

(Re)placing ourselves in nature:  
An exploration of how (trans)formative places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and  
ecological connectedness

by

Nicholas Richard Graeme Stanger

BSc, University of British Columbia, 2002

MA, Royal Roads University, 2007

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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# Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Jason Price, Supervisor  
(Department of Curriculum & Instruction)

Dr. Mijung Kim, Departmental Member  
(Department of Curriculum & Instruction)

Dr. Richard Kool, Outside Member  
(Department of Environmental Studies)

# Abstract

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This research considers a person's ontological fabric woven from experiences of and in (trans)formative childhood and adolescent places through three conceptual frameworks: complexity theory, endogeny, and i/Indigenous ways of knowing. By re-visiting the (trans)formative places of four exemplary citizens with them, creating an interactive website and iBook, and exploring ten online public participants' posts, I gained an understanding of how childhood and adolescent outdoor places act as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic environmental engagement. To achieve this, I asked the question: Does learning that occurs in childhood and adolescent outdoor places inform civic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual engagement or connectedness over the course of people's lives? If so, how?

Tsartlip (Coast Salish First Nations) Elder, May Sam, Hua Foundation co-founder Claudia Li, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, Wade Davis, and former Lieutenant Governor of BC, Iona Campagnolo, all exemplary individuals, shared personal relationships with their childhood and

adolescent places. They engaged through participatory action research by taking me to these places, contributing to the interview process, and supporting the analysis of the results. As a way to engage decolonizing methodologies and encourage authentic voice within this research, I took great care in using interview and discourse techniques that were respectful, engaging, and empowering. Each of these visits were filmed and appropriate sections were shared through online social media as a way to invite participation from the larger North American public ([www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com)). Ten more participants' experiences were analyzed based on their submissions to this website. Data were explored through a hybrid of phenomenological and participatory analysis and participants were invited to help discern meaning through post-filming interviews and dialogue.

The concept *(trans)formative places* was defined as sites that engage humans in biophysical, emotional, spiritual, and civic engagement. Major notions included the development of a memetic group of concepts that help describe the processes, characteristics, and relationships that occur from, in, and with *(trans)formative places*. I found that my participants' relationship to places were formed through family and community bonds, where learning occurs through shared stories, collective healing, and respect-building. Places transformed my participants through identity development, memory and anxiety, resiliency behaviour, nostalgia, and loss. Finally, my participants related to places through connective processes like knowing a place and being home, engendering bliss and appreciation, development of pride and hope and emotionality. The final section of this dissertation is articulated as a manifesto for creating, sustaining, and engaging in *(trans)formative places*.

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# Commitment and dedication

First, I commit to continue to return to my (trans)formative places throughout my life, share their stories with my family and community, respect their knowledge and wisdom, and hold them in reverence and with love. With this commitment, I then also dedicate this work to my (trans)formative places.

I dedicate this research to my son, Otis, and to his loving mother, my wife, Joy.

To Otis - You are four months old at the writing of this and you have come into a world that is beautiful and complicated. It is beautiful because the ecological systems are endlessly compelling, ever-changing, and emotionally fulfilling. It is complicated because many humans seem to have lost their way. We have built systems within our social systems that need repair, if not complete replacement. I will do everything I can to not burden you with these. I do not expect you to work in my field or to fix these ailments in our society. I also do not believe “it is up to you to solve these problems.” Indeed we will have to adapt together throughout our lives together, and once I die, you will have to adapt further on your own. Remember, the places that we

connect with can act as both our solace and our salvation. I love you and will always support you, no matter when and where you are.

To Joy - My life is drastically different with you in it. Sometime before meeting you, the spiraling circle of environmental despair was approaching. Your intellect, beauty, compassion, and love is written in the landscapes that we share. Those places are in our biodiverse little backyard in Victoria, the Square René Viviani in Paris, a donkey paddock in Powell River, and a donkey-campsite in the Pyrenees. We have many more places, where we (trans)formed and shared stories. I am in love with you and look forward to our future as a family.

I also dedicate this work to my family, who have supported my love for nature since I was a little boy. They continue to foster my curiosity and passion for environmental action in my lifetime. Thanks to Mike, Jan, Eric, Mark, Jen, Michele, Beckett, and Sasha.

## How to use this iBook (PDF version)

This document was originally designed as an iBook to be used as an interactive and immersive experience. There are many features of the iBook that allow you to read it using multiple approaches. You can search it for keywords by using the search field in the top right. You can scan through it by looking at the table of contents on the top left. You will also see bolded words throughout the document which represent the glossary. If you click on any of these words you will see a pop-up of the glossary item with a definition or contextualization.

In the iBook, all of the figures and videos are labeled “Interactive,” since they are. With many of them you can zoom in, click on features, or watch videos. These interactive elements give life to the research and allow you to touch and see the data through an enriched lens. Many of them also require an internet connection to function properly.

You can also make notes throughout the iBook by highlighting any text with your cursor or finger. This will bring up a hovering window with options to highlight, underline or add notes to that section.

None of the interactive elements are available through the PDF version of this dissertation. To access the iBook and use it in OS X (10.9 Mavericks or later) or on an iPad using the iBooks App, please go to [www.nicholasstanger.ca/downloads](http://www.nicholasstanger.ca/downloads), where you will find a link to the latest version of this document.

Many of the films referred to in chapters four and five can be found at [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com).

## Photos in this iBook

All of the photos within this iBook were taken by the author and were chosen to accompany the text as artistic and explanatory support. Whether it is an birds from South Africa, representation of complexity through tree bark, or from the (trans)formative places of each of the participants, their photo selection was intentional. Each photo is labeled with a caption that identifies the major element in it. In chapters four and five, the photos derived from the research study sites exclusively.

# Preface - Fern Hill by Dylan Thomas (1945)

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
    The night above the dingle starry,  
        Time let me hail and climb  
    Golden in the heydays of his eyes,  
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns  
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves  
    Trail with daisies and barley  
    Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns  
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,  
    In the sun that is young once only,  
        Time let me play and be  
    Golden in the mercy of his means,  
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves

Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,  
    And the sabbath rang slowly  
    In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay  
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air  
    And playing, lovely and watery  
    And fire green as grass.  
    And nightly under the simple stars  
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,  
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars  
    Flying with the ricks, and the horses  
    Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white  
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all

Shining, it was Adam and maiden,  
The sky gathered again  
And the sun grew round that very day.

So it must have been after the birth of the simple light  
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm  
Out of the whinnying green stable  
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house  
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,  
In the sun born over and over,  
I ran my heedless ways,  
My wishes raced through the house high hay  
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows  
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs  
Before the children green and golden  
Follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me  
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
In the moon that is always rising,  
Nor that riding to sleep  
I should hear him fly with the high fields  
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
Time held me green and dying  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

(Thomas & Jones, 2003, p. 255)



1

# Three tributaries of ontology

May you travel in an awakened way,  
Gathered wisely into your inner ground;  
That you may not waste the invitations  
Which wait along the way to transform you.

(O'Donohue, 2008, p. 54)

Bog, Beaver Dam, Canadian Shield,  
Ontario



Zulu beading and kudu drum skin - South Africa

## Studying human connection to place

I believe that studying the connection to place can be approached from many different angles. How do we begin to understand the human-**nature** relationships that are centered around place? This research floats on three (there are likely many more) pluralistic tributaries of ontology that resonate with one another in relation to human connection to place: **endogeny** (the biophilic physical and interior connection to **nature**), **complexity theory** (the concepts of system **resilience**, interconnection, and adaptive cycles), and **indigeneity** (the acknowledgment of being of this Earth, with some reference to the wisdoms of ecology, culture, and ceremony as they relate to specific places or resonances with **Indigenous** peoples). These three

tributaries are complex and interwoven throughout this iBook to illustrate the **transdisciplinary**, compassionate, and integral approach to research that as an activist-scholar, I am called to practice.

North Americans spend an average of 8.6 hours each day in a sedentary state, with six or more hours of this time spent in front of a TV or computer screen. These numbers are steadily rising with the proliferation of technology (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2011; Tremblay, Colley, Saunders, Healy, & Owen, 2010). Much of this sedentary time is spent indoors and with it comes the potential for physical, mental, and spiritual **disconnection** from **nature**, human communities, and ourselves. Within this dissertation, **nature**

connection and **disconnection** are characterized through the words like Glenn Albrecht's (2010) soliphilia; These connections are rooted in "the love of the totality of our place relationships and a willingness to accept the political responsibility and solidarity needed between humans to maintain them at all scales of existence....[and] to keep healthy and strong that which we hold in common." (p. 220). I believe that connection arises as physical, spiritual, emotional, and civic engagement in relation to place. This research investigates the underlying concept of place-connection and how it manifests in humans.

There are a few basic points that need to be addressed in these early paragraphs as a way to state my socio-political position. Later I return to this personal position, by way of a (trans)formative story. For now, I want to provide a brief overview of the current state of affairs as it relates to place and connection in North America.

With scales such as the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) (Dunlap, 2008), a refocussing on measurement of **ecological literacy** (McBride, Brewer, Berkowitz, & Borrie, 2013), and various other environmental measurement standards in place ((Hollweg et al., 2011; Jiménez Sánchez & Lafuente, 2010), we know a bit about how humans relate and understand the environment. Some scholars suggest that there is a **disconnection** from **nature** that could be due to a media-perpetuated fear of natural and social environments (Storksdieck & Styliniski, 2010). Others suggest that **disconnection** is due to the socio-political North American governmental systems that are systematically gutting environmental policies and procedures (Biro, 2010; Lukacs, 2012; Mazmanian & Kraft, 2009). Finally, many scholars have suggested that the ongoing oppression of **Indigenous** peoples by public and private sectors has removed any sense of long-term

connection to the land (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). **Disconnection** is likely caused by a mixture of these and other factors.

Yet, **disconnection** continues to expand despite decades of directed environmental education, health programs, community outreach, reconciliation, and research that points to the critical importance of understanding and working with the natural world for humanity's continued global survival and well-being (Convention of Biological Diversity, 2010; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007; Louv, 2005; Spencer & Blades, 2006, Stocker *et al*, 2013). I believe that an estrangement from **nature** calls for a (re)vitalization of our emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connections with the natural systems that sustain us. When I refer to (re)vitalization of emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connections with natural systems, I also mean a deeper acknowledgement that those natural systems are concurrently ourselves in and of **nature**. Yet even neologisms, such as **biophilia** (with adaptations and addenda like topophilia, ecophobia, **solastalgia**, and nature deficit disorder) might be further pathologizing, disconnecting, or colonizing human relationships with **nature**. These terms and their value in this research is explored in subsequent sections.

At this point, it is appropriate for me to identify what I mean when I use the words: **Indigenous**, **indigenous/indigeneity**, and **Indigenist**. First, I believe that all humans are (lower case 'i') indigenous; that is, we are all tied to some place-of-origin on the planet. In addition to this, I acknowledge the work that others have done to limit the essentializing and categorizing of (capital 'I') Indigenous peoples and their knowledge (e.g. Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Aluli-Meyer, 2008; Davis, 2009). A recent issue of *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*

sought to provide further insights into the challenges associated with **Indigenous** socio-political and geo-political struggles. In this issue, Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs (2006) provide a compelling description of these challenges as they relate to **Indigenous** geographies:

*Although suffering the paradoxical status - of essentializing or categorizing very distinct groups of peoples into some kind of monolith dubbed 'Indigeneity' - we have followed this categorization with one eye fixed firmly on the discipline's ever-evolving capacity for politics of 'difference', and for the more explicit political aim to recenter and 'reclaim' space within the discipline for distinctively indigenous concerns...While we recognize the range of definitions of the word 'Indigenous', the indigenous peoples referred to in this volume are generally groups with ancestral and often spiritual ties to particular land, and whose ancestors held that land prior to colonization by outside powers, and whose nations remain within the states created by those submerged by powers.*

(Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs, 2006, pp. 267 - 268)

I take the stance that much can be learned from these often disempowered **Indigenous** peoples who are rooted in place through language and culture and have ancient and current understandings, wisdom, and teachings associated with the land and water that stretches from creation through present-day, and sometimes into the future. I also acknowledge that romanticizing Indigeneity can be a particularly troublesome path to follow (Thomas, 1994), and I endeavor to support the movement beyond and apologize for any attribution of "monolithic qualities to **Indigenous** peoples by using an umbrella term" (Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs, 2006, p. 268).

For many **Indigenous** peoples, these knowledges of the land have both specificity for certain people and place and at the same time universality:

*It's not about how well you can quote theory; it's whether those ideas affect how you act...How will you feel encouraged to go forth into the world to alter its frequency? How will you bring robustness to this flat land knowing literacy keeps undimensioned? How will you actualize these principles of being to expand what knowledge is at its core? Make your work useful by your meaning and truth. I know it sounds somehow ethereal, but this is the point: Knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness the world needs now. This is the function we as indigenous people posit. And...we are all indigenous. (Aluli-Meyer, 2008, p. 221)*

This knowledge is in contrast to the relatively recent settlers of European or other ancestry in North America, who have arrived through colonizing means, and live in a shadow of colonizing methods (Chinn, 2007). This is not to say that all settlers are aloof colonials, and some settlers consider themselves to be **indigenous** to the places in which they live. Ultimately, I am attempting to express that settlers can act as allies of the **Indigenous** peoples as I intended to do with my research (Smith, 2005).

To further clarify my terminology. when I refer to **Indigenous** peoples in this document, I am usually referring to the First Nations within North America (whom I have the most familiarity of working with), unless otherwise identified. Therefore, when referring to any scale of tribe or larger group of peoples who might identify as Aboriginal, Native, Indian, Métis, or Inuit, I will refer to them with a capital 'I' **Indigenous**. When I

use the term **indigenous**, without the capital, it refers to exogenous relationships to place that are specific to that place. This term is used to describe an personal relationship to place that is unique to that place. These relationships sometimes resonate with an **Indigenous** Knowledge and sometimes not, depending on the participant and their description. Further to this description of my use of i/Indigenous, I also seek to engage in research through an ally-ship similar to what Shawn Wilson (2007) has called an Indigenist approach to research.

## Indigenist and intentional research

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Humans, place, thought, and **(trans)formation** interact through complex systems of adaptation. Our human evolutionary path, though often chaotic and driven by socialized normative behaviours like materialism, requires a focus on individual resiliency as well as a reduction of our societal impact on the places in which we live (Stables, 2010). I believe that we should recognize and celebrate our human presence on Earth, rather than a simple consumer/producer existence (Nhất Hạnh, 1998). In this same vein, research on humans in **nature** should aim to help decolonize research and its relations to discourse, worldviews, governance, and economic structures. To enact a decolonization approach in this research, I attempted to engage **Indigenist** research paradigm, particularly the following tenets:

- *Respect for all forms of life as being related and interconnected.*
- *Conduct all actions and interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty; compassion.*

- *The methods used will be process-oriented, and the researcher will be recognized and cognizant of his or her role as one part of the group in process.*
- *It will be recognized that transformation within every living entity participating in the research will be one of the outcomes of every project.*
- *It will be recognized that the researcher must assume a certain responsibility for the transformations and outcomes of the research project(s) which he or she brings into a community.*
- *It is advisable that a researcher work as part of a team of Indigenous scholars/thinkers and with the guidance of Elder(s) or knowledge-keepers.*
- *It is recognized that the languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes and that research and the discovery of knowledge is an ongoing function for that thinkers and scholars of every Indigenous group.*

(Shawn Wilson, 2007, p. 195)

It is important to point out that Wilson's ambitious tenets of the **Indigenist** paradigm are still undergoing ground-truthing, as he has asked scholars to test them. However, I believe the overall intent of his work is admirable and should be considered in research that engages **Indigenous** and settler cultures and their relationships to place and community. It suggests an awakened approach to research that acknowledges the value of Indigenous knowledge that exists among and within many disciplines. I weave **indigenous** research views through this proposal under Wilson's direction:

*I use Indigenist to name or label the paradigm that I am talking about rather than Indigenous. It is my belief that an Indigenist paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets. It cannot and should not be claimed to belong only to people with "Aboriginal" heritage. To use an analogy, one does not need to be female to be a feminist. Researchers do not have to be Indigenous to use an Indigenist paradigm, just as researchers do not have to be "white" to use a Western paradigm. Nor do Indigenous researchers have to use an Indigenist paradigm. It is the use of an Indigenist paradigm that creates Indigenous knowledge. This knowledge cannot be advanced from a mainstream paradigm. That would simply be mainstream knowledge about Indigenous peoples or topics. It is the philosophy behind our search for knowledge that makes this new knowledge a part of us, part of who and what we are. And it is then the choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy, or worldview that makes research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher. (pp. 193-194)*

Much of this focus on decolonizing my methodology comes under the guidance of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's who suggests following protocols for conducting research involving **Indigenous** peoples. The critical notion she puts forth is that no one protocol may be used when conducting research with **Indigenous** peoples, rather these need to vary based on culture and colonial experiences. Adapting this to my work, I see resonance with [my phenomenological methods](#) as a process for co-identifying and co-creating this very protocol.

## Why research the role of place?

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Despite considerable research in sense of place, environmental education, place-based learning, and sustainable behaviour, few action-based research and knowledge dissemination projects have been conducted that examine these topics through the integrated and mindful lenses of **endogeny**, complexity, and **indigenous** frameworks, where social and cultural systems are recognized as (inter)imbedded in ecological systems (Asfeldt, Urberg, & Henderson, 2009; Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003; Corbett, 2007; Lowan, 2009; Mueller Worster, 2006; Stanger, 2011b; Wason-Ellam, 2010). Much of the research that explores the connections between humans and **nature** has had restricted impact on educational practice and human behaviour, due in part to standard methods of knowledge dissemination – primarily through academic journals and edited books – which rarely engage active public participation in research production (Ballard & Belsky, 2010; Laessoe, 2010; McKenzie, 2009). However, recent movements of authors and change-makers such as Richard Louv, Louise Chawla, E.O. Wilson, Gregory Cajete, David Orr, Joanna Macy, David Sobel, Richard Atleo, David Suzuki, and Robert Bateman have helped galvanize the production of research and action around **nature** re-connection (Charles, 2009; Chawla, 2003; Macy, 2007; Peart, Stanger, & Hoskins, 2009; Sobel, 2004; Suzuki & McConnell, 1999). It is through their leadership that we have some basic understanding of the overwhelming environmental and social challenges humans face and the importance of place, **nature**, and connection in helping solve those problems. In chapter two, I explore concepts raised by these thinkers using a **complexity theory** lens called **panarchy** (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). Panarchy theory, which is outlined in detail below, applies ecological systems-thinking perspectives to situate complex interacting holarchies of thought through space and time.

Humans' connection to place form the basis of many **Indigenous** cultures through experiencing the wisdom of the land and water (Davis, 2009). This wisdom manifests through teachings around place-names, plant and animal uses, seasons, creation stories, and integrated and relational worldviews. **Indigenous** epistemology can be complimented by existing research that discusses the connections to place that can reveal insights into our spiritual and ecological identities (Haigh, 2006; Thomashow, 1995). Thus by connecting identity development to place, story, and land-based wisdom and exploring how these influence behaviour, knowledge, experience, and engagement this project contributes to an important body of research in ecological identity development, complexity and resiliency theories, and **Indigenist** research paradigms (Game, Liberatore, Popovich, & Zint, 2010; Krasny, Lundholm, & Plummer, 2010; Shih-Jang, 2004; S. Wilson, 2007). The challenge in the proposed dissertation then lies in creating new knowledge through appropriate research methods that provides and reports on 'authentic' experiences in **nature** in order to explicate how these experiences help (trans)form individuals by influencing their long-term ways of knowing and behaviour. Authenticity is a complex concept. For example, in this research I influenced the participants' reactions by being complicit in dialogue and activities that are (trans)formative by nature. In this regard, I resonate with the Heideggerian view that authenticity is a temporal and relational openness of being human rather than some report of idealistic and individualistic exceptionality (Guignon, 2008). However, I want to extend and adapt this concept to include and acknowledge the relational spiritual interconnection, such that our authenticity consists of and connects with human and other-than-human relations and are storied into this world (Bai, Elza, Kovacs, & Romanycia, 2010; Cajete, 2000; Heilman, 2008). This manifests as a pluralistic understanding of the nature of reality, such that singular evidence should be regarded

with scrutiny and critical thinking before taken as an ultimate truth. Rather some human's perceptions of reality, which go against evidence-based research can be just as (and sometimes more) real than empirical findings (Wittgenstein, 1958).

In order to support an authentic and interactive approach to research and to disseminate it to wider audiences than just an academic readership, many have argued for the value of participatory research methodologies (Ballard & Belsky, 2010; De Vos, 2002; Hycner, 1985; Krasny & Tidball, 2009; Laessoe, 2010; Payne, 2006). When participants are encouraged to partake, influence, and connect with the process of research, they become more than the substance of a research methodology, and are considered active participants in its design and implementation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005; Morgan, 2009). This project sought to align itself within the participatory action research framework as described within Chapter three.

From my own childhood and adolescent experiences and the landscape of research on this subject, I am intrigued by the question of how spending time and playing in **outdoor places** as children and adolescents might be (trans)formative (Stanger, 2011a). I wonder whether this 'traveling in an awakened way' as described in the O'Donahue poem at the beginning of this chapter is a form of acknowledging the ever-present **(trans)formation** which might support the movement of thoughts and behaviours. Or perhaps we can understand the ever-presence of (trans)formation through the Welsh sensibilities of the poet Dylan Thomas. His lamentations for the speed of which "time held me green and dying/Though I sang in my chains like the sea" suggests that that he as an adult now sees his mortality

despite his youthful (singing) jubilation. He was coming to terms with the fact that he was always dying, even as a child.

I locate the concept of **(trans)formation** as a existential and spiritual movement that creates fundamental cognitive, spiritual, ecological, or physical adaptations in a person: “If this process leads to a change in assumptions it also leads to a new way of interpreting the world, and transformation has taken place. Actions and behaviors will be changed based on the changed perspective” (Cranton, 1994, p. 730). In addition to this description of transformation, I believe that paradigmatic change is a form of **(trans)formation** – even without action and behaviour change. Rather a perceptual shift can come about by using a new lens which eventually might adapt behaviour, even if imperceptible to others. The change in lens use is a form of (trans)formation.

## Intertextuality and (trans)formation

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Let me take a moment to comment on my intertextual approach to **(trans)formation** and other uses of parentheses in this document. For some people, behavioural change, paradigm-shifts, and even existential thought might feel like they are occurring in a fundamental way for the first time, suggesting a ‘formation’ of identity, rather than a change from one being to another (trans) (Taylor & Kuo, 2006). However, my ecological understanding of human development and learning (discussed below as **panarchy**), restructures this understanding of the prefix trans- as a acknowledgement of the constant adaptation of all systems at multiple scales and times. Our individual ontological understanding is scaled within a larger societal ontology such that an individual might be undergoing a movement from

one manifestation of understanding of their reality to another beyond the linear scope of transmissive knowledge development (Schatzki, 2003). This suggests that interacting in and with **nature** and the communities that connect in and among **nature**, can create lifelong emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connections by (trans)forming our sense of place, and this potentially contributes to our understanding of the ontology of our own identities.

Similarly, the title of this work, *(Re)placing ourselves in nature*, is operating under notions of intertextuality. By placing parentheses around the prefix ‘re,’ I am commenting on the fact that we are always within nature (ie. placed) but much of the disconnection arises within the psycho-social realm as described later in this document. Therefore, when visiting our (trans)formative places, some part of identity re-connects, re-learns, and re-replaces itself in natural processes.



Grizzly Sow with four cubs, Chilcotin Plateau, BC

## Research goal and objectives

My goal was to explore the role that childhood and adolescent **outdoor places** have as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic engagement. I viewed this research through three conceptual frameworks: **endogeny** (Dilger, 2012), complex systems thinking (Gunderson & Holling, 2002) and **Indigenist** lenses (Smith, 2005). This means as I analyzed my research I was looking for synergies of complex relationships, forms of spiritual, compassionate, and respectful mindfulness, and a sense of responsibility for the outcomes of the research. To achieve a deeper understanding of returning to these places, my first objective was to investigate the emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological experiences elicited when four

**exemplary** citizen participants revisited their important **outdoor** childhood or adolescent places. My second objective was to examine the role that these places can play in awakening an individual to the relationships among social systems, citizens, and **nature**, to inspire learners about the value of living “as if the world mattered” thus engaging them in civic and ecologically-responsible actions (Jickling, 2009, p. 215).

By focusing on **exemplary** citizens who have been positively recognized by their own community for their contributions or engagement, I believe my work attracted interest and attention from communities not normally engaged in environmental discourses. In

order to achieve my second goal, I asked the North American public to help elucidate their connections to place through the interactive website: [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com). Thus I asked two communities:

Group one - four **exemplary** citizens who returned to their childhood and adolescent (trans)formative places;

Group two - the general public's reaction to those investigations and their own memories of place.

Looking at these two data sets, I examined the following main research question for the dissertation:

*Does learning that occurs in childhood and adolescent outdoor places inform civic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual engagement or connectedness over the course of people's lives? If so, how?*

I believe that experiences that combine knowing where we are, with paying attention to our senses, reflections, emotions, and playfulness, create a distinct opportunity for the further development of our **ecological literacy** (Orr, 1992; Stanger, 2007). Researchers have suggested the experiences that occur within childhood and adolescent outdoor places play an important role in our lives as meditative, reflective, geo-orienting, and spiritual locations and have been linked with increased environmental awareness, wellbeing, and sustainable environmental behaviour in later life (Kennedy, 2005; Sobel, 1997; R. A. Wilson, 1995). This research sought to help expand on previous findings by engaging the two participant groups and providing enriched descriptors and articulations of the human relationships with place. It also attempted to provide new insights into the process of place-attachment and social engagement resulting from early childhood

experiences, something that is explored with only limited depth in modern research (Chawla, 2003).

As a caveat not all experiences in **outdoor place** are necessarily positive experiences, some might even be mis-educative: "The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative" (Dewey, 1938, p. 13). The nuances in the process of change is also why I have chosen to use the word "(trans)formative" as part of my investigation. I believe the term has neutral connotations and thus represents a form of bracketing pre-judgements or conclusions about outdoor connections to place.

It was expected that returning to significant places could also elicit complex reactions, which included positive and negative emotional reactions, especially considering that these places were likely altered due to human and/or natural causes. In order to support the participants through these potentially challenging experiences, I engaged a therapist/counselor to be available for each of the visits if the participants requested their presence.

## Researcher positionality

As a trained ecologist who has studied some of the tallest trees in western Canada, I come to this work with an eye of a scientist and someone who has been humbled by the otherworldly and mysterious experiences garnered from long days spent in the tops of old-growth trees in western British Columbia. One experience in particular helps articulate my connection to **(trans)formation** and place. It is a personal story that was gifted to me by a tree within the traditional territory of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation. I share it here and acknowledge and respect the land and tree in which I had this unexpected experience:



*Growing up in a upper middle-class, rational, science-based household, where strep throats were cured with antibiotics and emotions were doled out in precise and regulated quantities, I developed a view of the world through a predictably positivist framework. This came to a culminating overture when faced with my undergraduate degree in Natural Resources Conservation at the University of British Columbia, arguably a social-sciences degree tucked inside an ecologically scientific framework. I studied the succession of forest ecosystems, the legal framework of First Nations treaties, the politics of resource extraction, and fish biology. Of course, it was peppered with social complexities of stakeholders, resource planning, and First Nations collaboration techniques, but the learning moments didn't mean much until I started to thrash around in the scientific morays of my own honours thesis.*

*With recent canopy research and tree-climbing experiences under my belt from a year living in New Zealand, I was hired by Weyerhaeuser's Adaptive Management Research Group, an independent scientific body born of the results of the Clayoquot Sound protests (Magnusson, 1997). This group's task was to understand the effects of a new technique of harvesting trees on the regeneration of forest ecosystems and the maintenance of old-growth characteristics across a landscape. Working on this project were arthropod experts, salamander experts, foliage experts, ungulate experts, and a number of other species-groups experts conducting baseline and empirical research across the tree-farm-licenses of Weyerhaeuser Canada, which represented much of the remaining old growth forest in British Columbia at the time.*

*My job was the riskiest of all the experts; I climbed trees with arborist colleagues or used a crossbow to shoot fishing line and*

*rope into the canopy where I looked at the complex distribution of epiphytes (plants that grow on top of other plants) in various forest ecosystems. One day, after climbing up to the top of one of the largest Sitka spruces on Earth (approximately 90 meters tall), I spent my usual break gazing over the lake below me. It was a blue-sky, windless day and I was alone with the trees, arboreal insects, plants, and turkey vultures. I found myself staring off at the unique mountainous landscape of old growth trees, and the occasional emergent tree candelabras, all sacred territory, ancestors, and significant places of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation. I looked down at the water of Sarita Lake below me and saw how no wind broke the surface.*

*In that moment, "it" happened. I realized that the tree was swaying. "Odd," I thought, "there is no breeze and none of the other trees are moving." I was puzzled by this movement, the tree likely weighed many tonnes and should have been immovable by my insignificantly little weight. I had no idea what was going on. What made this tree sway? I checked through my tick boxes of my reductionist positivism:*

- no wind - so no chance that it could be swaying from wind*
- my weight was insignificant compared to the weight of the tree*
- when alive, Sitka spruce is one of the strongest trees, so it wasn't breaking*
- there wasn't a bear making its way up the tree to make a lunch-time snack of me*
- I had never experienced vertigo in any of the trees that I had previously climbed.*

*Reductionism wasn't helping me explain why there was movement. Also, from my Dendrology 101 course at UBC, I knew that trees were alive; you know, in that science way: phloem, xylem, Calvin cycles and the whole bit.*

*And then....I found myself hovering above my body watching myself.*

*I didn't feel scared. But something inside me was drastically different. What was the tree doing? Can trees do things? Two simultaneous notions popped into my head: "Cool! This tree is really ALIVE and it is communicating in a way that my human-beingness has little understanding of" and "This is why I am here on Earth, so that I can help others experience moments like this, not to write short strange scientific papers about littler and stranger plant species." Before this experience, I had been having internal battles over the lack of change I was making in the conservation community. I interpreted this moment as if the tree had asked me to help others experience the world around them in profound and transformative ways.*

*In Nuučaah̄u† - the Nuu-chah-nulth language of the Huu-ay-aht peoples, the word for Sitka spruce is 'tuuhmapt'. But because this tuuhmapt had such a presence, it could be considered an ancestor and would be referred to with a more respectful term like grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, or brother. This tree, now my brother, had invited me to see it as an ally, a friend, a relation – and through this invitation, I saw the world in a different way. I saw it as a nested complexity of family.*

*It was also in this moment that I merged with the ecology of the Coastal Western Hemlock ecosystem but more significantly with the stories and place of the Huu-ay-aht peoples. In Joanna Macy's language, I saw the "world as self" and it profoundly*

*changed me. I had seen its complexity, its consciousness, and its interconnection through different eyes and realized that life is more than the biological components of this world; it is also connected to spirit, soul, and essence of all things. This is an experience I have called disembodied-embodiment where my body and ecology had connected through a spiritual and intuitive space (Stanger, 2011a). This was what I wanted to spend my life doing: helping people experience moments of awe and connectedness with and in nature.*

My position and argument in this research is: there is a potential for others to (trans)form through meaningful and engaging connections to place. Whether it is a transcendental experience like I describe above, or a subtler experience of finding solace, experiencing engagement, and learning/working with **nature**, these places and the memories they elicit can help guide our connection to the world. Thus, I am biased towards helping people (re)connect and (re)place themselves on Earth and through that connection live like the Earth and its stories matter.



