, motives, and desires” (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 29). The creativity required to attend fully to other-than-humans requires out confronting the shortcomings of our self-proclaimed human exceptionalism, and that we strain to develop sustained capacities for attending.

Tell Me About It:

The goal is mutualism. To imagine is an act of courage, and to imagine with others supports the creation of a more courageous system of education. Lee Maracle (2015) asserts, “The future is a remembered thing the very moment I give voice inside my mind to my imagined participation in tomorrow” (p. 7). Tell me about how you will participate in the future we are imagining?
Figure 18 Astonishing. Lobaria Pulmonaria on tissue paper.
February 20, 2022

This tissue paper was a protective layer covering the largest print. The dyes had reactivated in some areas, damp, glistening, still alive. While wet, the prints were otherwise intact and otherwise “unspoiled”.

I was reminded of a story I had read about Sunburst Lichen. These Lichens have been to space and back. To survive, it went into a state of dormancy. Upon reentering the Earth’s atmosphere, it was able to awaken and to continue “lichenizing” once it awoke (Sheldrake, 2020). The Lichen prints are alive.

Future areas for study will include refining how these ideas live in my practice in the Early Learning and Care program at Camosun College. I am grateful to know of a series of inquiries being led by my colleagues. The classroom houses Fungi, Worms, and stores tools that students use in garden plots. Shelves house jars of dyes, composed of foraged materials from around the campus—Hawthorne, Acorns, Arbutus bark and rust.

As I neared the end of my writing, enid elliot introduced me to Annie Murphy Paul’s (2021), *The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain*. I am
interested in the ways that we can engage post-secondary students in experiences that involve our bodies in our ways of coming to knowing.

In the pedagogical process of writing, more questions continued to emerge. Within my introduction, I playfully encountered the word *quaerere* and Sean Blenkinsop pointed me toward the work of William Pinar. As a key thinker in the reconceptualist movement, Pinar is an area for my further studies.

The more I read of Val Plumwood, the more I wanted to read (including how to build my own house of stones). I am aware of my lack of familiarity with diasporic authors and am interested in how their thoughts add to LANDBACK conversations. Research on gender intrigues me and I am delighted by the work of individuals and communities leading this work. The evolution of language around gender, and the gestures we use to express identity, makes possible cultural shifts that delight me. These emerging languages support my personal development and bring to light less-explored dimensions of my own identity. I imagine that Lichens can contribute to the sorts of mediation required to dismantle gender constructs, by illuminating the limitations of the categories we use for ways of being.

A particular area for future study involves encounters with a collection of chalky, red Soil. Mary Oliver whispers here, “You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves” (2017, p. 347). If the soft animal of your body is called to Soil, imaginative research awaits us…
References