Beckett climbing at my  
(trans)formative place in Maine, USA

2

## Endogeny, complexity, and Indigenist becoming

A central lesson of science is that to understand complex issues (or even simple ones), we must try to free our minds of dogma and to guarantee the freedom to publish, to contradict, and to experiment. Arguments from authority are unacceptable.

Carl Sagan (1997, p. 190)



brown algae and holdfast, Savary Island BC

## Entwining nature of this research

A central tenet of this research is that the development of ecological identity, connection to place, and emotional-spiritual **(trans)formation** enables contextual compassion for our existence on Earth (Cajete, 2005). An underlying hypothesis of this research is that human beings can achieve some level of resiliency through conscious connection to the places in which we live and work. To achieve this connection, we should live in and with ecological and social communities through a compassionate approach, as described by E.O. Wilson's hypothesis of **biophilia** (E. O. Wilson, 1984). Wilson locates **biophilia** through the manifestation of human beings' "innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes" (p. 1). Despite this **endogenous** quality of humans

being drawn to life processes, many have chosen to ignore, suppress, numb, or overpower these connections through promises of material development, economic gain, power, or paralysis (Bowers, 1995; J. R. Miller, 2005). Some argue that this ignorance and short sightedness is the result of a social repression: an alienation of our beings from **nature** that disassociates ourselves from the very sources of life that sustains us (Orr, 2004). If **biophilia** is innate in human beings, it might be evident through behaviour, peak-experiences, memories, and **(trans)formational** moments that occur outdoors. My research seeks to explore what (re)animates a return to experiencing and acting upon our curiosity about life, or even some deeper visceral connection,

where we draw on the inborn and **indigenous** sources of connection and continue to develop our love of life and all life forms and beings (Price, 2007).

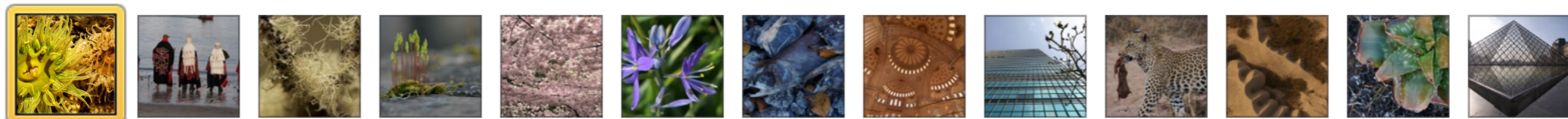
The mycelia of **transdisciplinary** research pertaining to **nature** connection are an ever-changing complexity of interactions, much like that seen in ecological systems. That our ecological evolution is entwined with human cultural evolution adds to the complexity of this research (Bateson, 1972). According to Bateson, thought and behavior are seen to evolve, change, and interrelate similar to that of evolution, change, and interrelation of ecological systems. A term that explicates this evolution of thought was coined by Richard Dawkins (1989): meme, “a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation and replication” (p. 192). Meme theory has taken its own memetic path, growing beyond an analogy to a mode of synthesis where pathways of thought evolution can be mapped (Costall, 1991; Laland & Brown, 2002). My research leans partially on the evolution of thought, looking for locations of paradigmatic change within scholarly research, and extends beyond memetic analysis to the analogy of ecosystem-level adaptation, namely **panarchy** theory (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). Despite using these analogies, I acknowledge that there are limitations of ecological systems being used to describe social systems. For instance, some organizations or individuals seek to appeal to conservation-minded audiences through weak associations with, or co-option of ecological terms to describe products or projects. This process, called greenwashing, has been known to mislead consumers who are thinking that they are buying ethically when they are not. Another example might be a focus on normative or positivist worldview when ecological knowledge can be seen to derive from the reductive science-based perspectives of the world. Positivism has played a role in mis-representing ecologically deleterious processes like oil-extraction

as being environmentally benign due to questionable science supporting a corporate cause (Stanger, 2011b). With these limitations in mind, I have attempted to be careful to not overuse the analogies of ecology but to see **panarchy** as a method of synthesis. I have chosen panarchy theory as an underlying systems approach because of its usefulness in describing ecological and psycho-social systems adaptation. I also want to acknowledge an attempt to connect **panarchy** with an **Indigenist** framework when looking at literature such that I continue to refer to the interrelated wisdoms of land and i/ Indigenous voices (Cajete, 2005; Chinn, 2007; Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010; Ng-A-Fook, 2011; Smith, 2005; S. Wilson, 2009). That is I see my work with **complexity theory** and **endogeny** as allied with **Indigenist** scholars, seeking to break down modern (and even post-modern) paradigms that maintain colonizing, racist, prejudiced, co-opting and other-ing characteristics.

INTERACTIVE 2.1 Panarchy represented in photos - pinch them open to see them full size



*The adaptability of an anemone, which can detach and swim away from predators despite being mostly sedentary organisms - Savary Island BC (Adaptive Cycle)*





Allah painted on the roof of the Hagia Sofia, Istanbul

## Panarchy as my theoretical framework

**Panarchy** theory helps guide my exploration into the literature and research relevant to **(trans)formation**, place, and ecological identity by framing my search through interpretations of dynamic synergies and resonances in seemingly disparate or alternative-education fields (Cutting & Cook, 2009). Originally designed to describe the connections among chaos theory, **complexity theory** and ecological system management, '**panarchy**' is a term that "explains the evolving nature of complex adaptive systems" (Holling, 2001, p. 392).

**Panarchy** theorists argue that researchers need to move beyond interpreting systems using simplistic equilibrium models and acknowledge the more complex and dynamic set of equilibria that

describes the states of ecological, societal, and economic systems (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). In this research, instead of describing the equilibrium-nature of a singular set of literature or data (i.e. environmental education research of one or two particular threads of thought) and subsequent thought-events that move them out of that equilibrium, I am primarily interested in the ramifications of using **panarchy** to describe how humans move and adapt through multiple equilibria of thoughts and actions (Varey, 2011). This is useful when analyzing thought over space and time through **transdisciplinary** lenses (Max-Neef, 2005). "Features of the **panarchy** approach involve discerning dynamic systems at different scales, in sub-systems of

adaptive cycles, with cross-scalar dynamics coupling those systems” (Varey, 2011, p. 513).

Max-Neef (2005) describes **transdisciplinarity** as a process of moving beyond binary-thinking and reductionism. It represents a process of complexity theory and research that continues to be described:

*[Strong Transdisciplinarity is] a kind of quantum logic, as a substitute for linear logic, and breaks with the assumption of a single reality. It is based on three pillars: Levels of Reality; the Axiom of the Included Middle; and Complexity. (Max-Neef, 2005, p. 5)*

**Transdisciplinary** research can be described as a process of adaptation, helping us see the value and critical importance of understanding and incorporating the viewpoints of **Indigenist** (S. Wilson, 2009), western (Heidegger, 1962), eastern (Nhất Hạnh, 2008), and ecological (Orr, 2004) scholarship.



Blue Whale ribs, Victoria BC

## The ecology of panarchy

A way to illuminate this **panarchy** theory approach is through the work of Gregory Bateson, the anthropologist and system theorist who was influenced by the ecologies in which he worked. Bateson's (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, frames this concept of thought as an interrelated system from an anthro-ecological lens. That is, he states that cultural systems of humans and ecology are conditionally interrelated:

*The questions which this book raises are ecological: How do ideas interact? Is there some sort of natural selection which determines the survival of ideas and the extinction or death of others? What sort of economics limits the multiplicity of*

*ideas in a given region of the mind? What are the necessary conditions for stability (or survival) of such a system or subsystem? (Bateson, 1972, p. xxiii)*

Bateson's exploration of the ecology of the mind provides insights into the critical connections among ideas, actions, and theories. Notable to this concept, he interpreted 'ecological thought' beyond the individual level of thought to a 'societal mind' level, similar to Carl Jung's collective unconscious (Hunt, 2012) or Teilhard's Noosphere (Moiseev, 1989). Bateson's questions frame some of my own inquiry that arises in both the ecological identity development and (trans)formative research that this process describes. In particular, the

acknowledgement of the complexity of overlapping and adaptive systems can frame a new approach to understanding how change occurs at the individual, societal, spiritual and ecological levels. Also, that complexity theory has particular resonance with the worldviews of many **Indigenous** peoples: The Creator is Earth and is in and of us, connecting our physical beings with place through spirit, story, and wisdoms of past and future relations.

Some ecological psychologists, and especially deep ecologists, echo a similar view of the world (Haigh, 2006; Naess, 1992; Quick, 2006; Reed & Rothenberg, 1993). They suggest that space, scale, and relationships affect the ongoing evolution of thought through story, discourse, and research (Ackerson, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2006).

**Panarchy** theory helps articulate ontological **(trans)formation** in this literature through its five interrelated components: holarchical, scalar, temporal, cyclical, and cross-scalar dependency (Gunderson & Holling, 2002) as explained below. Notice how each component also resonates with tenets of **indigenous** ontologies ([Interactive 2.2](#)).

**Panarchies are holarchical.** Holarchy is a term used to describe the structure of a whole system which is made up of holons (units).

Holarchies are described as a nested complexity of systems, but not structured as 'small to big' with absolute 'tops and bottoms'. Rather, each component of the system has functional inter- and intra-relations to each other and to other systems.

**Panarchies are scalar.** Ecosystems are scale-dependent, being any size as long as they have organisms, physical environment, interactions, and a specified extent as a way to bound and define them (Pickett & Cadenasso, 2002). In the case of **panarchy** systems, multiple systems of scale are considered concurrently, allowing for an amalgam viewpoint into the occurrences being studied.

**Panarchies are temporal.** Mapping, observing, or connecting with biophysical spaces are often limited by the time-availability of the observer which can constrain the understanding and view of multiple timelines of systems that are interacting in **nature**. **Panarchy** theory argues that multiple systems of scale and their interrelated holarchies operate across a diversity of time periods, which requires appropriate forms and lengths of observation.

**Panarchies are cyclical.** **Panarchy** theory acknowledges that systems move through four phases of an adaptive cycle: growth, conservation, release, and reorganization, which leads to a new cycle of the same phases. This never-ending cycle might be seen going through a process of revolt (major systems shift) or remembering (major systems return).

**Panarchies have cross-scalar dependencies.** **Panarchy** theory acknowledges the role of complexity within systems as an entwined multi-variable and highly dependent set of interactions, such that when systems interact across scales they can come into multiple states of equilibria. **Panarchy** allows for some level of prediction of these states.

# panarchies are holarchical

Holarchy is a term used to describe the structure of a whole system which is made up of holons (units). Holarchies are described as a nested complexity of systems, but not structured as 'small to big' with absolute 'tops and bottoms'. Rather, each component of the system has functional inter- and intra-relations to each other and to other systems.

Click through each of the slides to read the interpretations of the components of panarchy

## Rationale for panarchy

Part of my interest in a panarchical approach is to avoid the over-utilized and simplified use of critical theory, which I interpret as further legacy of the aggressive and logical thinking architecture of argument/statement> warrant 1> warrant 2> counter-argument> logical critical approach (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). Critical theory has been established as a useful approach within societies of oppression as it empowers groups to challenge established social order, and conduct comprehensive explorations of inequities with the intention of finding solutions or (trans)formational paradigm shifts (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 2000; Habermas, 1979). Yet in academic settings, critical theory seems to be practiced all too often as simple



criticism or the identification of deficits, fostering an aggressive approach to knowledge creation and destruction (Garrard, 2010; Grande, 2004; McKenzie, 2004). Rather than focusing on ‘what is lacking’ or where oppression might lie in this research field, my research seeks to celebrate the complexity of inquiry that connects to ecological identity, literacy, sense of place, or **(trans)formation** as a panarchical system and **Indigenist** system. This a sentiment that is shared by Donella Meadows who wrote a manifesto for a more resilient human future by celebrating complexity rather than seeking superficial simplicity:

*Let's face it, the universe is messy. It is nonlinear, turbulent and chaotic. It is dynamic. It spends its time in transient behavior on its way to somewhere else, not in mathematically neat equilibria. It self-organizes and evolves. It creates diversity, not uniformity. That's what makes the world interesting, that's what makes it beautiful, and that's what makes it work. (Meadows, 2002, ¶ 55)*

In light of this celebration of complexity, William Varey (2011) recently asked a similar question to the one that I have posed: “Is there evidence that systems of thought demonstrate **panarchy**-like qualities?” (p. 516). Varey justifies the use of **panarchy** theory within his field of socio-psychology with distinct relevance to the conundrum of ecological and thought sustainability:

*When examining the dynamics of human systems of ascent and decline, the ‘quantity’ of thought occurring is not an issue. It is presently the ‘quality’ of our thinking that presents the greatest challenge to our self-governance. To find new ways of learning about our ways of appreciating, particularly of the management of our own resilience, is one focus in a series of human importances. (Varey, 2011, p. 521)*

Varey’s interpretation of Holling, Peterson, & Allen (2008) connects psychology to the five major components of **panarchy** theory. In this research, I expand Varey’s approach to look at the ‘quality’ of thinking as it relates to managing our own **resilience**. This expansion of Varey’s work helps interpret change, movement, and transformation, providing language to the quality of my participants’ experiences that derive from their transformative **outdoor places**. To do this, I explored the relevance of the five components of **panarchy** and their relation to the research and literature of the change and **(trans)formation** process. This includes understanding development of individual ecological identity, with a special concentration on issues and the importance of place, childhood, and spirituality.



Sedges at Koeeye Estuary, BC

# Holarchy, psychological development, and eco-sociological development

## Holons to Holarchy

The term Holarchy was first coined by Koestler (1967) in his inquiry into the self-destructive overtones of the nuclear era, to describe the evolution of the brain and its relationship to the mind. He posited that the mind is at once a whole and a part of a whole. This description of holarchy, a form of heirarchy that has no beginning, ending, or other limitations describes the nestedness of complex elements (holons). Wilber (2000) further described the notion of holons and holarchy by articulating three distinct groups:

**Individual holon:** This is an element that has a distinctive ‘I-ness’ that is discrete, self-contained, and shows agency, made up of parts (ex. a human (holon) is made up of lungs, heart, blood, etc. (parts)).

**Social holon:** This is an element that exhibits a ‘we-ness’ and is made up of a collective of individual holons. These holons possess nexus agency, where the whole group has an aggregate agency that isn’t necessarily described by one individual holon (ex. a community of ants).

**Artifacts:** These are the items that are created by either individual or social holons that cannot be characterized as having agency, I-ness, or

self-maintenance. Artifacts can be anything created such as canoes, stories, or buildings.

Holons are embedded in larger wholes that are increasingly complex in their interactions and are influenced by their individual and social parts. If all instances of a holon is removed from a lower level of complexity within the whole, the more complex holons cease to exist. Some realms of holarchy are explored below in reference to the literature pertaining to place and development.

## Psychological Development

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Martin and Gillespie (2010) suggest that psychological developmental processes are stimulated by our experiences in biophysical settings. However, I believe that simply ‘doing of stuff in **nature**’ does not always trigger a series of events that sets us on a process of naturalistic psychological development (Scott, 2010). Instead, the ‘doing of stuff’ can be explored as number of holarchical events occurring simultaneously and in dependence of each other. Considered some of the most influential psychologists in education, both Vygotsky’s and Piaget’s well-known theories act as guidance for understanding the processes of human development. Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that humans develop through attempting tasks outside of our current abilities. This theory posits that abilities are formed through the process of maturation and exposure to opportunities (Vygotsky, 1962). Piaget’s description of schemata suggests that children adopt a series of thoughts and behaviours to understand the world. These structures act as components of a worldview and thus influence bias and stereotyping as they relate directly to the process of memory recall and seeing the world through a

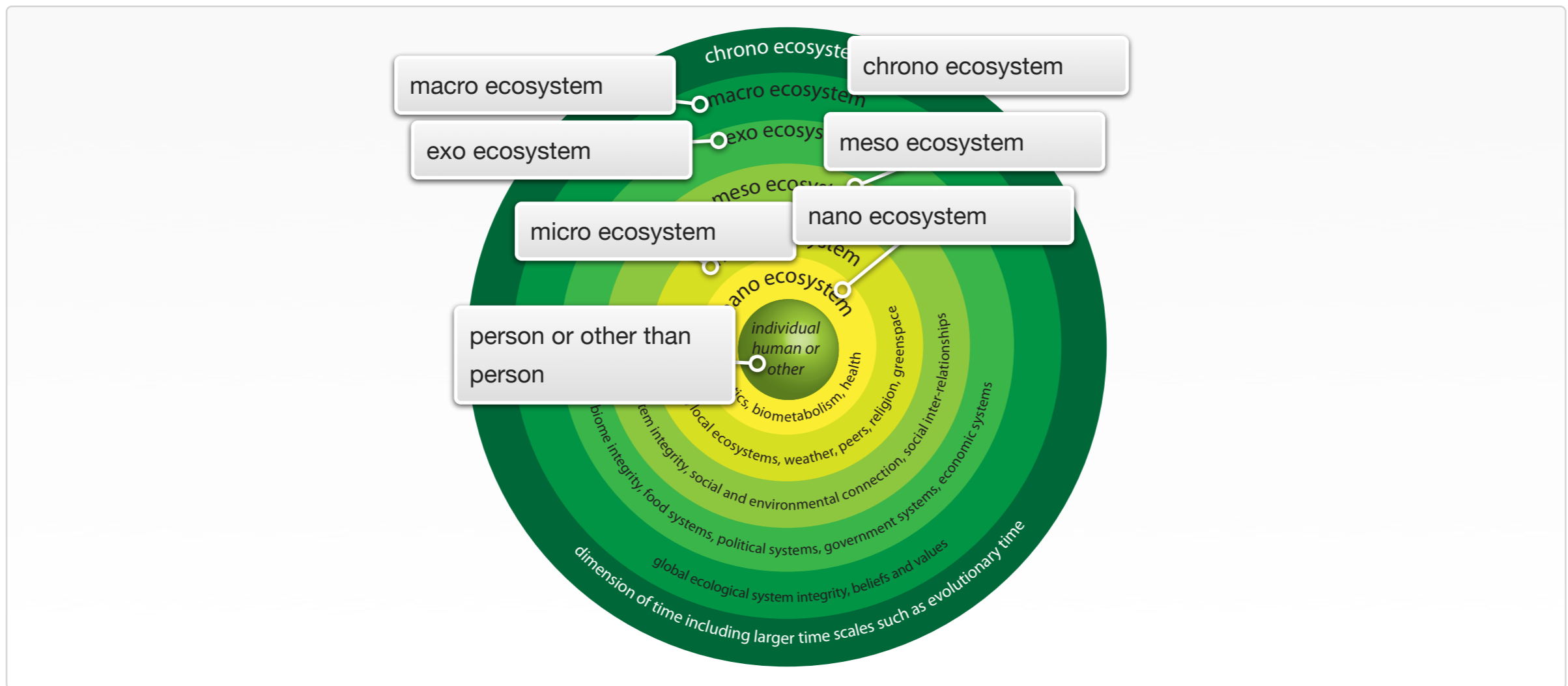
particular lens (Brewer & Treyens, 1981). Both ZPD and shemata represent aspects of holarchies of thought and development. Each of the theories discusses the complexity of experiences and life-events requiring a multitude of nested factors for psychological change (Piaget & Inhelder, 1967; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). However I feel that these theories are explained as causal systems of ontological development and they fall short of describing an entirely adaptive cyclical system of resiliency. An example of this is their hierarchic stage-based descriptions with discrete steps of systematic learning. Though Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories encourage an interpretation of the world as a way to ‘understand’ through multiple constructs or lenses (also described as constructivism), they maintain a rational and dichotomizing description of a complex process (Mingers, 1991). This is evidenced through processes of norming and group think where individuals are left to develop an understanding through their own means. Processes of conservatism and rigidity can limit adaptation within a wholly free-learning system where complex disruptions go ignored or un-investigated (Gordon, 2008; Windschitl, 2002). Through much of the literature on constructivist theory, I am left wondering how the theory describes moments of transformation and disruption, common elements of all systems. Whereas, complexity theories, and systems-thinking acknowledges and integrates the holons of other-than-human influences, evolutionary and nuanced behavioural phenomena, and the influence of local environments (Holling, 2001). One particular framework that exhibits a much more explicitly holarchical description of human development are socio-ecological models.

# Socio-ecological Development

Originally proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), socio-ecological models were described in his book *Ecology of Human Development* which explores the multi-scalar, nested holarchical systems of environments that influence the development of humans. These systems range from microsystem (family, school, and peers),

mesosystem (inter-relationships of these factors), exosystem (governmental, cultural structures), macrosystem (overarching beliefs and values, to chronosystem (factors over time). Bronfenbrenner's ecological structure of the environments that influence development is rooted in a metaphorical interpretation of ecosystems. Its foundation is that human relationships resemble ecological relationships. Emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual development in humans does not occur

## INTERACTIVE 2.3 Proposed revision to the socio-ecological model



in an ecological vacuum; it is directly linked to the biophysical world around us (Swick & Williams, 2006). In a recent article, I move to update Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological models and discuss the reorientation from the anthropocentric method (socio-ecological theory) to an "eco-sociological" method that celebrates and acknowledges the complexity of life on Earth as the major influencers of our lives:

*It is time to embrace the multiple interpretations of "ecosystems" within the models we use to describe human development rather than letting the anthropocentric politicians and economics drive space-ship Earth. If we adopt this eco-sociological technique in schools and school-based research, perhaps we will see and think differently. It will make us reject marketing and sponsorship from extractive and deleterious industry, refuse to continue to build schools like prisons, and dismiss curriculum that supports factory-like settings. We will quickly see the need to build more livable schools with more green space, connection with local community, sustainable materials, sustainable pedagogy, local healthy foods for cafeterias, and integrated buildings that support ecological habitat development and student creativity. It is time to re-orient the way we see young people develop through a true ecological lens. (Stanger, 2011b, p. 172)*

The eco-sociological model I propose ([Interactive 2.3](#)) suggests a holarchical approach to research on the development of individuals, which includes multiple ways of knowing and interacting with the world. This encourages us to look wholly at numerous forms of knowledge in a pluralistic capacity such as **Indigenous** knowledge, scientific knowledge, ecological knowledge, emotional knowledge, and social sciences knowledge (Lotz-Sisitka, 2009). These knowledge domains

exist as holarchies of thought, interacting in discrete and symbiotic relationships.

## Indigenous Knowledge and holarchies

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Holarchy can also be seen in some First Nation **Indigenous** ways of knowing. For instance, the practice of ethnobotany, where medicinal and food plants are intrinsically linked to place and place-names and are passed through generations through story shows a complex interconnections of many different systems built into each other (Turner, 2005); that is, **Indigenous** knowledge, story, place, and time. Without one of these systems, the others may not exist. Of course these attributes are not limited to **Indigenous** cultures, but are celebrated within some First Nations cultures as fundamental to their social and spiritual existence. For instance, in Heiltsuk culture, the rice-root plant forms the basis of starch in a basic meal. However, Grizzly bears are also rice root eaters. These two systems are not seen as separated between human and Grizzly, rather, each species connects and exists in the same place, making them both related as described through stories, songs, and ceremonies.

# Scale, sense of place, ecological identity and place-based research

## Sense of Place

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From my teaching experiences, I understand the power of place as a facilitator of awe, peace, calming, connectedness, aesthetic appreciation, delight, and scientific learning. When we spend time in biophysical places, our experiences can support an essential understanding of our surroundings and help us connect with ourselves physically, cognitively, and spiritually (Maller, 2009; Malpas, 1999; Mueller Worster, 2006; Sobel, 2004). Place is steeped in experiences of history, interiority, community and other-than human community, and sometimes a deep sense of solace (Albrecht, 2010). Place is a manifestation of meaning making, as



Brueggeman (1977) articulates in his book *The land: Place as gift, promise, and challenge in biblical faith*:

*Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued... Place is indeed a protest against the uncompromising pursuit of space. It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment and undefined freedom."*

*Brueggeman, 1977, p. 185*

Thus place, and the experiences that occur in them, are inherently scalar both in the biophysical sense and also the cognitive developmental landscape. We can experience the scalar-nature and developmental aspects of place by simply 'staying put' for a moment, whether 'in place' is in our minds or in our bodies (Payne & Wattchow, 2009). In education, this manifests through helping people find connections to the places where they live, learn, and love (Berger & Lahad, 2010; Ruitenber, 2005). Functionally, place-connection occurs through helping people develop a "sense of place," or the construction of a compassionate context to the local and global (Duhn, 2012).

Environmental education and place-based learning (and their research) are often action-based because they ask individuals to embody, reflect on, and connect with their experiences. Yet sometimes embodiment, reflexiveness, and connection does little justice to the complexity of

place when these experiences address space, time, emotional literacy, creativity, inspiration, spirituality, healing, and learning (Kuo, 2010; Somerville, 2010). This could be due to the obscurity of nested systems. Harrison (2010) comments on Malpas' (1999) suggestion of the scalar aspects of place-based learning and sense of place as a nested complexity of these items:

*The discussion of 'why' engage with place-based approaches to environmental education implies a research methodology that does not simply measure sense of place, but looks at how it is developed, investigating the relationship between epistemology ('place-based learning') and ontology ('a sense of place'). Furthermore, with regards to care and responsibility for more distant places, the research method requires the ability to move across different scales, negotiating what Malpas calls the 'nested' character of place (Malpas, 1999): the glen, the watershed, the region, etc., and follow the interconnections of modern life. (Harrison, 2010, p. 12)*

A human's sense of place is scalar to the ultimate degree of scale (that being atomic to cosmological). Astronauts come across this scale as a foundational element to the work that they do. For instance, on his first view of Earth during a space-walk, Story Musgrave described his experience in terms of physical connection: "...and when I looked back, it was all I could do to keep my hand still enough to take photos of her [Earth]. The beauty and size struck me so viscerally" (S. Musgrave, personal communication, June 20, 1996; [Illustration 2.4](#)).

One doesn't need to spend billions of dollars and thousands of gallons of jet fuel to experience this beauty. Connection to place can be just as enthralling through honouring and respecting the land as a mentor and guide, parent and nurturer, and healer and spiritual leader. This is true

## INTERACTIVE 2.4 Story Musgrave space walking



of how some **Indigenous** peoples around the world articulate their relationship to place and place-names. Of course, all humans are steeped in place-names and their history; however, the nuance of place-names within the First Nations communities of what is now called North America, is likely greater than 15,000-years-old - or in the words of a colleague of mine “as old as all creation” (XEMFOLTW N. Claxton, WSÁNEĆ, personal communication, November 22, 2012). The **Indigenous** stories of place and place-names function as teachings, entertainment, nostalgia, time-markers, and geo-orienting place-markers (Davis, 2009; Salmon, 2000). They also help monitor change in these places by the very nature of oral history being passed from generation to generation. This can include events such as fires, earthquakes, and landslides, but also spiritual and cultural shifts of the people and other-than-humans that are interacting with these specific places.

## Solastalgia, Indigenous place and spirit, and Nature Deficit Disorder

Imbedded within sense of place, but with necessary distinction, is the neologism **solastalgia**, coined by Albrecht (2010). **Solastalgia** is an etymological hybridization among the terms solace (provision of comfort), desolation (feeling of abandonment), and nostalgia (the pain of homesickness). Albrecht situates **solastalgia** as psychoterratic distress, where pain or sickness is caused by the loss of, and inability to derive solace from a person’s home or special place due to physical environmental changes, usually resulting from development, climate change, or other negative **(trans)formations**. With reference to the ongoing illnesses that **Indigenous** peoples around the planet are experiencing from being physically, culturally, and spiritually removed from their home territories (through reservation systems or other colonizing actions), Albrecht illustrates a compelling description of the effects of interrupting the human-nature connection:

*Both social and medical epidemics that afflict some Indigenous people can be partly understood as their attempt to relieve themselves of the distress and pain of solastalgia. Perhaps solutions to such problems can come from the diagnosis of solastalgia and its negation by empowered Indigenous people being directly involved in the repair and restoration of their ‘home.’ (Albrecht, 2010, p. 228)*

Despite the power of the term **solastalgia**, and soliphilia, the contrary response to connection to home, the consideration of using these terms as diagnoses or pathologies could be troublesome. The benefits of identifying people’s illnesses can be considered instructive

behaviour-changing events, as seen in the medical profession. Yet, identifying social-ecological phenomenon as illnesses couches these experiences in a deficit-mentality; that if I were to take this prescription of **nature** or restore/repair my relationship with **nature** and home, all will be well, and I can continue on as a ‘healed’ individual. This is one of the chief scholarly challenges that Richard Louv, the originator of the term Nature Deficit Disorder, has also faced (Louv, 2005). He acknowledges that his term, though sounding pathological is more illustrative than medical. However, philosophically, our connection to **nature** is more than simply a clever term (i.e. biophilic, topophilic, soliphilic); it is at the very biophysical, spiritual, and reverential essence of who we are as humans, such that **nature** itself is interior to our very way of being (Berkes, 2008; Nhất Hạnh, 2010). I struggle to abandon the use of a deficit mentality and instead recognize my human connectedness among all other species and beings including Earth as an understood living, thinking, and feeling place. I return to this interdependence in an upcoming section on [Interbeing](#).

## Ecological Identity

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A human’s development of sense of place is supported by (trans)formative methods such as linkages, elaborations, curiosity, and assessment through interactive and connecting experiences. For instance, when a child plays in a Garry oak meadow, they are reacting and engaging in a mixture of sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes that form a complex interconnected system of modalities. The pedagogical elements of **nature** (in the case of the Garry oak meadow – oak trees, snowberry bushes, camas plants, dark-eyed juncos, black-tailed deer, red ants, arachnids, microbes, and thousands of other named and un-named species and beings) connect with inherent

and innate forms of curiosity and are the essence and fiber to the very fabric of our relational identity in life (Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Thomashow, 1995). That we connect and reconnect (physically or in our minds) with these ecological landscapes of origin can have a profound impact on our identity as animals who are imbedded in our ecologies (Kuo, 2010; E. O. Wilson, 1984). In our childhood, the stubbing of toes, inspections of stumps, planting of seeds, building of huts, climbing of trees, chasing of brothers, licking of salty-lips, digging of pits, trapping of insects, and building of curiosity are playful risks that can support the development of ecological literacy (Chawla, 2003; Stanger, 2011a). As we grow older, our work can continue to connect us to place, even if exploitative, by engaging us as guides, miners, foresters, farmers, and fishers, just to name a few. I think that our ecological identity can be highly influenced by our profession, the normalizing behaviours of a profession will skew or re-orient how we understand our relationships to nature. This relationship that humans have with Earth has been that of the receiver of its bounty, which historically required us to have a much more attentive relationship to **nature**. However in the past few hundred years that critical openness and reflexivity of **(trans)formation** has been numbed by promises of efficiency, economic prosperity, and fame (R. Wright, 2011).

From miniscule to enormous, scale exists as a frame for our imagination, and when perception of scale is changed, the perceiver can be changed as well (Arnold, Cohen, & Warner, 2009). This might be best illustrated by the simple act of climbing up a trail to the top of a hill for a new perspective of the landscape around us. With this vantage point, we have the opportunity to see interactions amongst larger forms of systems. At the very same moment, we also might perceive ourselves differently, as organisms connected to a larger and

highly dynamic world (Scott, 2010; Stanger, 2011b). This ‘**endogeny** of being’ acts as a connection, even a sense of belonging to the earth – who am I and how do I connect to this place?

Vision quests continue to be practiced in some **Indigenous** communities around the world. Often taking form as coming-of-age ceremonies, they can provide a time-marker in a young person’s life. Ultimately acting as spiritual transformational events, these practices are an activity that connect the understanding of the self within the matrix of community, spirit, and Earth (Grimes, 2000; Plotkin, 2003). I have witnessed three stages of vision quests as a mentor of **Indigenous** youth: a) isolation from community and material-goods b) **(trans)formation** of mind, spirit, and body; c) incorporation of thought, behaviour, ways of knowing. Often connecting to a totem or life-spirit, these youth move beyond a lucid state to engage with spiritual and ecological stories of the world around them. They then bring this identity back with them to their home community and begin the next part of their life, which asks them to learn songs, stories, dance, regalia-making, and wisdoms of their totem life-spirit. All this knowledge derives from the specifics of place.

## Place-based Research

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Environmental educators, geographers, and psychologists have shown that place plays a central role in human development (Harrison, 2010; Mueller Worster, 2006; Naess, 1992; Ruitenberg, 2005) The research itself is characteristically dynamic and scalar, with a diversity of themes and disciplines. Harrison (2010) suggests that research that is focused on ‘place’ can be divided into two worlds within English-speaking communities, though this is not without some error of over-

generalization. First, an Australian/New Zealand/Canadian ‘place’ within environmental education focuses on the role of outdoor educators, interpreters, and alternative/exceptional programs utilizing place as a central aspect of their curriculum (Asfeldt et al., 2009; Duhn, 2012; Sauv e, 2005; Stewart, 2006). Second, an American “place-based education” (Krasny et al., 2010; Orr, 1990; Takano, Higgins, & McLaughlin, 2009), is concerned with adapting current “educational institutions to embrace local community and environment as part of the learning context” (Harrison, 2010, p. 6). Though the distinction between these two camps is somewhat indicative of binary thought, the subtle differences of how place is considered in education helps us articulate the multiple scales in which we engage. For instance, in 2007, The Outdoor Alliance for Kids Society in the United States sought to counteract the failing No Child Left Behind Act through a counteractive Act named No Child Left Inside. This new act sought to engage the entire K to 12 system in environmental education within the United States: 81.5 million students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). It is much more challenging to create a significant paradigm-changing impact in Canada due to our governmental structure where education is provincially mandated and we have significantly fewer students - 5.2 million (Statistics Canada, 2011).

**Panarchy** theory as defined in this work suggests that understanding the commonalities of these two research camps is useful as a study of its transferability in North American culture and among all cultures on Earth. Both of the two camps of research represent a diverse scale of meanings and interpretations of learning as it relates to environmental education and human-nature relationships. For students in the United States, rich place-based programming is limited partially by the enormity of their population compared to Canada. Yet, pedagogically, schools within the United States also have the opportunity for higher

diversity of approaches as more money, resources, and diversity can be seen in some of the communities. For instance, far more place-based school options exist for students in the United States than Canada. Yet, the learning that occurs from studying those schools has ramifications on the development across the world, despite the differences in their actualization. Questions of how a public schooling system might integrate, adapt, and re-write the lessons from place-based schools such as the High Mountain Institute, The Island School, and Teton Science School has been at the core of schools and centers like the North Vancouver Outdoor School (now the Cheakamus Centre), the Palisades in Jasper National Park, and the Nature Kindergarten in Sooke School District.

Interpreting schooling systems through the component of scale helps engage students, teachers, administrators, and government officials in seeing relevancy, complexities, and transferability across multiple and diverse systems.



frozen lichen, Powell River BC

## Time, slowness, flow, and dasein

### Slowness

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Whether it a peripheral glimpse of a bald eagle diving into a sun drenched sea to catch a fish or the visceral and contextual connection to a tree's slow growth over a whole lifetime, connection to place at the individual level is characterized by the diversity of experiences of time. Further to this, time plays curious tricks on us through our perceptive memory and imagination (Payne, 2010b). The often rose-tinted memory-lenses we use when we look into our own past can be both exciting and disappointing upon revisiting childhood places (O'Donoghue, 2006).

Despite the variable nature of time and the role that time plays in our memory, one temporal concept is exceptionally useful when considering time and **panarchy** through an individual's experience in **nature**; that is slowness. Our glut of 'efficiency' through increasingly distracting technologies has reduced our physical presence in natural settings (Louv, 2005; Tremblay et al., 2010). To support connection to the biophysical world, we should consider a shift towards slowness as an approach to life. The popularized notion of slow-food is in part responsible for the international movement; the 'Slow Movement' celebrates slowness as a method for experiencing the world in an enriching and healthy way:

*By taking aim at the false god of speed, it strikes at the heart of what it is to be human in the era of the silicon chip. The Slow creed can pay dividends when applied in a piecemeal fashion. But, to get the full benefit from the Slow movement, we need to go further and rethink our approach to everything. (Honoré, 2004, p. 17)*

This call for slowness could incite a **(trans)formation** of our economic structures, so obsessed with efficient competition at the expense of all others. A **(trans)formation** to slowness could intentionally intervene on the current system of hyper-active economic, political, and military-industrial-intelligence complexes.

One such relevant ‘rethinking’ approach to slowness is found in the ‘slow education movement’ where increasing interest in teaching slowly has led to learning in the ecological and cultural landscapes that surround us (Blewitt, 2006; Claridge, 2011). Slowness allows us to find meaning that is deeply relevant to our own experiences. Reflecting, and collecting our thoughts within an experience contributes to seeing patterns, connections, and finding a way to express this knowledge through creative means (Graham, 2007; Stanger, 2007, 2011a). Wabi Sabi, a character in the hermeneutic research project of Seidel and Jardine’s (2009), talks about the compelling nature of the complex world, a realization enabled through the act of slowing down:

*The more I have come to know a work of art, a piece of music, a track of forest, a bird’s call, the meaning of a name like Wabi Sabi, quadratic arcs, or the beauty of a beloved novel—the more I experience such things, the more compelling they become, the more they are experienced as “standing there,” over and above my wanting and doing, there, in the midst of the world. (Seidel & Jardine, 2009, pp. 17-18)*

In North American schooling systems today, we have very little time to ‘stand there’ and be ‘compelled’ to explore these experiences brought on through slowness. Yet, being there and being slow is argued as one way to develop a sense of wonder and awe in our surrounding places (Payne & Wattchow, 2009).

The environmental ethicist and educator, Dr. Bob Jickling suggested that a reorientation is needed in our society, such that we live “as if the world mattered” (Jickling, 2009, p. 215). I find this a profound concept and have heard it explained as “living like you plan on staying” (Dr. R. Kool, personal communication, March 2006; Astbury, Huddart, & Theoret, 2009, p. 167) and living more “sustainably by becoming rooted in place” (Turner, 2005, p. 67). Living “as if the world mattered” requires us to understand, celebrate, and engage with our local ecological and cultural places in ecologically sustainable ways (Bowers, 1995).

Slowness is a way of culture for many **Indigenous** peoples (Aluli-Meyer, 2008; Kirmayer et al., 2011). This doesn’t mean that speed is non-existent, but that space and time is honoured through an intention of appropriate protocol, respect, and wisdom is practiced for the appropriate moment. Whether it is acknowledging the land, ancestors, or connection to the Creator, many First Nations use time as a source of presence through respectful ceremony (Smith, 2005). This intentional time can open avenues for deep meaningful thought and connections that engages the community in a relational dialogue to the complexity of family, culture, story, and place.

Time’s role in place and **(trans)formation** can be confounded by the concepts of presence and expediency, especially in relation to the looming environmental crises that humans now face (Convention of Biological Diversity, 2010; Earle, 1991; Heller & Zavaleta, 2009;

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007; J. R. Miller, 2005). Thus slowness is both about being present and being aware of what is happening in that presence, such that we can learn to love where we are and fight for its ongoing integrity.

## Flow

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Flow is a critical temporal component of connecting to place and slowness. Flow relates to slowness in that it requires an attentiveness that goes beyond the socialized business so common in human culture. I recently attempted to research my own reaction to returning to my favourite childhood place on the top of Gonzales Hill in Oak Bay, Victoria, British Columbia ([Interactive 2.5](#)). This project led me to publish an interactive research paper and video as an exploratory auto-ethnographic exercise (Stanger, 2011a, 2011c). The goal of this project was an attempt to investigate the validity of my proposed doctoral dissertation research methodology. Accompanying this video is an article that discusses my reflections from this day as they relate to the scholarly literature on pedagogy of place and (trans)formative learning:

*That I existed in ecstasy, or outside of my body, allowed for deeper and richer observation of the world around me. My playing with Scotch broom and Garry oak trees re-affirmed my abilities and clarity. These steps of flow should be the basis for educational reform combined with the understanding that outdoor play, even within structured schools, must celebrate the acts of fun, engagement, and meaningfulness (adapted from M. Csikszentmihalyi, 2004):*

- *Focused: completely involved in what we are doing*

- *Ecstasy: being outside everyday reality*
- *Clarity: knowing what needs to be done and how well we are doing*
- *Do-ability: knowing that our skills are adequate to the task*
- *Serenity: having no worries about oneself, beyond the boundaries of ego*
- *Timelessness: being thoroughly focused on the present*
- *Motivation: being motivated through the activity itself*

*(Stanger, 2011a, pp. 87-88)*

Csikszentmihalyi's exploration of flow is a critical one that is somewhat under-recognized in environmental education research. This is especially true when considering the multiplicity of timelines in systems combined with the limitations on educational structures, 'calendarization' of young lives, and societal efficiency norms (Campbell & Timmerman, 2007). As humans connect with place through slowness, recognition of complexity, ecological identity building, and sense of place, the function of time and flow in these moments are the ecstatic experiences of wonder, awe, and inquiry when time ceases to exist. They help us experience timelessness and foster deepened and relational love of the places in which we live.

## Dasein

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Heidegger (1962) relished the physical nature of being and found his most present and 'real' moments were when he was working at his cottage in rural Germany. His 1927 work, *Being and Time* was written

as a way to describe a person's life and their sense of being. One of the major concepts he proposes in this book is the term *dasein*: the being for whom being is a question. *Dasein* can be further described as a social practice of becoming, where all other realities are based through perception of the being that is asking the question (Heidegger, 1962; Walters, 2008). He argued that people in rural spaces are fully absorbed in the world and therefore are *dasein*, but those people who live in large cities are leading inauthentic lives, by living in the future and for another's will. The idea of 'absorption' arises as a theme throughout many existentialists, hinting at the concepts of flow and slowness as elements of being and time (Benhamida, 1973; McPherson, 2001; Rousseau, 1888). Time and absorption are also fundamental principles of environmental education as shown in examples of rural/urban research (Acle, Roque, & Contreras, 2005; Corbett, 2007) and meaning-making (Payne, 2010a).

Therefore, in order to appreciate our surroundings, we need to prioritize our time so that we engage in the absorption of being, the flow of experiencing, and the slowness of observation in an **Indigenist** way:

*Temporal thinking means that time is thought of as having a beginning and an end. Spatial thinking views events as a function of space or where the event actually took place. Understanding the space-time difference in conceptualizing history is necessary in order for the [social scientist] to realize that the two ways of thinking are different yet part of the same continuum. Although the social scientist may be interested in when something happened, the participant/ community may be more interested in where the event took place. The idea of being in space versus time does not have to be a rigid one, and the [participant] may or may not want to relate events in a more space-time integrated*

*approach, although time may not have the same linear quality that it does for the Western person. (Duran & Duran, 2000, p. 91)*

We experience the systems of Earth as rhythms of other-than human ceremonial or ritualistic relationships such as bird migration, weather patterns, flowering plants, glacial till, volcanic eruptions, and shooting stars. Through this temporal experience, we can gain understanding of the world around us and the world within us – we are **dasein**.



How does connection to place manifest itself in research? This video was created as an exploratory auto-ethnographic exercise. I was attempting to experience what I was going to ask my research participants in the completion of my doctoral dissertation in Education at the University of Victoria. Accompanying this video is a paper that discusses reflections from this day as they relate to the scholarly literature on pedagogy of place and transformative learning; The intertextuality of environmental art in childhood special places: How play, flow, and pedagogy of place can reform education (Stanger, 2011a).

# Cycles, adaptive systems, (trans)formation, ecological literacy, and Indigenous worldviews

## Adaptive System

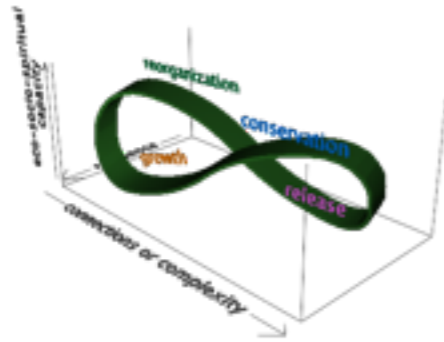
The very nature of using **panarchy** to outline literature relating to my research echoes my research methodology and analysis.

**Panarchy** not only forms the framework for this paper, but for the ecology of **(trans)formation** in general. The cyclical component of panarchy can be represented through a three-dimensional model of an adaptive cycle ([Interactive 2.6](#)).

In [Interactive 2.6](#) and [Interactive 2.7 Figure 1](#), there are four familiar stages of ecosystem dynamics within the adaptive cycle: growth, conservation, release, and reorganization (Gunderson & Holling,



## INTERACTIVE 2.6 The adaptive cycle (click to interact)



Three dimensional panarchy model showing the relationship among potential, connectedness, and resilience within an adaptive cycle (Holling, 2001).

2002). These stages exist within the three dimensional space constructed by the interaction among x-axis: *connectedness*, y-axis: *eco-socio-spiritual capacity*, and z-axis: *resilience*. Growth occurs in this system through a rapid expansion of a community where there is a plethora of ecological niches (personal learning example: developing a knowledge of canopy research through study and practice over many years). Over time, when biodiversity and complexity of interactions increase (connectedness), the Conservation stage represents the role of carrying capacities and an apparent equilibrium (personal learning example: providing empirical research and being an authority in epiphyte research within my community of practice at Weyerhaeuser). In this moment of the **panarchy** cycle, the systems **resilience** is lower, due to its rigidity of hyper-connectedness, and reduced adaptability (personal learning example: reduced new learning as the status quo

was working for my research). The shorter Release stage occurs when a stochastic event or competitor/predator alters the conditions that supported the equilibrium, disconnecting connections and reducing capacity (personal learning example: being faced with a new way of seeing the tree as ALIVE from the experience of the tree swaying). Reorganization is the reconstruction of the communities based on the available options such as successful organisms that survive natural selection processes associated with the stochastic event (personal learning example: the reflecting and reprocessing that led me to changing professions and orienting myself with my knew self-knowledge). This process then cycles into the future, with potential to spin into other loops 'above' and 'below' this one through events called remembering and revolt ([Interactive 2.7, Figure 2](#)). Over periods of time, these adaptive cycles might experience a revolt, where a series of rapid stochastic events leads to the escalation of the adaptive cycle to a much larger and slower cycle:

*An ecological version of this situation occurs when conditions in a forest allow a local ignition to create a small ground fire that spreads first to the crown of a tree, then to a patch in the forest, and then to a whole stand of trees. Each step in that cascade moves the transformation to a larger and slower level. (Holling, 2001, p. 398)*

Similarly, remembering is triggered by a cross-scalar event, pertaining to the use of legacy items such as seed banks after a stand-replacing forest fire. In terms of scholastic research, a revolt might be a series of events that expose a new paradigm (i.e. the research leading to the current understanding of role of unstructured play for children's mental and physical health (Orlowski & Hart, 2010). Another example of Remembering could be a major re-organization of thought based on a hermeneutic analysis of long-forgotten texts (i.e. the environmental

significance of the Diamond Sutra (Nhất Hạnh, 2010)). My tree experience that I shared above could resemble a revolt where multiple moments of understanding built on one another to catapult me into another much slower movement in my learning cycles.

The best insight into how this apparently highly ecological model

*The panarchy describes how a healthy socioecological system can invent and experiment, benefiting from inventions that create opportunity.... The whole panarchy is therefore both creative and conserving. The interactions between cycles in a panarchy combines learning with continuity. (Holling, 2001, p. 402)*

### INTERACTIVE 2.7 Adaptive cycle diagrams

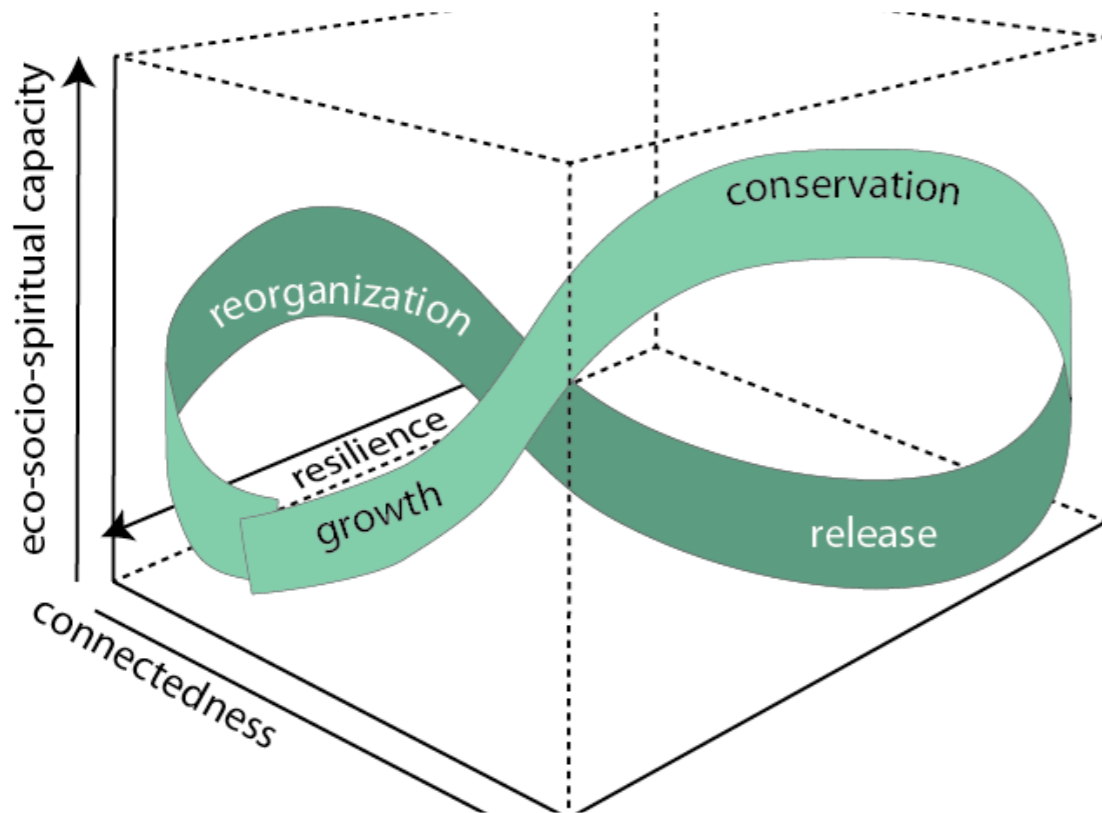


Figure 1. Adapted three dimensional panarchy model showing the relationship among potential, connectedness, and resilience within an adaptive cycle (Holling, 2001).

• •

pertains to **(trans)formation** at the individual level is through Holling’s discussion of the socio-ecological ramifications of **panarchy** on **resilience** and ultimately sustainability:

## (Trans)formation and Ecological Literacy

Applying the **panarchy** model at an individual level could be described as new knowledge creation (growth), ethics and moral judgment (conservation), worldview shifts (release), and evaluation of core values (reorganization). These experiences can be contextualized through the biophysical and societal aspects of place. Yet even places change. Places can be recursively returned to, through physical and imaginary means, as sources of reflexive understanding and new experiences due to their permanent impermanence. Cynthia Chambers refers to the evolutionary perpetuity of place in the curricular question of “what are the living literacies of this place?” (C. M. Chambers, 2009). Literacy is a word often used within environmental education contexts to describe understanding the connectedness and complexity of the environment and how humans integrate with it (Battles et al., 2003; Daudi, 2008). Referred to as **ecological literacy**, it can be defined as “how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably” (Orr, 1992, p. 92). Further to this, an ecologically literate person understands ecological systems, and how people and communities impact the systems in which they live (Balgopal & Wallace, 2009; Cutter-MacKenzie & Smith, 2003). Through this literacy and interpretation of place, humans with higher **ecological literacy** also recognize that places are always changing.

They are drastically altered through destructive economic and socio-political greed, climate change, mudslides, and volcanic eruptions, just to name a few. These occurrences, though sometimes brutal, can act as part of the curriculum of a place so that the evolutionary nature of the “living literacy” connects people to places through solutions-based advocacy, spirituality, environmental despair, or physical dissociation.

However, these physical and reactionary manifestations of change are only one component of **(trans)formation**. Change at an individual level might occur as an adoption of values and beliefs that alter the very nature of underlying worldviews, a literal **(trans)formation** of integral values and spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical beliefs (Jorge, Marina, & Ramon, 2006). Moving beyond the literal literacy of a place, we attribute our own values to place and connect beliefs to thoughts as a process of **(trans)formation** and interpretation. **Panarchy** theory can only be as strong as the conversations and meanings that arise from it. Despite reaching a new height of systems thinking language, the theory falls short in helping to interpret the emotional aspects of places and how humans connect at levels beyond the ecological relationships.

Transformation as an academic discipline is captured within education through transformative learning theory. Originally described by Mezirow (1991), transformative learning theory is the process of affecting change in a personal ‘frame of reference’ through discourse, critical reflection on assumptions, and the development of autonomous thinking. The word autonomous is a troublesome term in this case, as it lacks the acknowledgement of the very real potential that autonomy is a fallacy. That our creativity and understanding is in fact a co-constructed and interrelated ecological intelligence (Bowers, 1995) points to validity of the **panarchy** theory as a descriptor of

**(trans)formation**. Our (trans)formational change requires the holarchical, scalar, and temporal interactions of the systems we live in. These systems can be described as the biophysical world, memetic/knowledge world, and spiritual worlds:

*Today, the orthodox belief in the primacy and autonomy of the individual remains shielded from scrutiny by its taken for granted status among classroom teachers and educational theorists, and by the widespread practice of identifying it as one of the primary social expressions of progress and modernization... Illuminating the consequences of basing educational practices on an individually-centered view of intelligence will require thinking against the grain of the most deeply held conventions of modern thought... Just as an ecological model of understanding leads to a profoundly different approach to moral education, creativity, and to how we think about the educational uses of computers, an ecological view of intelligence has equally important implications for the reform of public schools and university education. (Bowers, 1995, pp. 93-94)*

Mezirow’s vision is one of change in the individual, yet to separate the mutual relationship between an individual and their communities is an unreliable and reductionist practice. Embracing a eco-sociological or panarchical view of (trans)formative learning, one can interpret change as a “comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (Cranton, 1994, p. 730) across systems, scales, time, and cycles.

Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton (2006) published a discussion on their understandings of transformative learning, which helped provide insights into some of its nuances. In this paper, Dirkx’s suggests that

Mezirow's view of transformation, being focussed on knowledge attainment and frames of reference, ignores the endogeny of transformation. Dirkx also indicates that emotional and shadowy thoughts that occur in our daily lives that go un-acknowledged reduce our opportunities to embrace adaptation.

**(Trans)formation** can be followed by feelings of excitement, satisfaction and freedom as well as sadness associated with loss of the old self (Johnston, 2009; Lof, 2010). **(Trans)formation** is not necessarily always timely or a "good thing;" It can be introduced by facilitators of knowledge (be they mentors, wisdom-keepers, or enlightened teachers) and can also occur due to stochastic events deriving from the complexity of the holarchical systems that are interacting with us.

## Indigenous Worldviews

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I have referred to **Indigenous** Knowledge throughout this paper in various ways, but I want to focus directly on it as it relates to cycles. In a way, the adaptive cycle is the keystone component of **panarchy** theory, helping explain the complexity of **(trans)formation**. In this same sense, **Indigenous** ways of knowing can be thought of as integral to the very concepts of this research on place and human-place-connection. It would be a great folly to attempt to assimilate or attempt to express First Nations perspectives in North America. The diversity of **Indigenous** ways of knowing are rich with nuance and complexity. An entire life's work could be devoted directly to these multiple worldviews. I draw on a few wisdom-keepers to help articulate the connections among **Indigenous** knowledge, adaptive cycles, and **endogeny**. Gregory Cajete, a Tewa Indian from Santa Clara Pueblo,

suggested that an **Indigenous** approach to the world can be languaged through 'sacred ecology' (Cajete, 1999, 2000). Sacred ecology is inclusive of humans and the changes that we make to the environment, spirits, organisms, and stories around us, including how those places affect change in ourselves:

*The land has become an extension of Indian thought and being because, in the words of a Pueblo elder, 'It is this place that holds our memories and the bones of our people... This is the place that made us.'... This refers not only to the physical place but also a place of consciousness and an orientation to sacred ecology. Sacred orientation to place and space is a key element of the ecological awareness and intimate relationship that Indians have established with the North American Landscape for 30,000 years or more. (Cajete, 1999, p. 3)*

This truth that humans can be as much part of land as the very place-consciousness in which we inhabit helps demonstrate the idea of **panarchy** as an ecological and spiritual descriptive theory. Indeed all humans, whether they identify as **Indigenous** or not, can understand that the places that we inhabit hold conscious and physical connections. It is this acknowledgement and subsequent actions of the ties to place that is missing from many modern cultures, which has contributed to the environmental and paradigmatic conundrums that educators, policy makers, and human-kind currently face (Barry, 2010). Cajete (1994) focuses specifically on **Indigenous** education and the role of educators as facilitators of **(trans)formation**, especially in regards to the ongoing sustainability of **Indigenous** cultures. He believes that the three most important questions for educators today are: How do we learn to take care of the planet? How do we learn to live together? And, how do we care for our souls? In some **Indigenous**

and Religious communities these processes of **(trans)formation** are planned (eg. Bar Mitzvah and Vision Quests). Yet, (trans)formative movement is challenging to force at a larger societal scale. Change requires some intention or opening of the individual and /or community of support as well as a perfect storm of factors, including socio-political, environmental, and economic (Anglin, 1996). Is there a space for planned (trans)formational activities within the public school system? **Indigenist** approaches to education could play this vital role, providing spaces and techniques for more grounded, spiritual, ceremonial and civic practices, such as connecting with local community, relational accountability, and historic connection (Battiste, 2009).

Incorporating **Indigenous** worldviews can be a fine line to walk when referring to the deeply pedagogical works of **Indigenous** scholars and cultures (Chinn, 2007). Shawn Wilson (2007) and Manulani Aluli Meyer (2008) invite scholars like myself, who don't identify as **Indigenous**, into the world of Indigenous perspectives, as mentioned above: the **Indigenist** approach. The **Indigenist** approach helps articulate my research as being allied with **Indigenous** cultures:

*It is not sufficient for researchers just to say that they are Aboriginal and are therefore using an Indigenist paradigm. We must explain the paradigm clearly so that we can make sure that good work is being done. For me it is a part of my relational accountability to ensure that research conducted in the name of an Indigenist paradigm lives up to the title. (S. Wilson, 2007, p. 194)*

In scholarly research, we are in the midst of change when a pluralistic openness of the academic community values authenticity through an **Indigenist** perspective of auto-ethnography, oral tradition, intuition,

and discourse. It calls on all of us to be allies rather than opponents, such that we can focus on movement and **(trans)formation** for the greater good. The very fabric of many **Indigenous** worldviews are the acknowledgement of ever-changing and living realities (S. Wilson, 2007). An **Indigenist** paradigm could provide a counterpoint to the positivist, reductive paradigm so prevalent in educational and political spheres (Smith, 2005). The challenge lies in involving theories such as **Panarchy** to the larger and wholistic and relational approach of **Indigenist** paradigms.



Trembling Aspen leaves in fall, Kananaskis AB

# Cross-scalar dependency, worldview development, and interbeing

## Worldview Development

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Worldviews are a necessarily complex concept. Frequently defined as a set of values and belief systems, they can exist as clandestine views into our day-to-day experiences (Koltko-Rivera, 2004).

*A worldview is a way of describing the universe and life within it, both in terms of what is and what ought to be. A given worldview is a set of beliefs that includes limiting statements and assumptions regarding what exists and what does not (either in actuality, or in principle), what objects or experiences are good or bad, and what*

*objectives, behaviors, and relationships are desirable or undesirable. A worldview defines what can be known or done in the world, and how it can be known or done.*

*(Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p.4)*

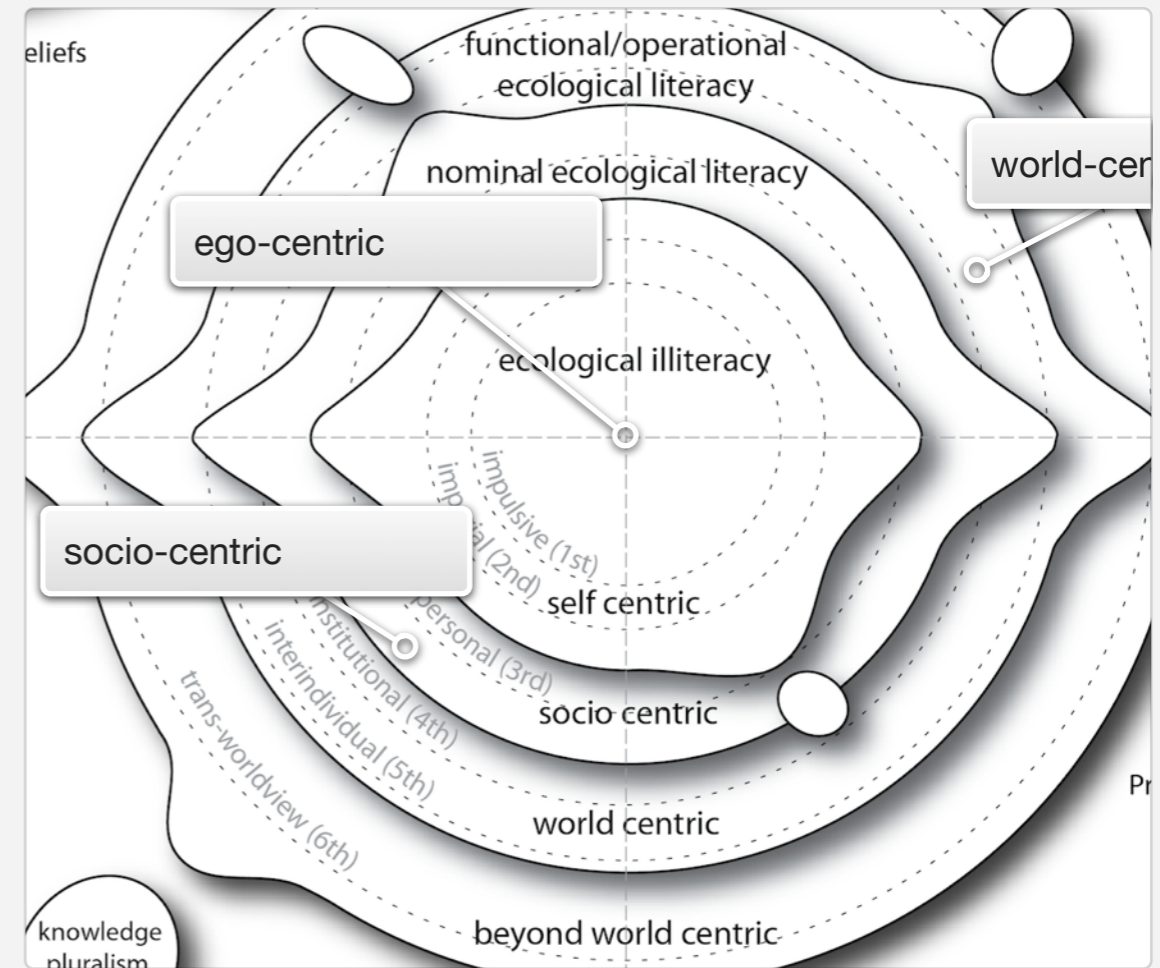
That is, many humans have little to no understanding of how their worldview orients their interpretation of life (Clacherty, 1993). Humans can carry multiple clashing aspects within their worldview at one time, and these items interact in complex ways as necessarily related entities for **(trans)formation** (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). That is, as people interact with changes in their life, they refer to a series of beliefs and values that may conflict, interact, or compromise subsequent

behaviour. In my Master's research (Stanger, 2007) I explored the potential use of mapping worldviews through the multi-scalar and cross-dependent model that combined multiple lenses of **ecological literacy** (Cutter-MacKenzie & Smith, 2003), multi-centric ontologies (Wilber, 1998), Kegan's order of consciousness (Love & Guthrie, 1999), deep ecology pluralisms (Naess, 1992), and worldview construction (Koltko-Rivera, 2004) ([Interactive 2.8](#)).

This model is highly complex, and likely suffers the same limitations of all models being maps, but not territories. My Masters research suggested that humans build their ecological worldview through thoughts and behaviour that moves them away from an egocentric center to a beyond eco-centric-spiritual connection to Earth. This concept is well articulated by Joanna Macy (2007) who describes the multi-scalar aspects of worldviews through the concept of four *weltbilds*, German for the 'way we picture the world,': World as battlefield, World as trap, World as lover, and World as self. Keeping the model of **panarchy** as a focus, one could interpret World as battlefield or World as trap as an egocentric narcissism of nature/society "I'm-here-to-conquer" or "the-world-is-out-to-get-me." These battle- and trap-lenses exist in all of us as the center of our ego, perhaps arising in places of helplessness, where flight-or-fight responses seek to protect ourselves, and perhaps what we hold sacred. Whereas Macy's World as Lover and World as Self celebrates natural interconnectedness of living in a world that exists in a symbiotic relationship with us. Lover and Self in these *weltbilds* could be interpreted as ecological-centricisms, rather than self-centricisms, truly an eco-sociological lens. That is, to be in love with the world, we can see it as a partner through all interpretations of love: *eros* (Brady & Swimme, 2012), *agape* (Bratton, 1992), and *philia* (Sobel, 1999; E. O. Wilson, 1984). Therefore when we move through multiple worldviews

in our lives we are engaged in a complexity of belief systems that interact amongst each other and with the biophysical environment through cross-scalar dependencies.

**INTERACTIVE 2.8** Multi-scalar and cross dependent model of worldview construction



*Ecological literacy matrix. This matrix is represented through layers of orders of consciousness, ecological literacy, and worldview beliefs. Super-imposed on this figure (extraneous bubbles) are other unidentified worldviews that are bumping in and providing pluralistic bursts of transformation (Stanger, 2007, p. 34).*

# Interbeing

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This idea of eco-centric-spiritual connection is one that is well articulated through some Buddhist and mindfulness practices. Thích Nhất Hạnh's (2008) concept of **Interbeing** illustrates the connection between loving Earth and living on Earth. It is best described as the interconnectedness of all things. There is also etymological usefulness by returning to the original Vietnamese term for **interbeing**, Tiếp Hiện, translated by Nhất Hạnh as 'continued realizing'. By continuing to observe and question the notions of realizing where and when we are, humans can reawaken our intrinsic connection to Earth (Nhất Hạnh, 1998). I lean on Nhất Hạnh's original poem of **interbeing** to demonstrate the nature of his theory (next page). He shows through his writing that everything is indeed connected and absolutely dependent on each other, whether it is the cloud that makes rain for trees to grow, or the logger who cuts the trees to make paper we use everyday – one can see the cloud within this piece of paper (or even this digital tool). He has also written many love poems to **interbeing**, where evidence of the complexity of change and **(trans)formation** is apparent (an excerpt from The Old Mendicant): Being rock, being gas, being mist, being Mind,

*being the mesons travelling among the galaxies*

*at the speed of light,*

*you have come here, my beloved.*

*And your blue eyes shine, so beautiful, so deep.*

*You have taken the path traced for you*

*from the non-beginning and the never-ending.*

(Nhất Hạnh, 1999, p. 144)

**Interbeing** is an eloquent explanation of cross-scalar dependency by mindfully exemplifying the absolute connectedness of all materials, experiences, and thoughts in every moment. It is concepts such as **interbeing** that provide potentially-paradigmatic shifts in how we connect with **nature** and ultimately how we come to understand and love Earth through mindfulness.

## Selected section from *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness* (Nhat Hanh, 1991, p. 93)

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. “Interbeing” is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix “inter-“ with the verb “to be,” we have a new verb, inter-be.

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. Without sunshine, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see wheat. We know the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. The logger’s father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

Looking even more deeply, we can see ourselves in this sheet of paper too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, it is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. We cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. “To be” is to inter-be. We cannot just be by ourselves alone. We have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.

Suppose we try to return one of the elements to its source. Suppose we return the sunshine to the sun. Do you think that this sheet of paper will be possible? No, without sunshine nothing can be. And if we return the logger to his mother, then we have no sheet of paper either. The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up lonely of “non-paper” elements. And if we return these non-paper elements to their sources, then there can be no paper at all. Without non-paper elements, like mind, logger, sunshine and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it.

## Place as Panarchy and Ceremony

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I want to step outside of this scholarly process for a moment, to allow for some metacognitive insight. It behooves me to comment on how place influenced the writing of this dissertation. I intentionally chose the University of Victoria as a geographic location for my research on place as it is in the city that I have grown up in. Thus, everywhere I look I see layers of complex history and **(trans)formation** from my own experiences and the historical and spiritual fabric of Victoria's pre- and post-colonial times. One such place, Uplands Park, known in SENĆOŦEN, the language of the WSÁNEĆ peoples as part of SNAKE (pronounced Snaw-kay), is a quiet sanctuary of old-growth Garry Oak trees amidst a very wealthy suburb. This place provided me a necessary grounding space while going through this journey. It represented a sense of solace when I was 12-14 years old. It was a place that I visited with friends on my bike to explore the ocean-side, the bluff exposed bedrock, and purple camas fields. It was in this park that I found solace and also a sense of wonder that is mostly indescribable. The best I can do is to describe it as a heart ache that fills my heart when I see and connect with the unusual ecological systems that are so full of diversity and integrity. I returned here frequently for motivation and found a place in the deep interior of the park to connect with this personal and spiritual history. While I lay there looking at the mosses, lichens, arthropods, and grasses, bursting with greenness and activity, I thought about systems, scale, time, cycles, and interactions. These components are in a constant symphony, sometimes in tune with each other and sometimes not. That our bodies have the biophysical and social architecture to connect with these components is truly a gift worth celebrating. And in returning to these places we are enacting personal and community ceremonies,

something that has been going on for humans since the emergence of our genus, *Homo*, I would guess.



3

## The authentic voice and researching place

*When we drop fear, we can draw nearer to people, we can draw nearer to the earth, we can draw nearer to all the heavenly creatures that surround us.*

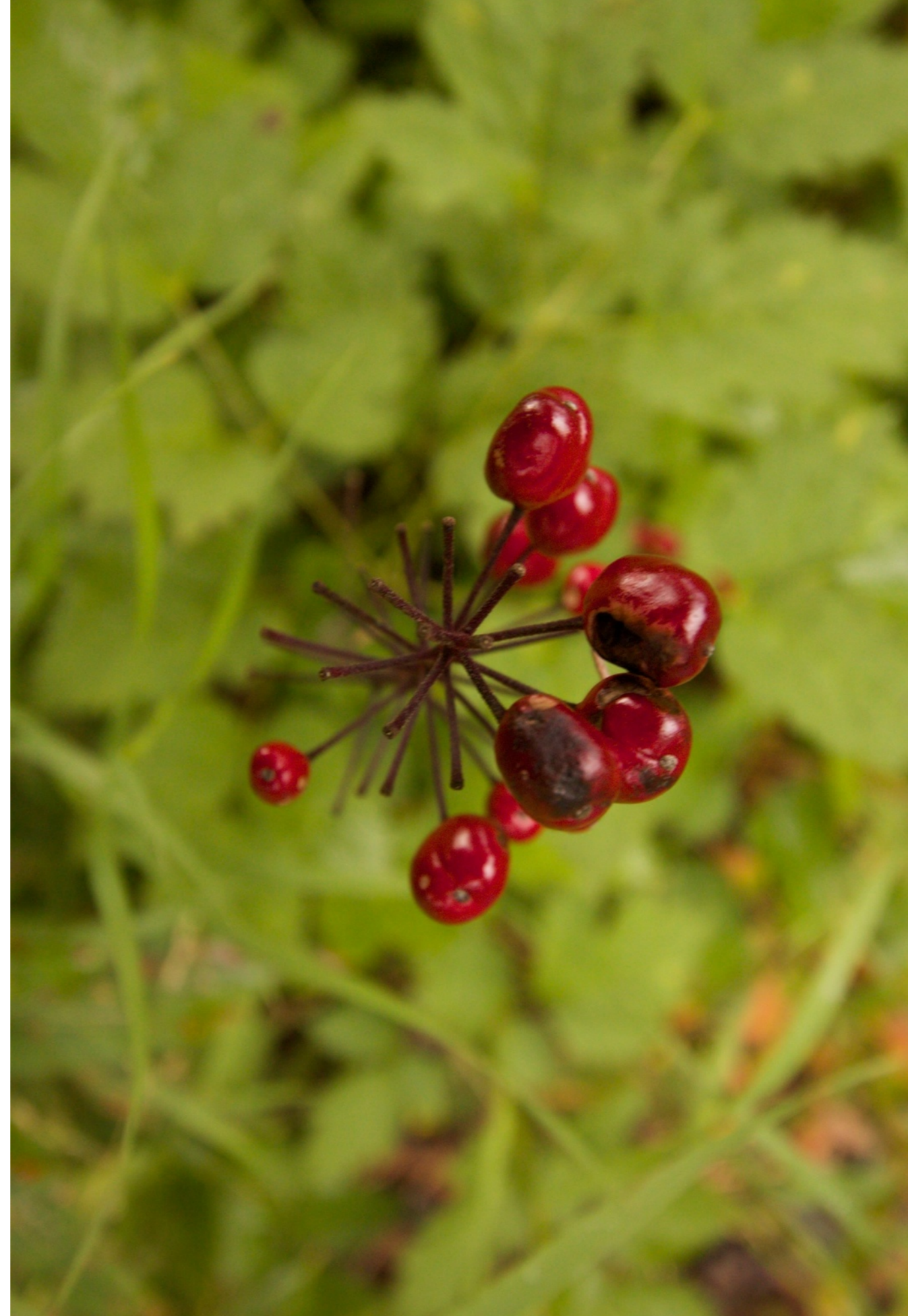
(Hooks, 2000, p. 213)

Iona Campagnolo in front of the institute she helped create as UNBC Chancellor - Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a Institute

## Overview of this research

This chapter presents an overview of my research, a discussion of the conceptual frameworks that forms its boundaries, a review of methodology in the qualitative research of place-connection, and my chosen methods for the dissertation.

Researching the influence of place on human identity prompted me to use participatory qualitative methodologies that allowed an integrated lens of emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and ecological views within an eco-sociological theoretical framework (Berkes et al., 2003; J. Chambers, 2009; Stanger, 2011b). I believe that participatory action research, engaged my participants as



collaborators enabling a relational accountability such that I integrated **panarchy** theory and **Indigenist** approaches into this study.

This research was conducted over three stages ([Interactive 3.1](#)). The

first stage of my work consisted of recruitment, travel to transformative places, and interviews. To recruit my participants I used a criterion-based selection process (Cohen et al., 2005), particularly unique-case sampling where participants were selected by having an attribute or characteristic that set that person apart from others. I also wanted my participants to represent some of the diversity of North American human communities. This diversity manifested through one or several of the following identifiers: **Indigenous** Elders, Spanish/French/Asian language speakers, youth, seniors, professionals, and public servants from across many geographical locations. In the summer of 2013, I identified four **exemplary**

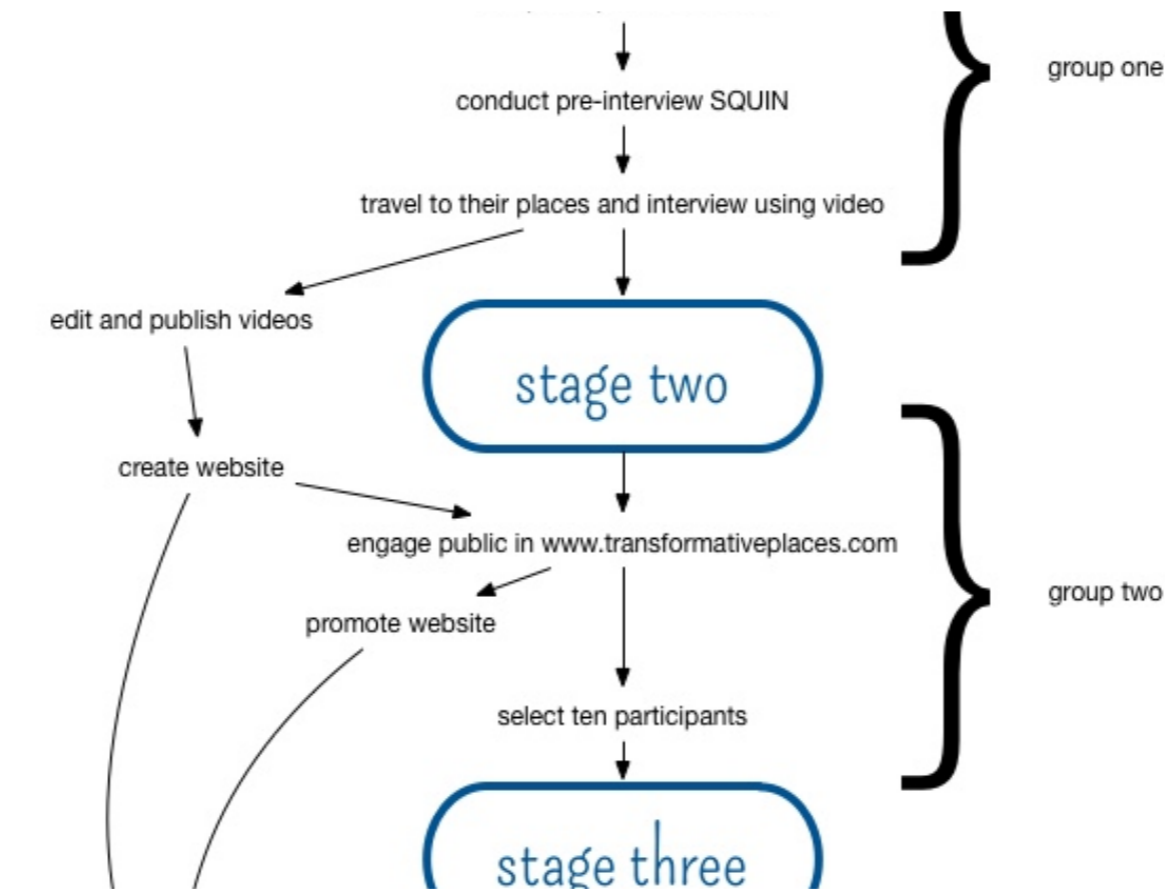
individuals and interviewed them in their childhood or adolescent transformative places. Using my personal contacts, I chose six potential participants. Four of those participants were willing to engage in my research. These included Tsartlip Elder and Cowichan Sweater knitter, May Sam; National Geographic Explorer-In-Residence, Dr. Wade Davis (with contributions from his wife Gail Percy); Her Honour, the former Lieutenant Governor for British

Columbia, Iona Campagnolo; and Hua Foundation co-founder, Claudia Li. All of these participants matched the criteria of being “**exemplary**” and represented some of the diversity of citizens in North America.

I contacted each of my participants and arranged the logistics of where the interviews were going to be held. I then conducted a preliminary Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) Interview (Wengraf, 2001) with each participant with the intention of exploring the memories, feelings, and ideas that were elicited when considering their childhood and adolescent places (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). These interviews usually occurred near their important place - but not in the place itself. At the end of this interview, each participant helped explore potential activities for returning to his or her childhood and adolescent place. We then travelled to their selected place

and proceeded to engage in their suggested activities and then conducted an open-ended discussion. The main intention of this discussion was to ask them to recount and revisit the learning experiences that helped them form their identity and the transformation that occurred in that place. Since each visit and participant experience was distinctive, I used a semi-structured interview tool that let the

INTERACTIVE 3.1 Stages of this research



pinch to expand

activities, structure, and discussion develop organically. Each visit, interview, and discussion was filmed in high quality format. This multi-media technique helped capture the sensory experience of visiting childhood and adolescent places, which I believe is not sufficiently described through text-based representation alone (Cohen et al., 2005).

The second stage of this research invited and encouraged online interaction from the public. With media and web design, the interview footage of the key participants in stage one was edited and presented at [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com). This site features each of the key participants and invited interaction from the public by asking them to submit stories inspired by their own childhood and adolescent places through video, photography, art, and written-word. The intention of this site goes beyond this research study. It is designed to celebrate human connection to **nature** by inspiring people of all ages to revisit their (trans)formative places, creatively capture their experiences, and share their stories in response to the first participants' stories. The data collected from the public input helped explore a wider view of how humans are interacting with childhood and adolescent places. Ten participants were selected from this secondary group with the intention of helping crystalize the earlier findings (Richardson, 2010). These ten were selected by looking for participants who met the research criteria of having places that were outside and who shared resonant stories about their (trans)formative places.

In stage three I analyzed each of the **exemplary** citizens' interviews, and ten of the public interactive stories, using a phenomenological analysis approach, where theories were generated directly from the data (Hycner, 1985). By listening and watching the films directly without manipulating language, I derived units of meaning relevant to

the research questions and reflective of my conceptual frameworks of **endogenous, indigenous, and complexity theory** (Rose, 2006). I also asked the stage one participants to help give feedback on these units of meaning through participatory analysis methods. This was conducted through a follow-up interview based on a SQUIN. By returning to the original interviewees, this research strived to be a transparent and participatory experience that authentically engaged my participants. Below I explore the conceptual frameworks, and describe each stage more fully.



filming with Wade and Gail, Ealue Lake

## Conceptual frameworks and context

This research is situated in a hybridized methodological framework amongst **Indigenist**, participatory, phenomenological, and eco-sociological theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Hycner, 1985; Krasny et al., 2010; Smith, 2005). Using **panarchy** theory as an overall lens of transformation, I structured this research through active and empowering participation for the interaction, celebration, and advocacy of important places. Below I describe how each framework contributes to the complex hybrid, with particular focus on the conceptual aspects that underpin each of them as they relate to place research.

First, however, I want to contextualize research in this field as it relates to methodology. The catalytic research that focuses on ecological

identity development and transformational research span a wide set of social sciences methodologies, from auto-ethnographies to quantitative survey-based methods (Burke & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2010; Lewicka, 2011). Ecological identity development and its research surround a complexity of values, beliefs, conceptual frameworks, and worldviews (Thomashow, 1995). I choose to interpret much of this research through eco-sociological and panarchical frameworks where ecological identity transformation is seen as a holarchical, scalar, temporal, cyclical, and cross-scalar dependent synthesis (Stanger & Tanaka, 2013; Stanger, Tanaka, Starr, & Tse, 2013; Stanger, 2011b). This is exemplified by the methodological processes transforming through

themselves over time, similar to that of an ecological system, referred to as **panarchy** (Gunderson & Holling, 2002).

Often couched in auto-ethnography, metacognition, or behavioural observation, identity development research can be situated in the psychological and cognitive landscapes of social sciences (Jaya, 2011; Scott, 2010). These typically consider the cultural and social environments of a participant, where identity development is seen to be influenced by the encompassing societal interactions. However, many researchers have started to extend beyond this limited scope to explore the influence of environmental factors. “More recently, theorists have attempted to explain the ways in which individual and environmental factors mutually influence each other throughout development and across contexts” (Jensen, 2011, p. 162). This movement towards including environmental factors is in recognition of a much more panarchical approach to developmental research arising from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Socio-Ecological Models and Lerner and Castellino’s (2002) Developmental Systems Theory (DST). Both of these theories use a systems-thinking approach to exploring the complexities of human development. Often practiced as an analysis of the richness and diversity of influential factors on development, research with socio-ecological models and DST, can be said to be in its infancy (Kyburzgraber, Hofer, & Wolfensberger, 2006; McKenzie, 2004; P. Morgan, 2010; Saj, Martinson, Chapman, & Sicotte, 2007). Some of this research explores the role of place, connecting behaviours to early experience in **nature**.

A natural bridge from the eco-psychology and DST methods in place-based research to ecological identity development is described by Morgan (2010): “A pattern of positively affected experiences of place in childhood are generalised into an unconscious internal working model

of place which manifests subjectively as a long-term positively affected bond to place known as place attachment” (p. 11). Except for the cross-pollination of **place-attachment** and ecological identity research done by Chawla (2003), Charlton (2011), Morgan (2010), Sobel (1993), Spencer (2005), and Wason-Ellam (2010), little work has focused on how place acts as a teacher through the processes of **place-attachment**. In the cases of ecological identity development research on adults, much of the methodologies revolve around a Levinasian and Buberian interpretation of the ‘Other’ as a referential recognition of other-than-ourselves or other-than-human worldviews (Atterton, Calarco, & Friedman, 2004; Scott, 2010). My research on place and ecological identity development is situated within a psycho-social stance, where I use panarchy and socio-ecological theory to help describe processes of connection and relationships.

Some of my research can be described through **place-attachment theory**. Morgan’s research represents a rare memory-based interview process of exploring **place-attachment** of adults to their favourite childhood places. His questions attempted to draw on the specific memories of his participants from places where they grew up:

*The study uses qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews of adults to look for indications of a process of internalisation and generalisation of positively affected childhood place experiences into internal working models of childhood place relationships which manifest consciously as place attachment. It is argued that qualitative accounts of subjective adult remembrance of childhood place experiences will contain common themes reflecting the influence of internal working models of childhood place experience on explicit memory. (P. Morgan, 2010, p. 15)*

Morgan's reliance on memory exhibits a complex process of interpretation and psychological methods involving seven interviewees. He approaches analysis through a phenomenological method by looking for major themes that arise from the transcribed interview data noting five common themes: love, grief, pleasure, security, and identity. He highlights the importance of identity development as a process of human development from early childhood experiences that "give rise to long-term affective bonds and contribute to adult identity" (p. 21).

Also in 2010, an important contribution was made to the research around **place-attachment** that outlined a tripartite model that helped describe the current researchers' use of the theory (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). With acknowledgment of the diversity of its use in human and cultural geography, refugee, diaspora research, and urban and parks planning, the model illustrates the concept with person, psychological process, and place ([Interactive 3.2](#)).

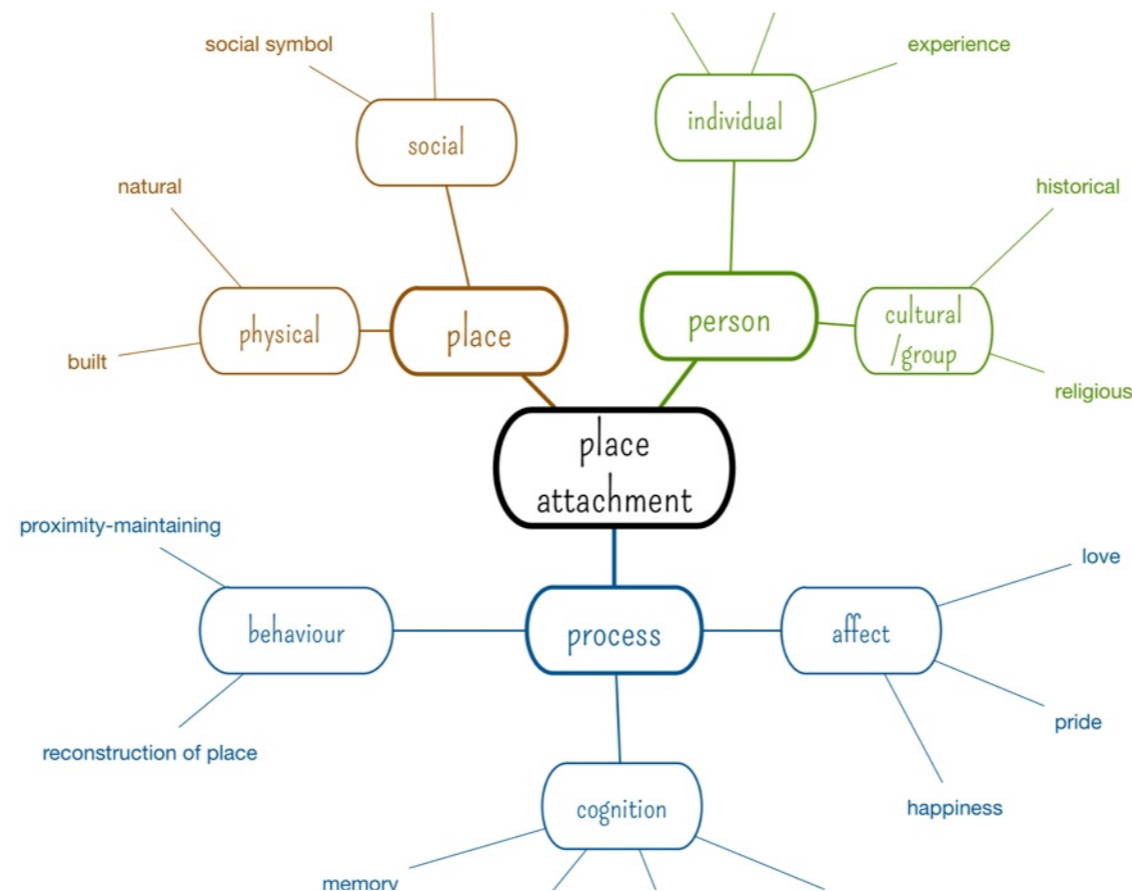
The personal dimension of **place-attachment** describes the individual and group levels of attachment. Individual attachment utilizes research areas that comprise of personal memories, sense of self, and meaning

making. Scannell and Gifford report that "although other theorists argue that place characteristics are integral in the construction of place meaning, the argument that individual experiences may form the basis for the attachment is convincing." (p. 2).

The group level is formed by collective understandings and meaning-making of place, when communities might become attached to areas where they practice and preserve cultural activities. Within this context, religion has played a deep role in identifying sacred and revered sites like Mecca or Jerusalem, churches or holy places in **nature**. These religious connections to place might also be individual, where spiritual experiences occur in a specific place, enabling a cherished or sacred relationship (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993).

The psychological process dimension helps describe how individuals and groups relate and interact with places. Within this dimension there are three definitional aspects: behaviour, cognition, and affect. The behaviour aspect of place attachment describes the actions that are expressed in relation to places. This includes looking at how people respond to homesickness, length of residence in one place, and maintenance of

**INTERACTIVE 3.2** The tripartite model of place attachment (adapted from Scannell & Gifford, 2010)



proximity to any one place. It also describes how meaning is created by the act of leaving one place, so that there is a dialectical relationship back to the place. Scannell and Gifford also report on the reconstruction of place, despite being forced to move because of disasters, or reclaiming a site that has been damaged. These reconstructions can sometimes be territorial, though **place-attachment** does not usually describe the aggressive realms of war or colonialism. Rather, “place attachment behaviours include pilgrimages, social support, and place restoration.” (p. 4)

The cognitive aspect of how people connect to place includes “the memories, beliefs, meaning, and knowledge that individuals associate with their central setting” (p. 3) Memory of places can be described as symbolic communities, where the connection is represented by images of the past. Using the term schema (discussed earlier within the context of Piaget) individuals can create a set of beliefs and knowledge about place and its relationship to self. Related to ecological identity, a further elucidation of the cognitive aspect of this research is the term place-identity, which describes the socialization of self through place.

*In general, individuals may connect to a place in the sense that it comes to represent who they are. Connections to place may be cognitive, and can sometimes be incorporated, at the most personal level, into one’s self definition. (p. 3)*

The affective or emotional aspect of the cognitive process is also present in the research around place-connection. This realm represents the emotional bonds that individuals create with places. It is exhibited both in forms of pride and love of place, as well as longing and sadness when individuals are forced to leave a sacred or loved place. Further to this, hatred and ambivalence show up in relation to

places, where negative experiences might have occurred. Yet place theory and **place-attachment** tends to be defined in positive terms.

Finally, **place-attachment** refers to the dimension of the place itself. Two levels are usually used to describe this place-dimension: social and physical. Within this realm, scale plays a large factor. The smaller the scale (larger the area), the fewer people are socially and physically attached to that place. The social aspect of **place-attachment** revolves around the relational and community feel of places. As humans, we tend to cluster together with familiar cultural, societal, and religious groups. This coupled with longer residence increasing social ties, leads to predictable local attitudes and sentiments.

Coupled with the social aspects of connecting to place are the physical characteristics of the place itself. Stedman (2003) suggested that individuals do not become attached to physical features, but to the meanings that are derived from the presences of these features in a place. Stedman’s view might move this theory to a place of over-intellectualization, where meaning-making trumps the visceral relationality of places and humans.

## Other forms of knowing: Indigenist research paradigm

One of the most stimulating areas of research methodology that explores the role of place, ecological identity, and **(trans)formation** exists in **Indigenous** research paradigms (Smith, 2005; S. Wilson, 2009). Research in this area typically involves ethnographic accounts and oral history that refer to the overlapping concepts of **Indigenous** specificity (e.g. cultural land-practices related to specific places) and universality (e.g. similar cultural relationships and respect of land among different **Indigenous** peoples) (Aluli-Meyer, 2008). That is, the

individual diversity of a specific tribes' connection to place through cultural and spiritual practices can also be described through some universal **Indigenous** epistemologies. Aluli-Meyer suggests that this is a form of coherent consciousness that is practiced amongst the worlds' **Indigenous** cultures who continue to practice their traditional knowledge and ceremonies.

Too often, academic research is lured by the reductionist, obsessively objective, and hands-off practices that reinforce limited views which continue to discount research as a function of an ecological, spiritual, emotional, and ceremonial approach (Cawthorne, 2001; Mueller Worster, 2006; S. Wilson, 2009). The attempts to remove our own bias as researchers, or even the attempts to acknowledge bias with no further exploration, confounds the arguments of validity and reliability that often plague theoretical frameworks and methodology (Chenail, 2011; Finlay, 2002; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Some forget that we are very much apart of the research process, and that our biases are highly influential and binding components of our work. As a partial reaction to these limitations, traction has been gained in the auto-ethnographic, narrative, and performative approaches of social sciences research (Pollack, 1998; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Even these invitations for more evocative and (trans)forming methods of research are based in a privileged dialogue, amongst privileged ways of knowing in highly jargon-oriented communities (Hurren, 2008; Lotz-Sisitka, 2009).

How might an **Indigenist** approach allow for the presence of repair, support, inclusion, and compassionate advocacy within our research communities? Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2005) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* helps orient researchers towards a more critical theory and celebratory approach,

drawing upon spiritually-based, place-based, land-based, and relationship-based wisdoms. "Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices" (p. 143). As described in the project-specific examples in her book, Smith outlines the role of connection to spirit, place, land, and relationship:

*Many Indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole... Connecting also involves connecting people to their traditional lands through the restoration of specific rituals and practices... Connecting is related to issues of identity and place, to spiritual relationships and community wellbeing... Researchers, policy makers, educators, and social service providers who work with or whose work impacts on Indigenous communities need to have a critical conscience about ensuring that their activities connect in humanizing ways with Indigenous communities. (Smith, 2005, pp. 148-149)*

These rituals and practices of place and land are not lost on non-Indigenous researchers, and can be transliterated as functional aspects to a research design, where 'data' arises from intuitive and visceral ways of knowing, embracing a multi-modal approach to understanding the human connection to place, and the (trans)formational aspects of those connections (Asfeldt et al., 2009; Becker, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; E. O. Wilson, 1984).

Lowan (2009), a non-Indigenous researcher working with an **Indigenous** community, comments on his approach to research in Outward Bound Canada's Giwaykiwin program for Aboriginal youth:

*As a qualitative methodology, collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2000) challenges the researcher to go beyond simple member checking—merely verifying findings with the research participants. In collaborative ethnography, the researcher and research participants collaborate to discuss the meanings of the findings. Research participants are also given the opportunity to participate in the production of the final product in such a way that their voices emerge more authentically in the text. (p. 44)*

Later in Lowan's article he admits to falling partly into the trap of a standardized ethnographic-audio-based methodology with full text transcriptions. He also comments on the challenges of collaboration requiring "dedication and extra work from the participants and myself" (p. 54). This statement makes me worry about the value of text transcription as a re-processing of interviews, especially when faced with research that is so tied to a unique experience of place and the actions in that place. My framework aimed to find others ways of representing this experience, where there is little disruption to the 'raw data' such that it misrepresents or manipulates the experience. This is especially important in research pertaining to working with **Indigenous** communities, where the very act of much research has been historically damaging and dominating (Lassiter, 2000). A decolonizing method in **Indigenous** research could be the very act of practicing ceremony, witnessing through spirituality, collecting medicinal plants, sharing teachings, and traveling through place and space. Through Shawn Wilson's (2007) call to action of all researchers adopting an **Indigenist** framework for their research, my inquiry and actions might be able to act as an ally rather than a colonizer in exploring the sensitive aspects of place and human connections.

## Participatory video and phenomenological research methodologies

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Video has been successfully used within ethnographic research for many years. Margaret Mead referred to the power of filming 'subjects' in her early anthropological work in the mid 20th century as an ethnographic film method to 'see what really happens'. Video footage like Mead's is said to provide insights into much deeper constructs of behaviour, relationships, cultural nuances, and political complexities (Derry et al., 2010). Yet, how can researchers interpret this rich mixture of data through video footage alone? At the same time as being valuable, ethnographic film has some major issues, which is evident in the fact that "the simplest human events unfold in a tangle of attendant activities, emotions, motivations, responses and thoughts" (Weinberger, 1994, p. 12). The ethnographic film technique has traditionally practiced hierarchical, masculine, or colonial overtones, calling into question the ethics, validity, and reliability of the research in general (Kindon, 2003). With my interest in approaching research through an eco-sociological and **panarchy** framework, I agree with Kindon's reorientation of video-based research as 'looking nearby' rather than 'looking at' an 'other's' life experience and practice. As an example of this, Kindon adapts a quote from a post-colonial filmmaker, Trinh Minh-ha, who argued that researchers are subject to 'speaking for' rather than 'speaking nearby' less powerful others in their research:

*...a looking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it was distant from the viewing subject or absent from the viewing place. A looking that reflects on itself and comes very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A looking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible*

*moments of transition ... an attitude in life, away of positioning oneself in relation to the world. (Kindon, 2003, p. 149 adapted from Minh-ha & Chen, 1992)*

When research methodologies revolve around reducing impact on the participants in order to connect with them in a compassionate approach; I see a much gentler, and perhaps more useful investigation into the stories, insights, and behaviour of an experience. A participatory video project engages the researcher as a facilitator and connector who presents tools, skills, and ideas. The research also may act as a generous listener, compassionate catalyst, and synergistic inquirer (C.M. Herr, 2011; Lunch & Lunch, 2006; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). Creating spaces where participants are empowered to 'tell their own story' through their own voice helps manifest connections to the overall intent of this research. I believe that this approach resonates with the respect that **Indigenous** cultures give to story and story-tellers. That the story derives from the land helping animate our connection with it, speaks to the complexity in which humans relate to the world. Therefore, I focused on the authentic voice of each participant as a guide to understanding their relation to place (Aluli-Meyer, 2008; Guignon, 2008). This means I was looking for my participants to go beyond merely reacting to situations; they were also asked to pose reflexive and capacity-enhancing concepts as collaborators in this work (K. Herr & Anderson, 2005). A participatory video methodology is housed within a much broader spectrum of participatory action research, often used with communities and individuals as collaborators (M. L. White, 2009; S. A. White, 2003).

Video provides a number of factors that are otherwise unavailable through the common audio-recording and transcription model of ethnographic interview and participatory research. Transcriptions from

audio-based interviews do not offer a complete picture of the research events, such as the list below (adapted from Cohen et al., 2005):

- *the tone of voice of the speaker(s) (e.g. harsh, kindly, encouraging);*
- *the inflection of the voice (e.g. rising or falling, a question or a statement, a cadence or a pause, a summarizing or exploratory tone, opening or closing a line of inquiry);*
- *emphases placed by the speaker;*
- *pauses (long or short) and silences (long or short);*
- *interruptions;*
- *the mood of the speaker(s) (e.g. excited, angry, resigned, bored, enthusiastic, committed, happy, grudging);*
- *the speed of the talk (fast to slow, hurried or unhurried, hesitant to confident);*
- *how many people were speaking simultaneously;*
- *whether a speaker was speaking continuously or in short phrases;*
- *who is speaking to whom;*
- *indecipherable speech; and*
- *any physical events that occur, including types of movement and actions, gestures, crying, laughing, or playing.*

When tied to phenomenological methodology, where one studies a direct experience through a conscious and meaning-bestowing

approach, video-based techniques can be immensely revealing (Cohen et al., 2005). Examining participants responses and actions through a free-association- and actions- based approach engages the participants and researchers in a method that can lead to representations of meaning that are sometimes difficult to discern. Wendy Hollway (2009) suggested that in order to achieve researchable communication with participants, one must consider the subjectivity of the experience and engage in compassionate listening. By acknowledging the complexity of time, space, embodiment of the activities, objectivity, validity, and ethics, phenomenological methods to research tend to be complex in their undertaking. Yet, by focusing on a communicated experience for its “vivacity, which means its capacity to elicit another person’s compassion,” (p. 472) rich and complex meanings may be derived.

The challenge with free-association lies in the way in which researchers examine how participants interact with meaning as a consequence of the phenomena being studied. We are unable to get inside our participants’ heads, and thus have to interpret their meaning through discourse, non-verbal communication, and largely a “differentiation of intersubjective capabilities” (Wagner, 1984, p. 194). This phrase can be explained as the lack of ability for one person to comprehensively understand another’s experiences or capabilities. Rather, focussing on the compassionate experience as Hollway suggests, allows us to ‘feel with’ that person.

## From Video to Online

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A major shortcoming of colonial research methodologies are their privileged involvement and recursive audience. That scholarly

research mostly exists within the siloed and disciplined concentric circles of academic communities points to its limitations as a restrictive and exclusive space (M. L. White, 2009). Research is almost entirely embedded in jargon-specific literary journals, where even participatory research that is supposed to catalyze action in communities has limited distribution (Sommer, 2009). This is not to say that there is little value in the activity of peer-review, connections among researchers, and clearly-stated findings, however, these activities are often celebrated as an end goal, when they are really means to new ways of thinking and being.

What is increasingly apparent in the current technological revolution is that the academic world is struggling to keep up with dissemination techniques utilized by the public, policy-makers, community activists, and politicians (Carlsson, Brunelli, & Mezei, 2010). Rathi and Given (2010), suggest that the web itself can be the research platform and dissemination tool:

*In the Research 2.0 world, then, all research stages would be executed within the web in a participatory environment. Web tools such as wikis, blogs, forums, multimedia applications and RSS feeds would help the team to conduct the study in the Web. (p. 4)*

Rathi and Given go on to argue that this process of working with online communities allows for an ongoing and adaptive methodology where ‘perpetual data’ contributes to a ‘research mashup’ model from more than a single device including video, audio, text, tweets, updates, likes, Apps, and other multimedia miscellany. These techniques not only become the research and data collection, but the engagement and dissemination process, ensuring longevity and meaningfulness for participants, readers, viewers, players, and researchers. The ubiquity

of technology across the globe (including that of developing nations, such as mobile phones) has changed the face of dissemination. This is critical when considering the nature of place-based research and ecological identity development that acts as a pre-cursor to activism, engagement, and connection to a more sustainable paradigmatic shift for human beings (Branagan, 2005; P. Morgan, 2010; Partridge, 2008). Being outside in places is paradoxical to the very notion of being online. However, with the increasing mobility of technology we can manipulate the way we interact with the world so that technology is used as tools for transformation rather than devices for distraction.

## Impact and Hawthorne/Observer effect in video-based research

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The very act of human-based research is an intervention in a person's normal life. These interventions often occur through the design of the research methods as an invasion of 'normal' routines (Robson, 2011). Impacts from interviews, video recording, or altering the normal setting of a participant, point to some of the ethical quandaries that researchers face when attempting to collect data. First, intervention caused by research is usually scrutinized through an ethical review, which attempts to limit the negative impacts of research on the participants, but cannot predict all potential outcomes. For instance, research involving personal and emotional subject matters, can trigger complex reactions from participants, eliciting the need for support beyond the scope or skills of a researcher. Second, the validity and reliability of research intervention can be reduced due to the observer effect, where participants alter their normal behaviour, consciously or not, which influences the outcomes of the study. As pointed out in the

section above with the troublesome aspects of Mead's ethnographic film work, the presence of recording equipment in general has limitations on an interview process (Jayasinhji, 1998). Sometimes referred to as the Hawthorne effect, video research is often criticized for being invasive (S. M. Miller, 1952). Invasion can be partially alleviated through the participatory video technique, where participants are partially in control of the research direction (Monahan & Fisher, 2010; S. A. White, 2003). Perhaps more importantly, this research is intentionally (trans)formative in **nature**, situating the researcher as both an educator and a participant such that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the greater good (Gadamer, 1975).



Ealue Lake, British Columbia

## Research Methods and Data Collection

As indicated above, this research was conducted in three stages. As a recap, stage one consisted of SQUIN interviews followed by site-visits to the participant-selected childhood and adolescent **outdoor places**. Stage two consisted of soliciting the North American public to submit stories, films, artwork, and music inspired by their (trans)formative places online at [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com). Finally, in stage three, I analyzed the data by considering the phenomenological meanings that were presented by the two data sets. I then worked in collaboration with the key participants to verify and ground-truth my memes. Below are the details that occurred within each of the stages:

### Stage 1: Exemplary Citizens - Site Visits

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#### Recruitment

Overall, six participants were invited to participate in this research using the criterion-based approach, with the criteria being that they were **'exemplary.'** I have chosen this term specifically to avoid an exclusivity of famous participants. I define **exemplary** as leaders who are known and distinguished within the context of their own community, be that a First Nation, youth council, political party, TV audience, or business. I limited my key participants to four due to

constraints of time and finances. This allowed me also to spend more time with each of them which helped create a sense of collaboration. By choosing **exemplary** individuals, I was able to appeal to a wider audience for the second stage of this research, thus increasing my likelihood of a larger more representative data set from which to choose a sub-sample. These four individuals represented some of the diversities of the public, without the intention of their presence as being **token** or for the purpose of speaking on behalf of their representative community. Rather, I hoped that the participation of these four collaborators would catalyze a larger movement of public participants in this process through a sense of inclusive representation. The intention of this research is to have a life beyond its use in this research project.

Recruitment was conducted as a snowball approach through email recruitment within my own personal and professional networks. First, I developed a list of famous, well-celebrated, or well-known people. I then looked for personal connections that might have been able to introduce me to them. Potential candidates' email addresses were also obtained through publicly available contact forms or agents. These candidates were emailed an invitation letter ([Appendix A](#)). Once they agreed to participate in the research, I also asked them to sign the letter of informed consent, which I have stored in my home office ([Appendix B](#)). I did not feel that these recruits would feel obliged to participate as they were not connected to me personally.

I successfully recruited the Elder May Sam, Dr. Wade Davis (and Gail Percy), Her Honour Iona Campagnolo, and Claudia Li ([Table 3.1](#)). These individuals were introduced to me through personal connections.

## Research Site(s)

The four participants were individually asked to reflect on the SQUIN interview question ([Appendix C](#)) and then introduce me to an **outdoor**

childhood or adolescent place that they felt transformed them in some way. These remembered places had to meet all or some of the following criteria:

1. be outside a building or structure;
2. have not been visited in the past ten years;
3. contributed to personal growth, play, or solace over some

component of their childhood and adolescent years (approx.. 4 to 20 years old) ; and/or

4. be public or near or adjacent to a publicly-owned space

I also acknowledged to the participants that these places might have been built-over, altered, or damaged so that they do not meet the above criteria currently. The critical aspect of this list is that the place had met this criteria during their childhood and adolescent experiences.

**TABLE 3.1** The four exemplary participants and selected distinctions

Title, Name	Selected Distinctions
Tsartlip Elder, May Sam	First Nations Elder, Celebrated Cowichan Sweater Knitter, Educator
Hua Foundation Co-founder, Claudia Li	Top 30 under 30 - Explore Magazine, Sharktruth.org founder
National Geographic Explorer-In-Residence, Dr. Wade Davis (with his wife Gail Percy)	Acclaimed Author, Award-winning Anthropologist, and Professor
Former Lieutenant Governor BC, Iona Campagnolo	Politician, Radio-Host, and Member of the Order of Canada

## Participation

I used an initial interview through the SQUIN approach ([Appendix C](#)) with the question:

*Can you please share a story from a significant outdoor place in your childhood or adolescence? Please start wherever you like and say whatever comes to mind. Take the time you need, I'll listen first and won't interrupt you.*

Then, using the tenets of a participatory methodology and **Indigenist** paradigms, I asked my participants to introduce me to their childhood and adolescent place in a manner that seemed most appropriate to them. This manifested through a relational approach to the research, such that questions of environmental, community, and self were addressed and respected through appropriate ceremony, ritual, or intention. As long as the larger question of my research were kept in mind ([Appendix D](#)), we let the activities arise naturally during the visit to the site.

## Data Collection

Videographers filmed the SQUIN interviews as well as each of the childhood and adolescent place visits. This resulted in videos that documented the experience as well as gave the participant the ability to direct what activities were being filmed. Due to the phenomenological approach, participants were interviewed through free dialogue.

## Video and website editing

I developed the website [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com) using the HTML5 editor (Tumult Hype) as a way to tell the four participants stories of returning to their places. Each participant is introduced and some description of our time together was provided. There are also photos and other artifacts represented within each page. I also edited and produced 13 videos from the visits using Final Cut Pro. The videos appear as embedded interactive elements within each page of the website.

I chose to edit the videos with as few transitions as possible as a way to maintain the story-telling quality of the participants' voices. This means that each film was given a title that related to the place it was being filmed and name identifiers. It also used sound entirely derived from the scenes, excepting the intro and outro music, which was supplied with an creative commons copyright agreement.

The filming technique kept me out of the frame, and without a mic. The point of the films was to not hear my questions, which were aimed at enabling the participant, but to hear and see the participant interacting in that place. Where knowledge of the preceding question is necessary, a interstitial slide has been edited into the video to provide clarity. The videos range from 5 minutes to 25 minutes. They are hosted on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). The remainder of the site is hosted on my personal web server space through a Canadian company called myhosting.com.

## Stage Two: Public Participation

The website has many interactive components that encourage public participation to tell their stories and respond to the original four participants. There are discussion spaces, through a widget called DISQUS that exists at the bottom of each of the participants' pages. In these discussion spaces, the public were encouraged to react to the films and stories.

I also created a collaborative map using Google online mapping technology, where participants were encouraged to "pin their place" by editing the map, placing a marker on their own (trans)formative places, and then adding meta-data such as videos, photos, written stories, or other expressions. They were encouraged to return to their places using the same methods as the four participants.

### Recruitment

Participants for this aspect of the research were solicited through social media and snowball recruitment strategy using an emailed invitational letter ([Appendix E](#)) (Cohen et al., 2005). I also asked five organizations to help promote the research, including National Geographic Society, The Canadian Wildlife Federation, Children and Nature Network, The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, and the University of Victoria. I paid for advertisements on Facebook, specifically targeting international English-speaking countries, such as India, Kenya, Australia, United Kingdom, and New Zealand ([Interactive 3.3](#)).

Ten of the participants that contributed to the collaborative map were selected by looking for examples that resonated with the original four participants. This means, I looked for rich descriptions of (trans)formative places, the relationships that people had to those

places, and any uploaded media. This quantity of data (four key participants and ten respondents) meets the standards of qualitative narrative data saturation (Bowen, 2008).

The website had a letter of consent that was linked from multiple

#### INTERACTIVE 3.3 Social media recruitment images



Facebook post asking for engagement

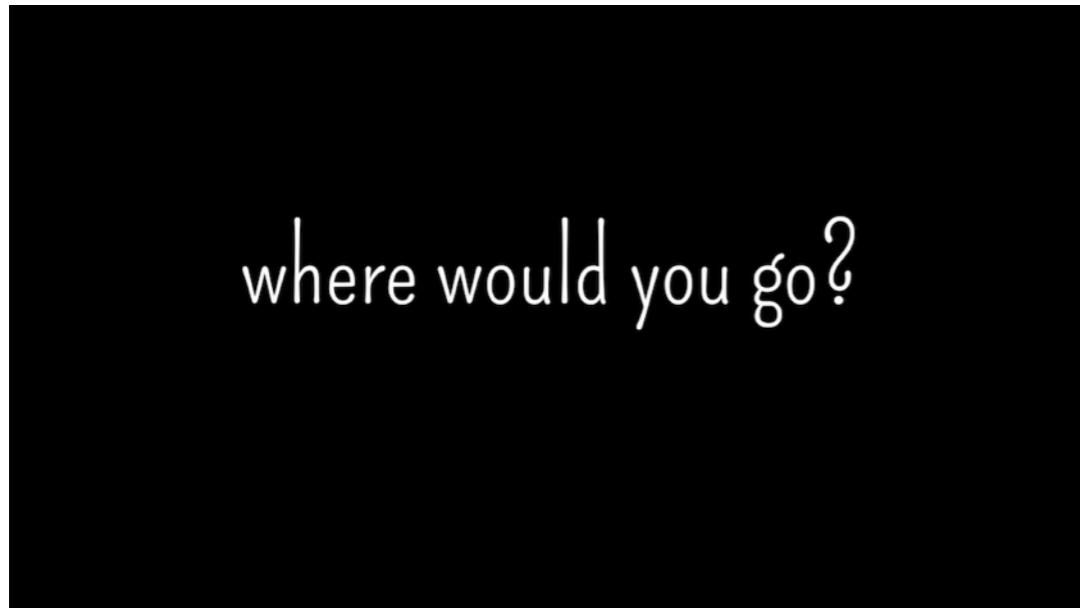
places ([Appendix F](#)).

The following Social Media sites were used for recruitment with daily updates, prompts, and stories about the research.

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Google+](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Youtube](#)

Participants were also invited to participate through the use of a preview film (1:02 mins long) ([Interactive 3.4](#)). This summarizes the work and invites the participants to visit the website.

### INTERACTIVE 3.4 (Re)placing ourselves in nature: (Trans)formative places preview



#### Research Site(s)

The public participants were asked, much like the original four **exemplary** participants, to comment on significant or (trans)formative **outdoor place** from their youth. These remembered places had to meet all or some of the following criteria:

1. be outside a building or structure;
2. have not been visited in the past ten years;
3. contributed to personal growth, play, or solace over some component of their childhood and adolescent years (approx.. 4 to 20 years old) ; and/or
4. be public or near or adjacent to a publicly-owned space

Again, these places might have been built-over, altered or damaged so that they do not meet the above criteria. The critical aspect of this list is that the place had met this criteria during their childhood and adolescent experiences.

#### Participation and Data Collection

These participants were asked to share stories about their own (trans)formative **outdoor place** in response to the original four participants. This could have been done by re-enacting the visiting of the place, similar to my participants, or by simply using memory, previous images, or video to tell the story. I asked them to share songs, writing, painting, or any activity in or about those places that connected to the underlying vision of this research – the role of these places over the course of their lives. These stories were shared on the “pin your place” section of the website

[www.transformativeplaces.com/pinyourplace.html](http://www.transformativeplaces.com/pinyourplace.html)). This URL takes participants to a page that has a Google World map with other participants’ pins and overlaid instructions on how to add their story to the map. In order to edit the map, users had to click on the button indicating EDIT THIS MAP. This button takes participants to the [\(Re\)placing ourselves in nature collaborative map](#).

#### Stage Three: Data Analysis through a hybrid of phenomenological analysis and participatory analysis

I adapted Hycner’s (1985) simple guidelines for using phenomenological analysis of interviews so that it weaved video-based data collection into his approach ([Table 3.2](#)).

TABLE 3.2 Adapted phenomenological analysis guidelines from Hycner (1985) (pp. 280-294)

Original Guidelines	Adapted Guidelines
1. Transcription	Video-based presentation of data with notes and some highlighted transcribed sections to ensure full representation of participants (Markle, West, & Rich, 2011; Wellard & McKenna, 2001)
2. Bracketing and Phenomenological Reduction	With acknowledgement of Hycner's post-modern interpretation of reductive research.
3. Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole	This is a critical step in my research. However, it included watching as well as listening.
4. Delineating units of general meaning	For these two, I point to Hollway (2009) that looks at the interiority of meaning. Rather than looking at words alone.
5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question	
6. Training independent judges to verify units of relevant meaning	I asked my editors Joy Beauchamp and UVic research team to review identified meanings.
7. Eliminating redundancies	not adapted
8. Clustering units of relevant meaning	At this point, I related the meanings to the three frameworks that I was working within, endogenous, indigenous, and complexity theory.
9. Determining themes from clusters of meaning	
10. Writing a summary of each individual interview	not adapted
11. Return to the participant with the summary and themes: Conducting a second interview.	This was conducted by asking the participants to review the units of meaning as well as participate in a SQUIN by email.
12. Modifying themes and summary	not adapted
13. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews	Re-present the found units of meaning as they relate to the three conceptual frameworks and the interviews.
14. Contextualization of themes	not adapted

Phenomenological video analysis allowed for a more authentic method for understanding the units and clusters of statements and actions that were relevant to the research questions. This meant that as I listened and watched the interviews I looked for units of general meaning throughout the interview by using verbatim language, actions, and non-verbal cues as indicators of meaning. I also reflected on these units of meaning as they related to the conceptual frameworks that this research is bounded in. That is, I looked for synergistic language that related to **endogenous** understandings, **indigenous** resonances, and **panarchy** theory.

Hollway (2009) has done much to help researchers understand the value of story, language, and looking beyond the words of individuals to psychoanalytically understand the meaning that show up in interviews. By using aspects of her free association narrative method and phenomenological methodology where researchers access “latent meaning through eliciting and focusing on the associations between ideas, as opposed to exclusively on words and word clusters” (p. 463), I engaged a compassionate approach to interviewing. This is something that Hollway calls “experience-near” research.

I then reviewed these general units of latent meaning to derive relevant units of meaning to this research collaborating with an independent researcher helping maintain validity and rigour. To do this, I asked professors at the University of Victoria, who were independent of my work but knew its content, to look at my units of meaning as they related to my footage. Finally, I reflected these units of meaning back to the participants through a follow up interview, and then weaved in a participatory research analysis into my work (McIntyre, 2007). A follow-up post-interview communication (by email) occurred as a way to enact this participatory research. This email used the SQUIN question: We

visited a significant place for you a little while ago. Tell me about that experience and any thoughts or actions you have had since that visit?

This was followed by reviewing the film(s) of their experience and my analysis of the research. I asked them to provide any potential insights that they might have had that were relevant to the study.

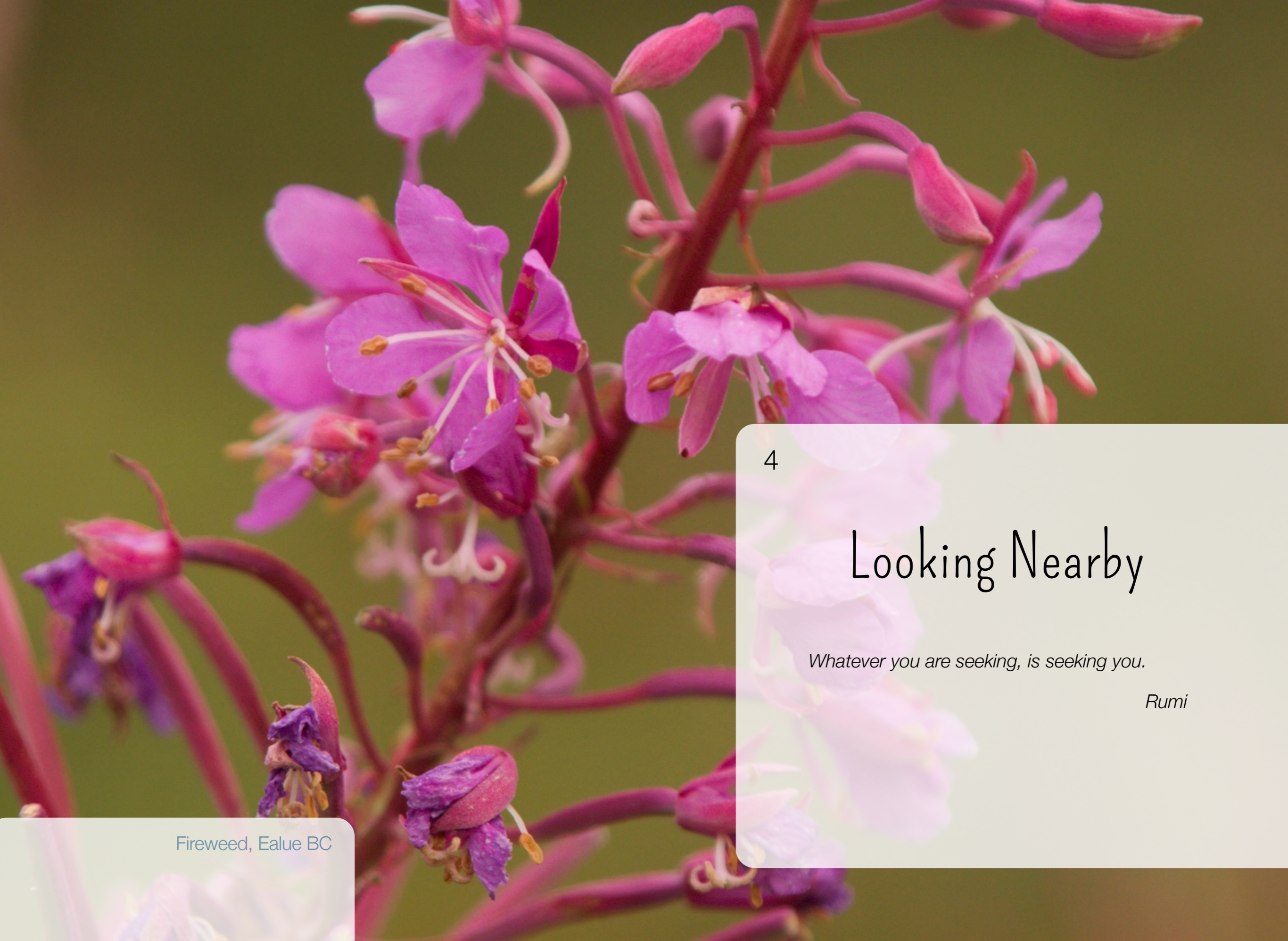
My intention was to build “an analytic story that has coherence” (Given, 2008) as opposed to a disconnected set of codified language within this analysis. In addition to the feedback from the SQUIN, I asked my participants to comment and connect to the research throughout the process of analysis, which increased its relevancy to them as well as its rigour as a being part of their inquiry (McIntyre, 2007; Petras & Porpora, 1993).

I believe that this analysis acted similarly to a ceremony of story-telling and re-storytelling such that it connects us relationally to the data as a living entity and something to be respected beyond the clinical approaches of traditional research. The challenge layed in maintaining the original participants’ stories. The reader will notice that methodology, data, and analysis fuse over the coming chapters, which was a result of mixing multiple methodologies and allowing for a flow of the intended research protocols. This engaged me in the act of reflexivity and metacognition throughout the process.

As a way to crystalize the responses of my four participants, I also analyzed the public responses through Hycner’s guidelines and relationships to **panarchy** theory. However, because of the short length of many of these submissions, units of meaning were limited.

By developing a website and iBook to disseminate results and discussion, I believe that I have pushed the edge of scholarly and participatory research dissemination and mobilisation. I will continue to

encourage the public to comment, critique, and share my results through my website as an ongoing element to my research beyond the scope of this dissertation.



4

## Looking Nearby

*Whatever you are seeking, is seeking you.*

*Rumi*

Fireweed, Ealue BC



My data collection took me on my own transformative journey across British Columbia, Canada to visit the transformative places of four well-known North Americans: May Sam, Dr. Wade Davis, Iona Campagnola, and Claudia Li. In the summer of 2013, I traveled with filmmakers, and a support person (my father-in-law, Darreld Beauchamp) to each of the interviews. The following pages provide summaries of the interviews with specific reference to interview locations using embedded google maps. It also presents the first distillation of the interview data through edited videos.

Approximately 100 hours of combined footage was edited down to 13 videos that range from five minutes to 20 minutes long. These videos are accompanied with photographs of the transformative places to create a visual and auditory storyline of each of the participants. Notice that the photographs that were taken in each of the participants' transformative places are used throughout this iBook.

Following these videos and interview summaries, I examined each participant interview videos using my [adapted Hycner's phenomenological analysis guidelines](#). Each research video can be watched directly in the iBook, and will automatically fill the window, or iPad. Specific excerpts of the video are referred to within the text by indicating a range of numbers (ex. 1:02 - 1:40 mins). Indicating time like this enables the reader to interact with the footage, and specifically get a sense of the experience of components of the interview. This technique is used to indicate notable non-verbal cues, point out emotional aspects within the interviewee's voice, or other nuances that would be lost in a direct transcription.

Using this video excerpt technique, I then identified units of meaning as they arose in the videos and described the salient notion, detailed its context, and also presented an excerpt to help the reader/viewer see, hear, and experience it more fully. After each unit of meaning is introduced, I then provide an exploration of its resonances with the three conceptual frameworks that are introduced at the beginning of this iBook: **endogenous** understanding, **indigenous** ontology, and **complexity theory**.

## From meaning to meme-ing

I want to take a moment to explore some of the limitations of this process as I describe it more fully. The units of meaning were derived with as much bracketing (the process of suspending pre-formed conclusions) as I could realistically muster. That is, I tried to limit myself from identifying conclusive concepts or attaching personal theories during the research collection itself. This attempt at bracketing was complicated by a number of factors; most of which relate to the participatory aspect of this research. I asked my participants to help drive the research and gave them freedom to share what they wanted, go where they wanted, and do what they wanted. Yet, this indicates that I was not part of the logistical discussions, and therefore part of the larger discussion in general. I feel that bracketing was made difficult when looking at this data because of my highly involved relationship with each of the four participants. Yet, I was aware of the importance of not imposing previously created categories of potential analysis as I explored the experiences of my informants.

That meaning should be derived in scholarly research through some post-interview deconstruction does not sit well with me. Similar to how my participants are continuing to develop an understanding for their

transformative places, I am continuing to develop understanding of their statements. I have come to understand the importance of prolonged engagement to be able to explore some of the complex findings. In order to analyze this data, and in particular relate it to three conceptual frameworks, I must also practice what these concepts purport as I conduct the research.

**Endogenous** understanding has been linked to concepts like intuition, instinct, and empathy (P.A. Wright, 2000). Throughout the interviews, I relied on my intuition to support my participants in telling their stories. Thus, I was trying to make meaning even in that moment, trying to hear, see, and feel what they were communicating and ask further about the underlying concepts. Therefore this co-analysis effected my reading and viewing of the films as data, since I was also there co-constructing an experience with my participants. In a way, the data existed in the moment of research and the videos are a method for sharing these with the reader.

Each interview was conducted *in situ*, in the place that was being discussed. Thus the places are a particular feature in each of the videos. You can see the lichen-encrusted lava-beds in Nass Valley, the luscious green forests along Cowichan River, hear the lapping of Ealue Lake, and almost smell the imagined tomatoes in the backyard in Burnaby. So the land, in a way, is also being interviewed in this research. The land, coupled with the stories that connect these people to it, represent an **indigenous** relationship. That is, their stories are coming from and are inter-connected to the specific places they are speaking of. Again, because I was able to walk these places with these four, I also experienced the places first-hand, and so I understood those areas in a way that influenced the subsequent analysis. I can picture the feeling of the sedges that Iona was

caressing in her video under the North Pacific Cannery. I remember the uncomfortable feeling of being in the Burnaby backyard, now rented by a family that only learned of us coming on the day we did the video and stared at us throughout the process. I can picture the Sacred Headwaters under Mount Klappan, after Wade took us all to the Tahltan protest camp immediately after our interview. I can feel the simultaneous heartache and joy of May Sam after she remembered stories about her Father growing up in the small cabin at Tl'ulpalus.

With the overlapping intricacies of interpreting data, looking for units of meaning through a bracketed lens has some interesting benefits. It provides a way to see my data differently. The value in a shift in perspective is likely best addressed by **complexity theory**. It gives me tools to describe how experiences are connected to a system and therefore I can see an interview in the context of time, scale, relationships, cycles, and interdependence. It provides a method for getting the larger sense of meaning of an experience whilst being imbedded in the experience myself. To see meaning as a whole, it is important to step back and look for larger concepts, messages, and expression. In this research, stepping back with the attempted bracketing effort corroborated my initial and *in situ* understandings that I realized during the process of the interviews.

## Integrated memetic discussion

After several attempts to write this section of the research, I came to the judgement that I needed to further discuss each transformative meme after they are presented. This came about in reaction to the awkwardness of presenting my results using the typical reporting-on-what-happened technique. Of course, I do this to a certain degree, but then I indicate after each meme how the notion might connect to the conceptual frameworks on which this research is built. Each meme is further investigated for



resonances with the components of the three underlying frameworks: **endogenous** understanding, **indigenous** ontology, and **complexity theory**.

It behoves me to articulate one of the tensions that arose in my research and subsequently my memes, analysis, and manifesto. While attempting to follow protocol of an Indigenist and respectful course, the complexity with which I present my material at times objectifies my participants' places. This objectification is not intentional and likely derives from the struggle I continue to find myself dealing with as a settler and post-structuralist thinker. The ultimate irony of my work, which is designed to articulate a person's relationship to place, is that I coded, dis-assembled and re-assembled meaning through theoretical frameworks, analysis, and projections. Perhaps falling into familiar modes of data presentation including abstraction and reductive terms at times I have counteracted what I was attempting to represent: the situatedness of my participant's experiences.

So with the limitation of falling into the reductionist trap being acknowledged, I also need to point out that this was not my intention. Throughout the following chapters, I have provided metacognitive discussion as an attempt to invite the reader to view the analysis as nested moments within a larger whole.

# May Sam

---

May Sam, a Tsartlip elder, Malahat and Khowutzun member, Great Grandmother, knitter-extraordinaire, and embodiment of generosity has helped transform her communities with her practice of knitting, relational respect, and traditional ceremonies. Along with four generations of her family, May led me through her childhood places in Malahat traditional lands and Cowichan Valley.

May Sam's sense of place is rooted in her connection to family, food, and respect. To see the four generations of her family interacting in the three significant places she brought me to was a humbling experience.

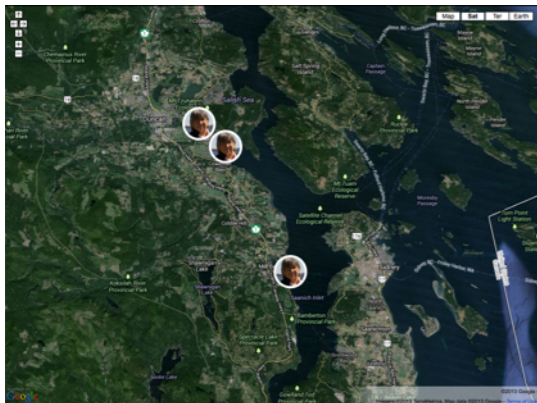
Her memories are resonant in stories of learning respect for her father as well as the land and ocean that continues to support her.

In Meluxulh (Malahat), where she was born but does not have any early memories, she stated that it felt good to "be home." She recounted stories of her father, single-handedly raising May and her sister. He kept a watchful eye on them while he sorted the logs in the log-booms offshore. May's older sister would look after her while she lay in an apple box on the beach.

At Lhumlhumaluts' (Cowichan Flats), May had many rich memories of the salty-brined Cowichan estuary. She was diligent about helping her

May Sam at the Malahat booming grounds

INTERACTIVE 4.1 Interview sites for May Sam





## May's sacred thimbleberry

family, by fetching groceries many kilometres away, collecting fresh water for drinking, and respecting the boundaries of the long-house. She also remembers being a trouble-maker, by 'borrowing' canoes to pick crab-apples along the river which was against her dad's wishes. Her connection to this place continues to be devoted, and her memories of it were only slightly altered by the reality of new buildings - Lhumlhumaluts' has remained relatively unchanged since her childhood.

At Tl'ulpalus (Cowichan Bay), May remembered staying in a cottage and helping her father fish for flounder by walking in the shallows of the bay until she stepped on a fish. Then, having found one, she would wait for her father to spear it between her toes. She also told me about one of her earliest memories of presenting

her father with a gift of steamed clams that she and her sister had secretly made.

"That was the first time he cried. He was so appreciative of what we had done, despite breaking the rules to do it."

May's connection to place is woven with her connection to her father, and now to her own family. Her work as a knitter and supporter of language revitalization with the Cowichan and Tsartlip communities is directly influenced by her connection to these three places.

# May Sam's Transformative Places

INTERACTIVE 4.2 May Sam remembers her childhood



INTERACTIVE 4.4 May and Josephine Sam visit Meluxulh



INTERACTIVE 4.3 May visits Tl'ulpalus



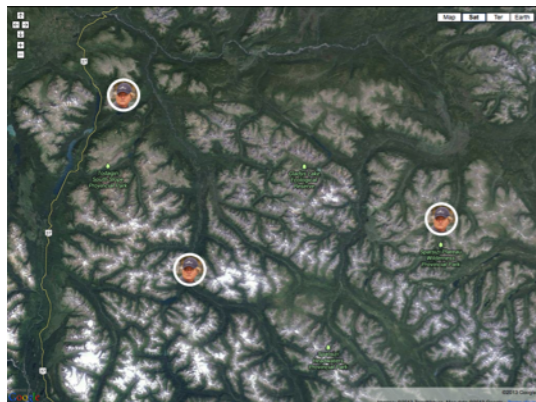
INTERACTIVE 4.5 May Sam visits Lhumlhumuluts'





Wade Davis and Gail Percy preparing for the interview at Ealue Lake BC

INTERACTIVE 4.6 Interview sites for Wade and Gail



## Wade Davis and Gail Percy

Dr. Wade Davis, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, anthropologist, photographer, writer, father, and husband, with Gail Percy, anthropologist, adventurer, and wife, shared stories about their summer home on Ealue Lake and their experiences in the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park and Mt. Edziza Provincial Park.

Wade has been coming to this area of northwestern British Columbia since his early

twenties, as the first park ranger when it was only accessible by a rough patchwork of logging roads.

Wade Davis and Gail Percy are anthropologists by training, both with rich experiences of many cultures, yet their relationship to Ealue and the Stikine are rooted in a human and relational approach to the land, rather than an exploration of the ethnographic landscape. Wade stated that he will not "act the anthropologist"; rather, that he is working on longitudinal research with the Tahltan First Nation that is far more participatory than that



Wade's red canoe with outboard

carried out by the many fly-in-fly-out anthropologists that show up into this area of Northern British Columbia.

Both Wade and Gail find a connection to this land that goes beyond the physical beauty of it alone. It evokes positive and negative memories that help Wade and Gail describe a rich sense of place. Wade talked about recently seeing the Stikine and Spatsizi area as a garden in which he knows many of the plants and animals. This contrasts with his first arrival in the area in the mid 1970s, as a resident of Montreal, with little knowledge of the ecosystem components. His description of the land also alluded to it as a place of danger and exposure. This transition from considering the place as one that threatens him and Gail when they first moved to the area to one that nourishes them now was most obvious when Wade took me out on his boat on Ealue Lake. He talked about the process of learning all the trails and rock formations down to the square inch, and noted that his daughters share the same knowledge, and "melt" at the mention of returning to Ealue.

Wade's view into the Ealue, Spatsizi, Edziza, and Sacred Headwaters area is nested within the socio-political and cultural landscape of Northern British Columbia. He is a stalwart advocate for its protection. With published articles and books and a series of lectures as a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, he is well-known for his advocacy work. Much of this work to protect natural and cultural systems stems from the early experiences of growing up in Montreal, where language and cultural differences fascinated him. He links these early experiences to the work as a park ranger in Spatsizi, where working with the Tahltan people enabled a deepened view of his relationship both within and among 'culture' and 'nature'. When he talks about returning to his childhood home in Point Claire in Montreal he spoke of how his view of past memories and places plays a role in his current life.

# Wade Davis' and Gail Percy's Transformative Places

INTERACTIVE 4.7 Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC



INTERACTIVE 4.8 Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal



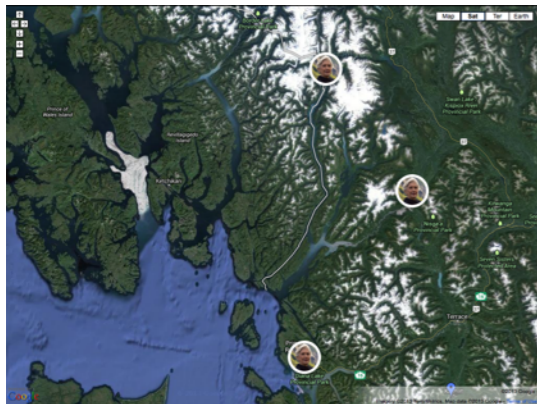
# Iona Campagnolo

Her Honour, Iona Campagnolo, Former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, MP for Skeena Constituency, Radio Host, Mother, and change-agent took me to a childhood place under a dock at North Pacific Cannery that has been adapted into a historic site and museum along the Skeena Slough. Iona told me an incredible story that wove her early childhood experiences through her life as a politician, then her life as representative of the Queen of England in British Columbia.

Iona's relationship to Northern British Columbia is rich, deep, and full of stories. I felt that I could have travelled with her throughout BC. for many months and continue to be surprised by the personal anecdotes of her relationships to particular places, families, and businesses. What I found most compelling was her ability to weave significant political events (be they regional, provincial, or national) into her relationships to place. Her acts of civility are grounded in politics. Over the course of her diverse career, she also acted as the Member of Parliament for Skeena and was named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, where she served 2 years with Minister Judd Buchanan. Later, she was named Federal Minister of Fitness and

Iona under the North Pacific Cannery Dock

INTERACTIVE 4.9 Interview sites for Iona Campagnolo





Iona at Bear Glacier



Stewart BC Geese



Wooden bridge over Nass River

Amateur Sport where she served for 3 years and set up the Sport and Fitness Ministries for Canada, and finally, she served as the President of the Federal Liberal Party. Her views are deeply connected to the era of Pierre Trudeau politics, and yet she can tell you the current state of regional political battles and affairs.

What is most poignant for me, however, is her long-view of history in Canada. This extends well beyond the comings and goings of 1970s politics or even the founding of Canada. Her connection to place is deeply related to her connections to First Nations peoples, be they Tsimshian, Gitksan Wet'suwet'en, Haida, or Nisga'a. She has worked tirelessly to support rights and titles claims, and treaty negotiations. Despite no longer living in Northern British Columbia, she considers many of these community members to be her closest friends. These political and First Nations relationships, combined with a sense of place and her 'steel-trap-mind' of memories created a rich revisiting of places throughout British Columbia.

# Iona Campagnolo's Transformative Places

INTERACTIVE 4.10 Iona Campagnolo remembers growing up on Skeena Slough



INTERACTIVE 4.12 Iona Campagnolo visits her childhood home at North Pacific Cannery



INTERACTIVE 4.11 Iona Campagnolo revisits the Nass Valley



INTERACTIVE 4.13 Iona Campagnolo visits Stewart BC





Claudia Li in her childhood backyard

## Claudia Li

---

Claudia Li, the co-founder of the Hua Foundation and Sharktruth.org, took me back to her childhood home in Burnaby BC to rediscover her connection to place, somewhere she had not been since she was five years old. With memories of her grandma, smells of tomatoes, and the discomfiting realization that memory can play tricks on perception, Claudia leads us through an experience full of emotion, connection, and healing.

For twenty years, Claudia has lived within a few blocks of her childhood home but she had never ventured back to her childhood backyard. Her memories connected to her recently passed grandmother, a first generation immigrant from Hong Kong.

I asked Claudia to take me somewhere that would be a natural setting for a pre-interview. She suggested the Burnaby Mountain Conservation Area, where she walks with her mother every week. This site gave us a vista over Burnaby, Burrard Inlet, North Shore Mountains, and in the distance, Vancouver Harbour and the City

of Vancouver. Claudia told me about her grandmother and one of her first olfactory memories: the smell of the tomatoes that her grandmother grew in the backyard.

Claudia described an idyllic setting of sunny afternoons after school being mesmerized by the tomatoes and her grandmother's stories. "Bliss" was the word that that emerged when Claudia recounted the memory of her grandma and her childhood backyard.

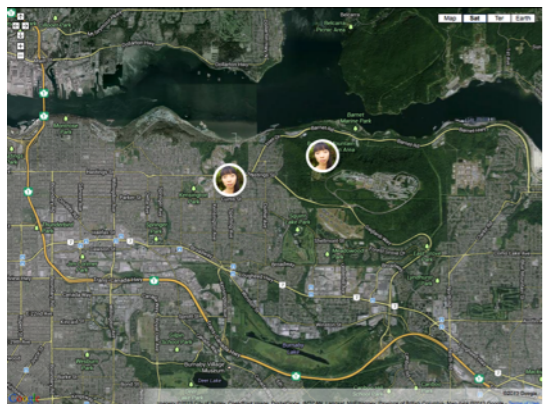
I asked her to draw the yard as a way of helping her reconnect with this place (you can see her drawing and the film of her drawing it in [Interactive 4.18](#)). Depicting her memories of this transformative place sparked some new memories, including how this place related to the larger landscape context near the North Shore Mountains. Claudia's drawing became a 3D representation of her running down the steps of this house and looking for her grandma.

Claudia's visit back to the backyard was emotional: "I know it is my childhood memory, and I know it is kind of tricking me". She said she felt sad that her "memory bubble" had burst. "The yard



The hose that her grandmother used to water the tomato plants still exists

INTERACTIVE 4.14 Interview sites for Claudia Li



seemed so much bigger in my memory...it seemed so vast and grand." Yet, when asked about how to connect her memory of the place to her work as an activist now, she explained that her connection to place and to her grandmother is the basis for her joy, love, and appreciation of life. She also indicated that this house was not all filled with rosy memories, and that to experience deep joy, one also needs to experience some darkness. There was something about this place, she said, that gave her this diversity of feeling-experiences.

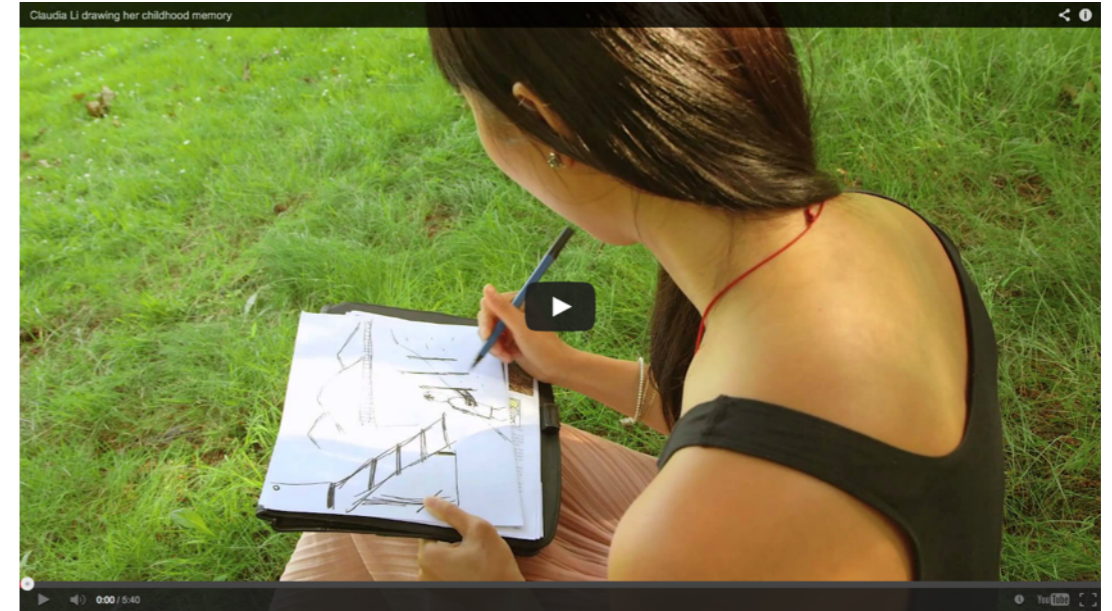
After the filming was done, I asked Claudia, "how was that for you?" She replied, "healing." She didn't explain this statement to me, but I surmised that this place was the site of some hard memories relating to her family. She had avoided returning to this place until I asked her to go, but it seemed that revisiting her childhood home brought positive memories of her grandmother and helped her process some of the harder memories of this time.

# Claudia Li's Transformative Places

INTERACTIVE 4.15 Claudia Li remembers her childhood home



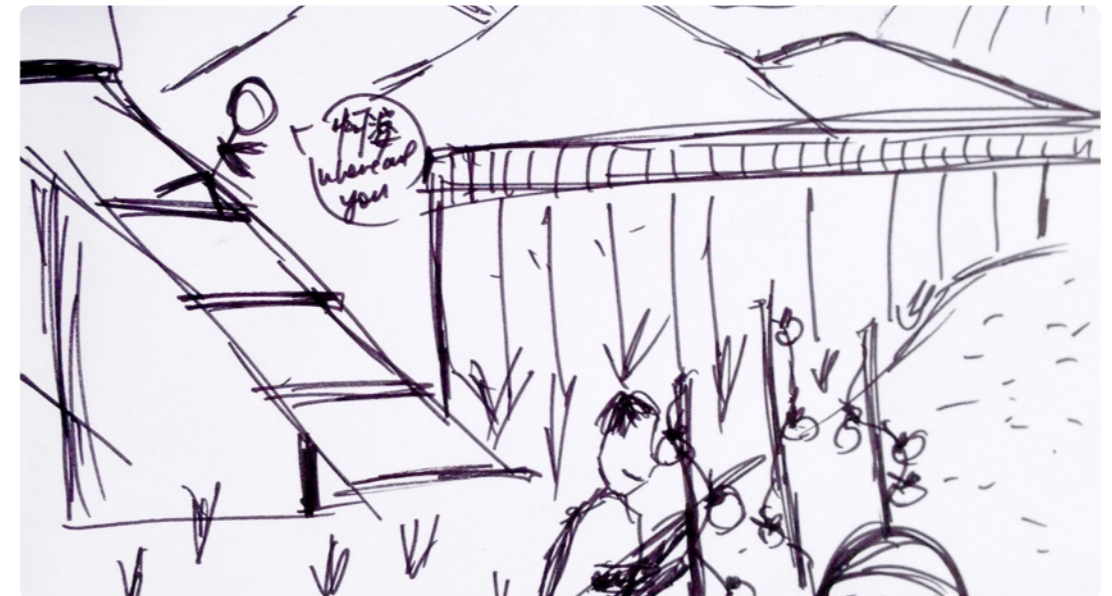
INTERACTIVE 4.17 Claudia Li drawing her childhood memory



INTERACTIVE 4.16 Claudia Li visits her childhood home



INTERACTIVE 4.18 Claudia's drawing of her transformative place



# Public Interaction

[Interactive 4.19](#) shows a live map of the public participants' submissions. At the time of writing this, 50 markers had been added to the map that represented transformative places for people around the world (including Canada, United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Cuba, and Germany). I asked the public to try to re-enact the process that I engaged my four participants on. None engaged in the process in this way, rather using text to describe their memory and photos to represent their places. I had many people tell me through various social media streams that that they are interested in conducting the full research process in their transformative places by telling me on the Transformative Places [Facebook Page](#). Since the launch day (April 2nd, 2013) of the [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com) website, the youtube films have been watched 2114 times, representing 5851 minutes watched. The website has had 1982 visitors, with 3008 page-views from every continent. Since the intent of the website is to live beyond the scope of this research, future data might be collected and analyzed for further investigation.

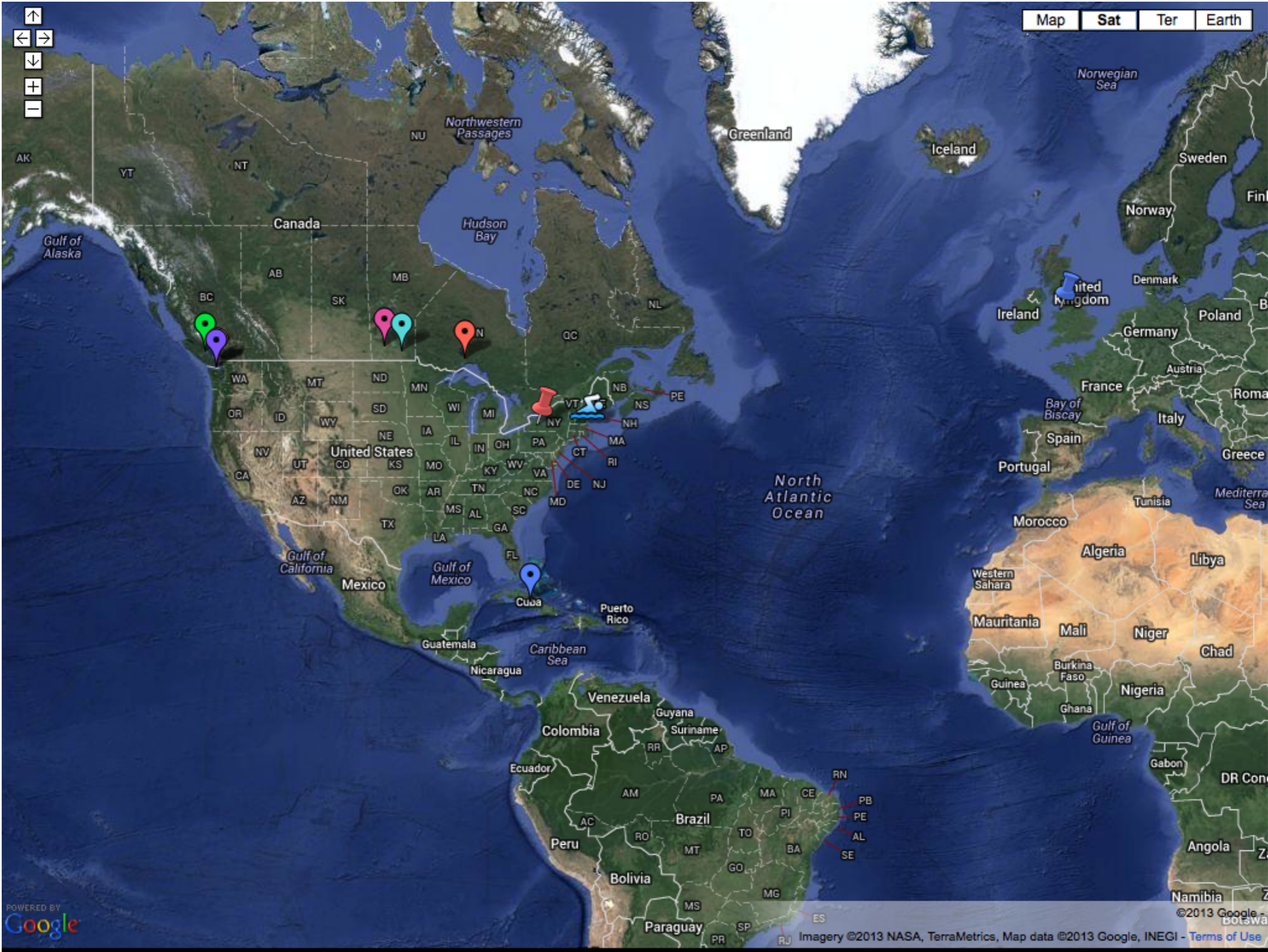
Ten submissions were selected by looking for resonant stories that represented some diversity of geographical places of Earth. By resonant, I mean that the public participant contributed more than a few sentences, described an experience or connection, or provided some enriched media like videos, photos, or audio. Since the submissions are created in a semi-anonymous and anonymous ways, I refer to them only by the title of their submission. [Interactive 4.20](#) shows the 10 selected participants. You can zoom in, click on each of the pins, and see their submission.

INTERACTIVE 4.19 Interactive public map



Click on the map, click on any marker to see the public contributions to the collaborative map. This map is live and will automatically upload.

INTERACTIVE 4.20 Ten selected public participants transformative place submissions



Click on this map and then you can click on each marker to read the public submissions. Notice that each marker has a unique colour or graphic.



## (Trans)formative memes - results and analysis

I want to start this section with the note that the three clusters (*place and family, place and transformation, and place and connection*) of memes outlined below are interrelated and interacting. This means that memes found in one are not exclusive to that cluster. The memes identified only represent part of the whole experience. This interrelation and partial representation is discussed further in chapter five. Each meme is presented as an active phrase indicating its ability to engage the individual in interacting with their (trans)formative places. Also, each meme highlights data from the public participants to help crystallize the description of the meme itself. I provided sections for each meme titled “Nick looking nearby [meme name]”, which acted as a metacognitive and dialogic device to describe my own reflections on the meme and how it might interact with my conceptual frameworks.

### Cluster one - place and family

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Connection and appreciation for family was a recurring statement for all of my participants when discussing their places. Usually presented as stories about the family members that introduced these places, transformative experiences in place were rarely discussed without reference to the human relationships that helped guide them. This connection between place and family shows up in a number of ways for the participants.

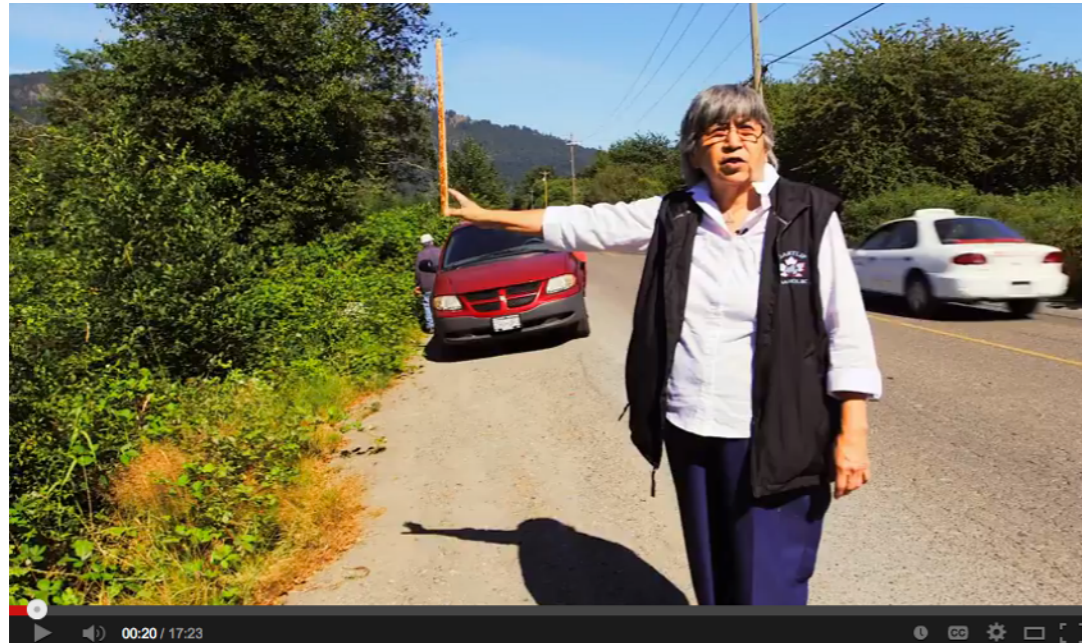
#### Place and family are teachers

May Sam referred to her father, who raised her and her sister as a single parent, throughout her four interviews. She indicated that she

INTERACTIVE 4.21 Excerpt from May Sam remembers her childhood (0:00 - 1:59)



INTERACTIVE 4.22 Excerpt from May Sam visits Lhumlhumuluts' (0:00 - 0:42)



holds him in high esteem because of his devotion to his family and community. In [Interactive 4.21](#), May told one of her earliest memories when she collected clams for dinner with her sister and this act of

generosity moved her father to tears. At 1:48, she repeated “and that is my memory of him and my sister,” indicating to me that this could be a cherished memory for her. In another interview she talked about his generosity of giving, something she suggested is a fundamental part of being in a community today ([Interactive 4.22](#)). When May was two, her father later relocated his family from Malahat to Lhumlhumuluts' (Cowichan Flats), where he raised them along the banks of the Cowichan River. Notice that May talks about eating fish from this river and that her father would give his catch away rather than selling it. She grew up in the 1950s when eating from the land, rivers, and ocean around you was more common than it is today, and giving away food was a act of generosity. Later in this video, May discussed how her father looked after more than his immediate family. He gave away cherished food, lent money, and supported his sister’s family with his salary ([Interactive 4.23](#)). He also used store credit to help other families get through rough times. These are all teachings that May links back to her dad and to this place. May reported that her daughter

INTERACTIVE 4.23 Excerpt from May and Josephine Sam visit Meluxulh (4:39 - 6:59)



INTERACTIVE 4.24 Excerpt from May and Josephine Sam visit Meluxulh (4:00 - 4:37)



Josephine, also seen in [Interactive 4.24](#), found herself feeding many community member's children and wondered aloud to May who all these children were. May reminded her that these kids were with her because she represented a safe place for them, similar to her father's role in the community. May went on to suggest that this nurturing characteristic could be something that these children have all now learned and will practice as part of their life. The concept of nurturing was all derived from how her father used to share the wealth of food derived from the places where they lived. Josephine tied this ethic back to the importance of connection to place by suggesting that this place helped teach her family. "[We are] soaking all that stuff in right now. It is giving us strength to do what needs to be done."

May's memory of place is enmeshed with stories of people and teachings. These teachings are something she continues to engender in her community. At the time of this research, May was the elder-in-residence at the University of Victoria, acting as a welcomer, counsellor,

educator, and guide for the University's **Indigenous** and non-Indigenous programs. She talked about education as being a critical piece in how young people connect to culture through learning the language [Interactive 4.25](#).

INTERACTIVE 4.25 Excerpt from May Sam visits Lhumlhumuluts' (13:04 - 15:05)



This, tied to the concepts of Khowutzun, ([Interactive 4.26](#) and discussed later), provides insights into how May understands place through the teaching it offers. Whether it was the hard work of her dad, the nuns and knitting, respecting elders, or finding pleasure in simple treats like berries, chickens, and Chinese food, May continues to teach about this place through all she does.

Claudia also resonated with stories of family during her interviews. In particular, she spoke of her Grandmother (**Apō** in Cantonese) who helped to look after her, her sister, and her cousins. When I asked her to close her eyes and think of place that transformed her, her immediate reaction was to think of a person: her grandmother

INTERACTIVE 4.26 Excerpt from May Sam visits Lhumlhumuluts' (11:53 - 13:03)



INTERACTIVE 4.27 Excerpt from Claudia Li remembers her childhood home (0:00-1:11)



([Interactive 4.27](#)). Through that reference to her grandmother, she then connected to her (trans)formative place. For Claudia it was the relationship with her grandmother and the growing of tomatoes that helped create a sense of connection.

The family aspect of this meme was not well represented in the public submissions to the website. References to family were only tangentially made:

**Trout fishing at the cabin** post near Neepawa, MB:

*My dad used to take my sister and I trout fishing here when we were kids. This is where my dad grew up, he would tell us stories about skipping school as a boy to come down and fish at this creek.*

**MWW** post near Black Creek, BC:

*Our family (mostly the adults) raised animals and had expansive gardens producing fruit and vegetables which were canned or frozen, purchased as little as possible and heated the house with a single central woodstove...*

Yet, despite few references to family as teachers as contextualized by places, place as teachers was a common thread amongst all ten submissions. This lack of reference to family could be due to the memory-based approach to the online data collection. A few highlights are identified below:

**Exploring King's Park** in Winnipeg, MB:

*The park is where we learned first hand the impact of spring flooding and erosion of the riverbanks. I also saw how "dirty" the river appeared, partly due to the high silt content and partly from the garbage dumped into the waterway.*

**Learning the value of Diversity** near Ciego de Avila, Cuba:

*The feel of the sand, the fresh ocean air and the sun gave me a feeling of comfort, an openness that I would not have developed in an enclosed space.*

The teachings about the ecology of Spring floods and personal growth that these two examples portray suggest that the places that the participants described are profound to their early development.

## Nick looking nearby place and families are teachers

This meme exhibits the relationships between place and family as teachers during childhood and adolescent (trans)formative years. I blended family and place together in this meme since I saw that despite places being teachers unto themselves, my group one participants tended to focus on the people that these places represented or elicited when we visited them. Therefore, the places and the interactions within them became the context and content of the discussions.

May's relationship with her father could be considered an example of both an **indigenous** way of knowing and holarchical systems at work. Having four generations of May Sam's family visit her transformative places speaks to a collective approach when honouring her past. We walked through places that she had not been since she was a little girl, and all the while she introduced these places to her family, who accompanied us, and acknowledged the values that she gained from these places. I was left with the impression that she would do anything for her family. Yet, she also holds her family to a high standard. She expects them to practice cultural ceremonies, to respect elders, and to embody the concept of Khowutzun.

The knowledge and teachings that May described were not only **Indigenous** in the socio-cultural domain, but they were literally of, from, and with the land. She referred to her ancestors as teachers who helped her to understand the value of her Cowichan Valley and Malahat homes. Through this process of learning, she has prioritized education as a major tenet of her life. This is poignantly caught in the moment when May is playing with her great-granddaughter on the beaches at Meluxulh (1:48 - 2:24 and 8:54 - 9:16). May is saying only a few words, but she is supporting her great-granddaughter Josephine in the wonder of the small crabs at the beach.

May's connection to her family and place represents a nested sense of responsibility; I could describe it as a holarchy of responsibility. Her family, in turn, is responsible to her, supporting her work in and around the community. She is absolutely committed to her family prospering and also listens to their council. Much of this commitment stems from her connection to her homes in and amongst the Cowichan Valley. Her father instilled in her a strong work-ethic as well as a sense of respect. Growing up with him as a single father was not easy for May. Yet, she recounted stories of fun and adventure as a girl, reading and learning from the land as a teacher, deriving food from the river and ocean, and connecting with her community.

Much has changed since she was little, including the ability to eat off the land. She sees how all of the systems are related amongst, fishing from the river, collecting berries, human society and hard work (6:10-7:43):

*So there were only three of us that lived here. Our neighbours would have to look after us when dad was at work....Everyone here at Cowichan Bay kept an eye on us when we were little. We didn't realize that we were always*

*getting into trouble. You know, being safe with the whole community here in Cowichan Bay watching over us... To think of everything that is happening today, the violence and everything... ...So glad that we were okay....[May then eats the berry she has been holding in her hand]...mmm so sweet. Huy ch q'u [thank you in HUL'Q'UMI'NUM'].*

When watching the films, you can tell that May loves these places. She sees the place as more than just the geophysical descriptions, but as a series of holarchical communities that she can share with her family who walked with her through this process of remembering.

Similarly, Claudia's reference to her **Apō** was one of reverence. She talked about her providing insights into the cultural domain of her Chinese heritage, all the while providing an exciting activity of learning about plant growth and gardening. In interviews in the backyard in Burnaby, Claudia refers to her interest in learning more from her elders and also sharing the learnings that her **Apō** helped her understand. Claudia's relationship to her place is inextricably linked to her grandmother and therefore the memories, teachings, and love are all represented in that place for her. I believe that Claudia reconnected with this place and therefore the teachings of her grandmother in a further (trans)forming way during our visit.

The public submissions, though mostly focused on personal growth and understanding gained from places, provided some crystallization to this meme. Many of the participants referenced what they learned from this place and spoke about the experience as an appreciative act. For instance, **Polly Lake, Ontario**, said "It was hear [sic] I learned to listen, to see, to feel myself grow up. It was here that I was transformed into a leader." It seems that simultaneous learning of, in, and with a place helped my participants grow individually and in their ecological literacy.

Many referenced a new understanding of the natural systems as part of their connection to place.

By seeing the land as part of their own families and as teachers, these examples of *family and place are teachers* describe connections to place as meaningful and (trans)formative.

## Place, family, and community strengthen respect

One particularly (trans)formative place that I visited with Iona was underneath the wooden sidewalk at North Pacific Cannery, suspended above the inter-tidal zone along the Skeena River. The Cannery was a place, where she spent ten years of her life, from age seven to age seventeen. She talked about a memory of connecting with some children who had come with their families to work at the cannery. The children she was playing with were mostly local First Nations and Japanese and they acted like an extended family, like a group of younger and older siblings ([Interactive 4.28](#)). But it was not only play that was going on underneath the creosote-encrusted pilings: “The fundamentals of the Nisga’a Treaty - I heard here from Rod Robertson.” These discussions framed her respect for First Nations with such profundity that in later life, she devoted much of her political will to supporting their causes, including that of the Nisga’a Treaty. This treaty represented the first modern treaty in British Columbia among

[INTERACTIVE 4.28](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo visits her childhood home at North Pacific Cannery (0:00-2:13)



Government of Canada, British Columbia, and the Nisga’a people; 113 years in the making.

That these discussions arose from places like this was an important point for Iona. She connected this place directly to her sense of community and family and talked about following these friend’s life moments throughout her own life.

Respect for family that is larger than one’s immediate family was also referred to by May. She described the meaning of the word Khowutzun (of which the settler name Cowichan is derived):

*It’s Khowutzun, all of this whole area. My home, my dad, my family. My family, my daughter and my two sons, and my great-grandchildren. That’s just it that is all of it. That is how I got to be who I am today.*

This concept embodies a place-based ethic that is enriched with a respect for each other and the land. May talked further about Khowutzun’s meaning in [Interactive 4.26](#). Notice that it represents culture, practice, place, and people.

The public submissions also referred to their respect for place, though never labeling it with such language. For instance **Bold Moss, Saint Helens, Merseyside** referred to the respect he/she had for the process of ecosystem regeneration and in turn community regeneration:

*A truly amazing place that transformed itself from from coal mine waste into a amazing site for wetlands, orchids and skylarks (amongst other things) the regenerative power of natural systems helping to regenerate community.*

## Nick looking nearby place, family, and community strengthen respect

I chose to expand beyond the traditional reference to family in this meme to include place, family, and community as actors in the strengthening of respect. In some ways this meme can be seen as an extension of *place and family are teachers* by highlighting a particular teaching that was profound to both Iona and May: respect.

In Iona's inter-tidal discussions, she reported experiencing a form of decolonizing diplomacy, where empathy and equity created life-long friendships. Notice in the film that she played with the sedges, pointed under the pilings, and periodically recalled names of her young friends and recounted where they now worked. On reviewing the video footage, I could see that returning with Iona to this place was a visceral experience for her. She was comfortable underneath the sidewalk; she sat on a stump, her facial expression relaxed, and she paused many times to look around during the interview. Throughout our time at North Pacific Cannery, she wove together her early memories of people, the role of the landscape, its ecology, and the cultural interactions as functional drivers for her self-identity and motivation. One particular narrative stream that relates to her lifelong support of First Nations rights is her support of the Nisga'a treaty. Her references to these interactions represents a rich understanding of the interconnectedness of the systems in which she was engaged. Not only did she develop a strong respect for the people who are **Indigenous** to this part of the world, she also developed a love and respect for the ecology that supported all of them. This interconnectedness could be described as an **indigenous** way of knowing, where she recognizes the relationships as critical to their existence.

May's connection to her places are contextualized by Khowutzun, also referred to in the *place and family are teachers* meme. Yet, there an element of respect can be seen in how May describes her understanding of the concept Khowutzun. It is everything to her, and is also part of her. It enables her to see herself as part of the system in which she is supported and therefore is coming from within her. Chosen as an elder in her community, she represents an embodiment of teachings of Khowutzun, and therefore is afforded the high honour of representing wisdom and spiritual guidance for her now adopted communities of Tsartlip people and University of Victoria.

The public submissions that refer to the *place, family, and community strengthen respect* meme come in forms of awe and sense of responsibility. Similar to the participant who describes the ecological restoration of a coal mine helping to strengthen a community, other participants referred to the importance of protecting sacred places to them. They saw the importance of these places as community strengtheners, rather than sources for natural gas or other development. **Glenora Point, Dundee, New York** refers to the possible fracking in New York State as potentially affecting her place: "Unfortunately, there are some people who value the natural gas in the shale under the ground more than the clean water and air, and the natural beauty above ground."

For my participants, communities, and families that connect people with important places acts as a way to strengthen the respect we have for those places (including the ecological values) as well as respect we have for ourselves as individuals, family members, and members of the larger community. This last connection brings this argument back to the respect gained by being members of the ecological community that includes other-than-human members.

## Place engages shared stories

Wade and Gail's relationship to Ealue seemed to be entwined with their daughter's relationships to that place as well. Wade recounted how his two daughters return annually to Ealue Lake and how this relationship fostered a deep connection to the place for them, and in turn deepened his relationship.

*You can't think about this property without thinking about that period [his daughter recovering from a lethal disease at Ealue]...So, I mean there are layers upon layers of joy, agony, and happiness which is typical of all places.*

[INTERACTIVE 4.29](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (5:00 - 7:19)



In the clip in [Interactive 4.29](#) Wade talked about his “daughters’ melting” at hearing the word ‘Ealue’. He spoke proudly of his commitment to bringing them to Ealue almost every summer of their childhood and adolescent lives. This long-term multi-generational connection to place weaves and connects with Wade and Gail’s own

stories. They are able to share their love of this place with their daughters and through this have an experience of their transformational moments. One such moment is described by Wade in [Interactive 4.30](#). Wade recounts his daughter Raina lamenting the industrialization and extractive industries that she felt threatened somewhere she loves.

[INTERACTIVE 4.30](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (17:44 - 19:38)



May Sam’s family returning with us to the four sites we visited was also an example of this meme. In much of my filming with her, she told stories to her younger family, pointing at landmarks and explaining where she played or where a family member used to live. Her husband, Skip, was there for much of her life (from 17-years-old onward) and recounted to me the fishing he used to do off of the beaches of Cowichan Bay, seeing the same stories from a different perspective and knowing May’s father.

Shared stories were also present in the ten participants selected from the public participation. **Glenora Point, Dundee, New York** refers to a place that her family has connected with for over five generations.

*My husband's family has been here for five generations, but I am a lucky transplant. In my late teens, falling in love with my future husband was inextricably linked with falling in love with Glenora. In our twenties, we were engaged in the Big Stream glen and married in front of the waterfall. Through our thirties and forties, our children are growing up swimming, hiking, and playing here... I hope and pray that the next five generations of our family will be able to enjoy the serene beauty of Glenora as our family has for the past five.*

Shared stories help form our connection to place by engaging human communities in contextual discourses and memory-making. That is, my participants talked about their relationship to a place through the shared understanding of that place based on the memories that it elicited. In the case of the public participants', place represented an historical wealth of shared stories with the potential for future shared stories.

### Nick looking nearby place engages shared stories

*Place engages shared stories* can help to describe the notions that there are collective understanding of places and also that potential (trans)formation occurs in and through them.

There are two aspects of this meme that are compelling. First, shared stories occur from shared experiences in and of a place, though these experiences do not necessarily have to be concurrent or even congruent. For instance, Wade's memory of the Spatsizi area is

layered with history back to the early 1970s, whereas his daughters' experiences were more recent. Yet both father and daughters have accounts of the place that are collective and diverse in some ways. This diversity of stories bring about the second notion that is compelling about this meme. Shared stories do not always mean the same story. They might be contradictory but the point of this meme is that they act as part of the fabric of understanding a place.

I noticed that shared stories might also be an act of witnessing a family member's development of connection. Wade was able to see his daughters grow a connection over time with this place. Similarly, Skip Sam witnessed his wife's relationship with the Cowichan Valley, and compared it against his own understanding of the place through his own experiences. They know some of the same places through different perspectives and times.

Shared stories are complicit with the component of panarchy that is the most challenging to enact in social sciences research: time. Shared experiences require a passage of time to become shared stories. Since I am looking back into the childhood and adolescent experiences of my participants, these are then coloured by the inexactness of memory. Memory can play strange tricks on how we perceive what occurred and what is remembered in relation to place (Sebba, 1991). Though it is not in the scope of this research to investigate the complexities of memory, it plays a major role in this meme (and is referred to as its own meme later on).

## Place heals people and families

In [Interactive 4.24](#), Josephine Sam described the connection to her Mother's birth-place as medicine. "It reflects back to what Grandpa has done for my mum and my auntie...all his strengths...like all the medicines here...it is giving us strength..." She identified with the power of Meluxulh being more than a simple residence, but a place where ancestors provide continual support. In some ways, May's decision to invite her family back to join her was an effort to help heal her family's relationship to the land. Off the camera, she told me that none of her family had seen where she grew up and that she thought it was important for them to hear the stories so that they can tell their own children about the teachings that she received as a young girl. She went on to talk about the challenges that her people have endured for the past four generations.

Similarly, Wade Davis shared a story of his daughter Raina who recovered from a lethal disease at Ealue [Interactive 4.31](#). Instead of taking her Doctor's recommendation to keep her in the hospital, they chose to honour Raina's wishes of coming to Ealue. She made a full recovery and the story around her illness and her subsequent recuperation are interwoven into the history of his family at the lake. For Wade and his family, Ealue acted as a place that healed in a very real way. It is a place that is tied to otherworldly ways of being, where illnesses can be contracted from dead bear cubs and helped through peyote ceremonies thousands of kilometers away.

There were a few public participants that had loose references to this notion of places healing. Usually a reference to the psychological realm of calming or quietude, these helped suggest a rejuvenating element to this meme. **Polly Lake, Ontario** described it in his/her poem "...Calm,

[INTERACTIVE 4.31](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (14:34 - 17:32)



forest, friends, and fun- the learning came from each other and our surroundings." Perhaps with greater clarity of writing, **Lincoln House Point, Swimming** writes a coming of age story that explains overcoming the anxieties of a boy that didn't fit in. He describes swimming out into the open ocean:

*I had accomplished something, the sea and I felt comfortable with one another. I knew, though, the sea had been gentle with me -- it told me that. During stormy, rainy, winter days when I would walk from my house on the hill, overlooking the bay, out to the end of Lincoln House point to watch the waves crash against the rocks, the rocks I swam around in the summer, I knew I was a small -- but not totally insignificant -- creature in a vast cosmos.*

## Nick looking nearby place heals people and families

Places can be associated with healing through emotional, physical, and spiritual contexts. That *place heals people and families* is a meme that I saw in my research data in small traces. Yet, I felt it was important to the concept of this research, so I identified it as a full meme. You could almost see Wade's anthropologist mind struggling to make sense of the complexity of the story about Raina. For him, her healing was a very real thing, yet its connection to the bear cub and to the experience with Peyote forms a tenuous context to the story. One to quickly criticize hippie ethnographers, his belief of her healing is mostly tied to the power of Ealue, which formed the setting of comfort, connection and solace for her. For Raina, the healing qualities of Ealue were likely embedded both in the bio-physical and socio-cultural landscape. I would also posit that her choice to be in Ealue had an effect on her family's journey to healing. That is, the psychological effects of seeing your daughter or sister recovering from a terminal illness in the place that she loves provided relief and appreciation for the place in a new way. For Raina, she had an inner desire to be in a place she loved to recover. This represents a conscious choice to seek out solace in a time of physical challenge.

Similarly, Josephine's reference to Meluhulx as medicine for her and her family suggested a reinvigorated approach to reclaiming her identity. In the context of helping find **Indigenous** names for her grand-children, Josephine was struck by the idea of celebrating her mother's (trans)formative places. It helped her situate her mother's stories and teachings and (re)order her priorities when working in her own community.

Finally, the public participants' reference to healing was not prominent in their responses likely due to the public nature of the submissions. Despite the anonymity that the participants were afforded, being vulnerable in a space like a research website could have been daunting. However, I saw some reference to the solace aspects of healing in a few of the participants. Usually in the form of calming effects, these places represented moments where day-to-day stresses could be alleviated.

## Cluster two - place and transformation

The recognition of change and transformation was apparent in all of the interviews and public submissions. Yet, it presented itself in different contexts and forms. This meme cluster includes anxiety about environmental damage, memories that were different from realities, and personal growth and identity developing from place.

### Place elicits nostalgia and sense of loss

One of the most powerful moments of interviewing Iona occurred at the end of the discussion at North Pacific Cannery ([Interactive 4.32](#)). I asked her, “How does it feel to be here?” Her response was surprising:

[INTERACTIVE 4.32](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo visits her childhood home at North Pacific Cannery (6:40-8:09)



“They [her friends] are mostly all gone,” Iona says, at the end of this clip. The remarkable time she experienced under the cannery still

resonated deeply to the point of bringing Iona to tears. She was mourning the the loss of her friends and the memory of those moments. The train then blew its whistle, and the moment of vulnerability passed.

In another interview Iona pointed out the ever-shrinking Bear Glacier on the highway to Stewart ([Interactive 4.33](#)). When she was the Member of Parliament in the 1970s, it stretched across the morainal lake to the edge of the highway. During this trip in the summer of 2013, Bear Glacier did not reach the edge of the lake on the far side of the valley. Iona suggested that this is likely due to climate change.

[INTERACTIVE 4.33](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo visits Stewart BC (0:00 - 0:57)



“I guess it won’t be there 50 years from now, but people will remember it.” Iona described how she thinks northwestern British Columbia will be drastically altered due to the changing climate, likely drawing large amounts of people to settle there ([Interactive 4.34](#)). I believe that in

her mind, migration is how humans will adapt to the complexity of climate change. When she was telling us this, I could hear her sadness of the loss of the more glacier-rich landscape, with the ruggedness of ecology paired with a rugged community of people. She also commented on “California birds” coming up to this part of the world, which indicated her belief in ecological adaptations in relation to climate change.

[INTERACTIVE 4.34](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo visits Stewart BC (2:45 - 3:51)



Claudia talked about a sense of loss when she returned to her transformative place ([Interactive 4.35](#)): “It makes you sad a little.” She was referring to her childhood memories tricking her into thinking it was going to be more magical. I learned this from the process of asking her to draw her memory ([Interactive 4.17](#)). In that video, you can see her drawing an idyllic scene, with mountain backdrops, high fences, and a sizeable backyard. To her, the difference between her revisiting experience and her memory represented loss, change, and difference,

[INTERACTIVE 4.35](#) Excerpt from Claudia Li visits her childhood home (1:27 - 2:07)



something she was struggling to come to terms with during the interview.

Nostalgia, but not sense of loss, was apparent in all of the ten public participants submissions. The description of memories, even if short, was rich with imagery and reverence. I could tell that these places were cherished with wistful sentimentality. The post by **Trout fishing at the cabin** near Neepawa, MB, helps describe this feeling.

*To get to the creek we had to walk through grass nearly as tall as I was...The creek was small, too small for regular fishing gear, so we tied a hook strung on fishing line onto the end of a stick. We fished with kernels of corn.... My favorite thing to do was to throw in kernels of corn and watch the bright specks jump around as the little fish fought over them.*

## Nick looking nearby place elicits nostalgia and sense of loss

Time plays an obvious role in the meme *place elicits nostalgia and sense of loss*. As humans get older or move away from their (trans)formative places, they lose an immediacy of the memory through the visceral and physical experiences of returning to a place. As in the cases of Claudia and Iona, humans also engage in other experiences, connection to other places and people, and a moment of (trans)formation might be layered with other moments of development. Thus returning or remembering a (trans)formative place can elicit memories that trigger nostalgia or a sense of loss.

Under the docks of the North Pacific Cannery, Iona ended her statement by sharing her emotional response to returning to this transformative place: “So this is it, the sacred place for me....and it makes me sad....to think that they [her friends] are almost all gone.” This place was sacred to her as it represented the hope that was actualized 60 years later in her life, and in the same breath, it brought back feelings of longing. This is a form of solastalgia, the pain caused by the loss of a place of solace or the events that occurred there. This place still moves Iona to tears and continues to play a role in her life. Subsequently, it plays a role in many other people’s lives too, due to her actions over the course of her influential life.

Iona mourned the deaths of the friends she made under the dock and the changing geography over the course of her career. She was reminiscent of a time when there was a ruggedness to the coast, celebrating parts of the history of the settlers to Northern British Columbia. These memories and relationships to place were strained through the process of her witnessing the changes to her cherished places due to climate change. In a sense, Iona was also considering

her own mortality as it related to her sense of place. Her friends are all passed, and she too will pass.

Claudia’s memory of her backyard was noticeably different than the reality of being there. She described it as being much larger and more beautiful in her memory and it was hard for her to return to the backyard that was full of other families toys and weeds.

Both Claudia and Iona exhibited grief at these changes, an emotional response that relates to loss, disconnection, and yearning. The pain of losing a place, even if the place is part of memory, was clearly difficult.

None of my ten public participants engaged the technique of returning to a place they had not visited for ten years and because of this, the emotion related to loss was not apparent. I believe that emotion would be more prominent if the participants were able to engage fully in the research, rather than using memory to describe their places.

Many people did verbally recount to me the sense of loss in relation to their transformative places. Some said that they “wouldn’t want to go back there, since it is now gone.” Protecting the memory of a transformative place appeared to be important for these people and I think that this partially affected my group two participants’ motivations to revisit their places.

## Place induces worry about integrity

May expressed anxiety over how things had changed since her time growing up on the Cowichan River ([Interactive 4.36](#)). She worried about the effects of pollution and fish-farms on the safety of eating traditional meals like salmon and octopus. Later in this clip she talked about how you can protect the banks of the river so that “Cowichan river is saved.” May’s connection to this place relates to worrying about its long-term ecological integrity.

[INTERACTIVE 4.36](#) Excerpt from May Sam visits Lhumlhumuluts' (7:02 - 8:07)



Worry about the integrity of a place was represented in two of the ten public participants submissions. First, **Glenora Point, Dundee, New York’s** post, which was reported on earlier, talked about the worry about fracking in her (trans)formative place:

*Unfortunately, there are some people who value the natural gas in the shale under the ground more than the clean water and air, and the natural beauty above ground. I hope and pray that the next five generations of our family will be able to enjoy the serene beauty of Glenora as our family has for the past five. Let's keep fracking out of New York State.*

Similar to May’s statement on how to protect the banks of the Cowichan River, this statement to “keep fracking out of New York State” is a call to action and perceived solution to the worry about the potential damage of natural gas extraction.

Similarly, **Exploring King’s Park’s** post described the witnessing of the dirtiness of the river: “I also saw how ‘dirty’ the river appeared, partly due to the high silt content and partly from the garbage dumped into the waterway.” This person recounted their childhood anxieties about the integrity of the ecosystem.

On the other end of the spectrum of worry, when a site is remediated and the worry has been solved, **Bold Moss, Saint Helens, Merseyside’s** post declared a “regenerative power of natural systems helping to regenerate a community.” This indicated that local ecologists and community members came together to reclaim a damaged site as a way to alleviate their worries of a retired coal mine so close to human dwellings.

## Nick looking nearby place induces worry about integrity

To worry about the integrity of an ecosystem, something other than oneself, suggested an **indigenous** response to the land. For instance, May is concerned about the impacts of pollution and development on the Cowichan River because it not only effects the ecological systems of the river and bay, but it in turn affects the human health and cultural

health that rely on it. She sees the river as an extension of herself and her community and this plays a role in her anxiety.

For the public participants, emotional connection to place induces worry for its protection. This emotional motivation, be it potential damage to a place and thus the memories connected to it, can often be tied to the ecological values of the places as well. Fracking in New York, would most certainly have long-term impacts in the local ecosystems, water cycles, and geography, and it also would affect the relationships that many people have to those places.

Yet, ecological integrity at its core is about (trans)formation. All systems are undergoing change, even if they appear to be static. That is, systems require movement to be necessarily systems. Remember that imbedded in that concept is the component of time, such that some systems might appear to never change, yet are undergoing change in a way that is nearly impossible to see (geological time). Also within the concept of constant change, is the human relation to place; Our relationships to the ecosystems and places that we connect with are also in flux (Smith & Bernatchez, 2008).

*Growing empirical evidence indicates that human-induced evolutionary changes impact every corner of the globe. Such changes are occurring rapidly, even at the level of a human lifespan, bear huge economical costs and pose serious threats to both humans and the biodiversity of the planet. (p.1)*

The complexity of this particular meme is bound to the desire for maintaining *what is* (sometimes referred to as preservation) and the attempt to maintain the important processes of *what could be* (sometimes referred to as conservation). In panarchy theory this movement is represented in the adaptive cycle. All systems experience

release out of a state of conservation and move into reorganization at some point in their cycle. How does the human's desire to maintain the norm affect these changes? This notion of seeking to preserve the norm is further discussed in the next chapter.

## Place is (mis)remembered

When we visited May's places, her memories did not always work as she expected. For instance, she was unsure whether it was her mis-remembered taste of traditional meals or pollution that was affecting their taste; the special foods didn't taste the same as when she was young ([Interactive 4.36](#)).

While many people have a hard time recalling events and memories from a long time ago, Iona and Wade seem to have no troubles. Able to recall people, place-names, events, and stories, their vision of the past was clear. In every one of Iona's films she referred to politicians, friends, and their relationships with clarity and assuredness ([Interactive 4.12](#)). At times when driving to Iona's (trans)formative places, I ignored the GPS and went with her directions, even though it had been over 20 or more years since she had been to some of these places. She was able to easily guide me to places not found in the digital maps that I relied on.

Wade referred to his love of fur trading as an example of his memories of Montreal and his childhood ([Interactive 4.37](#)). "Everything I ever wanted to do was to be in the woods....that is all I ever wanted." Wade linked his current work as an anthropologist to the memories, experiences, and hopes of his childhood. Ultimately, these memories contributed to his childhood dream (which is described in [Interactive 4.51](#)). His memory has been recounted by some journalists as photographic, yet it is more than simple recollection that he excels at. Wade has the ability to remember large sections of his own and other's writing and presents this text as part of his general speech. This allows for him to recall events that he has catalogued with great eloquence.

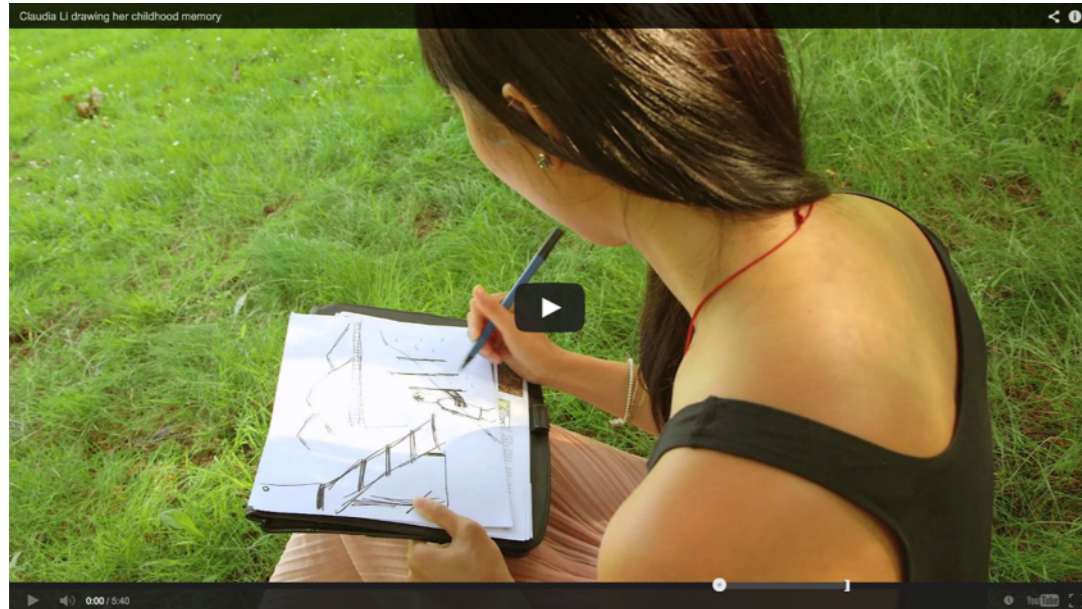
[INTERACTIVE 4.37](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (2:50 - 4:34)



Claudia talked about her transformative place as the "first memory of smell for me." After drawing her memory ([Interactive 4.38](#)), she asked "How do you draw smell?...I don't even know." She stated multiple times throughout that film that she didn't remember what it looked like - but she remembered the sun, mountains, a big fence, and her grandmother. Of course later on, as I have described already, she realized her memory was playing tricks on her, and no mountains could be seen, the fence was small, and the size of the backyard was also tiny. "I guess you remember the good stuff."

It was difficult to identify any (mis)remembered aspects of the public participants' submissions since I had no way of corroborating their stories other than zooming into the map and looking at the general topography of places. Yet, this act of zooming in was rather an astounding action I could take with the data. Since the standard view of the map is at a scale of 1:25,000,000, only general location of each

INTERACTIVE 4.38 Excerpt from Claudia Li drawing her childhood memory (3:42 - 4:25)



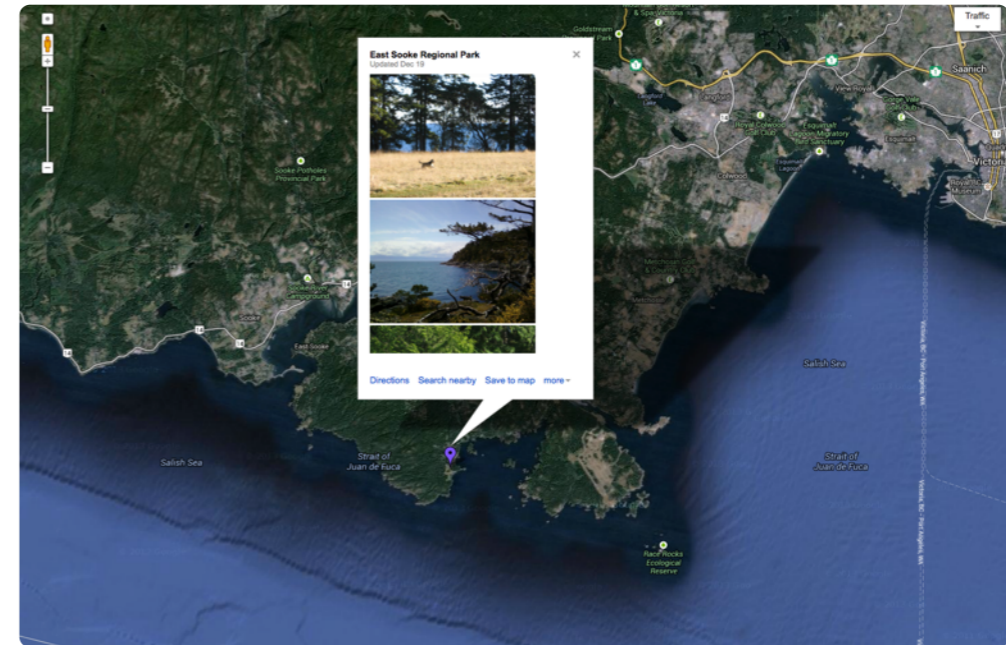
of the places can be seen in relation to geographic features. When zooming into a scale that is much larger like 1:100,000 or closer, I could see the intimacy with which people were sharing their memories. The stories corresponded with the places. This was further enhanced by submissions with photos. **East Sooke Regional Park's** post was one such submission:

*I love this area. You have meadows, the forest, and the ocean. I use to come here when I was little with my father, and now I come back whenever I have the chance with my dog, Dakota. This is the place I imagine in my mind when I think of nature.*

Accompanied with this statement were photos of her dog in the meadows and along the shoreline ([Interactive 4.39](#)).

INTERACTIVE 4.39 East Sooke Regional Park's submission

Nick



looking nearby place is (mis)remembered

The development of memory is commonly created through non-memory components for humans. Memory can be affected by how we describe events (to each other and ourselves). Sometimes we leave out occurrences that did happen or add in elements that did not happen. This is both a conscious and subconscious phenomena that affects our memories as a whole, making them more of an interpreted narrative than a factual record. In the 20th and 21st centuries memories have also been augmented through photography and videography which reinforce memories that we think are our own but are really developed through the lens of a photographer and the narrator of the context.

This meme uses the intertextual parentheses to describe the complexity of how memory functions. That we remember events in

their entirety from our youth is likely misleading, thus we often will remember and (mis)remember components of our own history. Claudia's experience of her childhood backyard was something that she (mis)remembered. Whether it was painting a rosier picture of the experience in her mind, or it was a parent or guardian augmenting her memory of that place through photographs, Claudia's memory of the backyard was not accurate to the experience. It was fascinating to see her re-organizing her thoughts throughout the interview. She kept the items that were important to her like the relationship to her grandmother, and discarded the memory of it being surrounded by snowy mountains, and the yard being a huge space.

Scale does play a role in people's memory of their childhood. Often this is related to physical size changes. It also relates to power and vulnerability of children and adolescents as well. In many family structures, the decisions around current activities are made by adults. This might augment the way we perceive the size of items when we are children.

Wade and Iona are public figures and this in some ways affected how they talked about place. Well practiced in providing salient points, their answers were often succinct and powerful. For Iona, returning to North Pacific Cannery was profound since she had not been there since she was a teenager and though she provided a rich description of how that place (trans)formed her, she also momentarily was vulnerable, indicating a movement of emotion and remembering that was somewhat unexpected. In Wade's case, he was deeply familiar with Ealue Lake and had been there every year since buying his lodge in the late 80s. Therefore, engaging spontaneous responses from the land was much more difficult with him. That being said, when he talked about his connection to Ealue and Montréal in ([Interactive 4.37](#)), his

storytelling persona momentarily paused and he recounted feelings about these places in a much more instinctual way. I felt when hearing from my participants in more spontaneous moments, memories were recounted in a raw form, without the subtexts, editing, or augmentation of interpretation.

Changing the scale of the maps within the public submissions was an interesting process. Though seemingly an obvious action, I initially found myself paying more attention to the text of the submissions. When I started to zoom into the places that they had identified, I experienced the connections that they described with a richer context. This could be an indication of how memory is augmented. It is impossible for me to not help write the story into the landscape. For instance, zooming into **Polly Lake, Ontario's** submission you see a typical lake bound to the granite complexity of the Canadian Shield. Going further still, however, you can start to imagine the campfires, cabins, challenges, and forest all mentioned in the post. When coupled with a personal story, the map itself helps tell the story of place. Imagine what it would be like to be on the lake itself. It would help tell the story of this person's (trans)formations.

## Challenge and resiliency are rooted in place

I asked Gail Percy, Wade's wife, to join us in an interview, to get a sense of how she saw the Spatsizi Area. For her, this place was not part of an adolescent (trans)formative experience, but I wanted to highlight her ongoing relationships with Wade and their connection to this place. On a trip in Mount Edziza Provincial Park, her first trip to Northern BC, Gail fell and cut her forehead. This was a moment that changed her outlook on the area and how she related to Wade, and vice versa ([Interactive 4.40](#)).

**INTERACTIVE 4.40** Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (0:00 - 3:05)



Overcoming the physical challenges of the hike helped Gail see the beauty of the Spatsizi area in a new way. Wade was also moved to see his future wife's resiliency for what she was capable of in the face of major physical challenges and gave him an appreciation for what she was capable of under those circumstances.

For Claudia, her Burnaby home elicited complex feelings that led to a statement of resiliency ([Interactive 4.41](#)). She said that she felt like she should have done more with her grandmother when she was around. She also talked about reaching out to her elders to try to make sure that she can connect with them while they are still alive. She suggested that it is important for her to let go of the conflict she had with other people so that she could engage them through love.

*To experience really true, deep joy, it is often tied to some sense of deep loss, sadness, or pain. Because when you are in the darkness and you see a just a tiny bit of light it is just that much greater if you have been in the darkness before.*

**INTERACTIVE 4.41** Excerpt from Claudia Li visits her childhood home (8:34 - 10:39)



When I asked Claudia how the interview went for her after the camera had been turned off, her response was, "healing." She revealed to me

that her experience of the Burnaby home was a mixture of complex emotions and revisiting it helped her come to terms with challenging memories and celebrate the good memories.

Wade's description of growing up in Montréal suggests a relationship to place that engaged him in resiliency and adaptation. He described it as a shift in perspective, when he connected with an old French couple who owned a corner-store on the Quebecois side of his boulevard in Saint Claire ([Interactive 4.42](#)).

**INTERACTIVE 4.42** Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (0:40 - 1:52)



Bridging gaps of language, worldviews, and physical boundaries, Wade overcame many barriers to explore his neighbourhood. Ultimately these early fascinations with difference in cultures engaged him in anthropological research around the world.

The public participants had some reference to resiliency and challenges within their submissions, but one particular submission stood out as an

example of this. **Learning to value diversity's** post, near Ciega de Avila in Cuba, resonated with the process of overcoming language challenges in a foreign country:

*At age 16 my parents took me on a "resort holiday". Naively, I wandered off the resort without permission with nothing but a bathing suit and met a young man around my age who also spoke no English so we drew in the sand to communicate. He then led me into a small village which ended up being an orphanage and I played soccer with a broken ball and a bunch of young children. We later drew a clock in the sand to signal we would meet again at 11am the following day. ...this experience would have been dramatically different if I had not been outside. The feel of the sand, the fresh ocean air and the sun gave me a feeling of comfort, an openness that I would not have developed in an enclosed space. I couldn't tell you the name of the town, the name of any of the people I met, but I can tell you that all of my senses were engaged; the colours, smells and inspiration to keep exploring will forever be instilled in me as I continue to wander and feel more and more connected to nature around the world (and of course, at home!).*

This participants' account of meeting local children described a process not normally experienced on a holiday. To engage local children in a game helped create a memorable experience for this participant.

Nick looking nearby challenge and resiliency are rooted in place

The meme *challenge and resiliency are rooted in place* helps name the sometimes challenging relationships that places present to us.

Whether it was the physical challenges of Gail and Wade in Mt. Edziza park, the emotional challenges of Claudia returning to a place that represented pain, or the language and coming of age exploration of the Cuba resort holiday participant, challenge can enable a movement towards resiliency.

Place, and the communities that they represent and nurture, comes with a variety of potentially challenging opportunities. For instance, Wade's relationship to his "carbunkle" of Saint Claire, the English-speaking village nestled in a French community was a place where overcoming fears of other languages and other cultures was a necessary process. In order to get groceries for his mother, he had to walk into a French shop-keeper's store and learn to communicate and connect in a foreign culture. This risk taking, and inner bravery helped him start to see the world through another perspective, even if it was just from the other side of the street. I think it was his ability to make meaning from those early experiences through the lens of his professional life that has helped him see his connection to place.

Place contextualizes our socio-cultural activities and through the process of overcoming the physical, cultural, emotional, or spiritual challenges that manifest out of those places, humans can appreciate the cyclical relationships and inter-dependence of places and their socio-cultural values.

## Place (trans)forms identity

In [Interactive 4.43](#) Wade talked about his perspective shifting as he related to the environment around Spatsizi. Originally coming to this area in his early twenties, Wade saw it as a dangerous place, where Bears and extreme exposure were of paramount concern. Throughout his recurring visits, he gradually started to see it differently. The lenses through which he was viewing the area started to change, and with those changes, so was his relationship to Spatsizi.

[INTERACTIVE 4.43](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (20:00- 23:00)



For May, her connection to place reflects and influences her worldview, a model of the world which acts as a guide. At the end of [Interactive 4.26](#), when May defined the concept Khowutzun, she said, “That’s just it that is all of it. And how I got to be who I am today.” She identified

that this place, this valley, the teachings in it, the families in it, her family all contributed to the development of her own identity.

The statement that “This place made me who I am today.” was common from my participants and other people I talked to about my research. I heard it from all four of my participants, whether it was the two above, Iona talking about the space under the North Pacific Cannery, or the vegetable garden and tomato plants for Claudia. This meme is also resonant within the ten public participant submissions. Below are a few excerpts that resonated with this meme:

**Lincoln House Point Swimming’s** post that referenced a becoming moment:

*During this journey of about a mile, from an active beach with commercial as well as pleasure boats, anchored to mooring, to a somewhat challenging sea, and on to a sandy, small, secluded beach with few bathers, I became me.*

**MWW’s** post about how the farm he grew up on has shaped his life:

*It’s remarkable how much that experience has shaped my life. My early explorations of the property and surrounding undeveloped territory instilled a love of experiencing the outdoors, quietly and with minimal intrusion to truly get a sense of the place. It’s rejuvenating and exhilarating, somewhat in the same way I imagine childhood play once made me feel. The farm is also ever-present as I try to (re)learn how to garden successfully and how to process and preserve the modest bounty produced. My partner and I find we long for the relative peace and pace of rural life, where our aspirations to become more self-sustaining might grow as our children do. I find we’re longing to give our own children much the same formative experience I had.*

## Nick looking nearby place (trans)forms identity

The participants' statements of identity being entwined with their (trans)formative places helped articulate this meme. There was a resounding notion that the places they engaged in specifically shaped their identity. This goes beyond the simple story-based relationships to the places. For many it was a biophysical permeation from swimming in the ocean to being on the land. Though this meme is stated as a necessary fact, it is more accurately described as place (can) (trans)form identity. That is, my participants talked about the places that (trans)formed their identity, but didn't talk about the places that did not.

Looking closely at the other memes represented in this research, many of them require some relation to family members or larger human community. This meme is an exception to that trend. Related to research of coming of age moments, the (trans)formation of identity is an event that seems to be somewhat of a solitary act. Perhaps this is due to identity-development being a process that requires overcoming personal challenges and building a self-resiliency, not something done easily in community.

I want to caveat that I realize that humans have many facets of their identity, so it would be naive of me to present (trans)formative places as some wholly game-changing event that helps develop a singular identity in a person. I also want to point out that these (trans)formative places can represent experiences that could be described as negative and the subsequent handling of that event could be transformative in itself or miseducative and deleterious. Perhaps due to the nature of my line of questioning and the presentation of my data online, I did not collect any data that describes a miseducative (trans)formative place.

## Cluster three - place and connection

The concept of human and other-than-human *connection* tends to be challenging to articulate. The memes below are mainly identified by non-verbal cues suggesting that relationships that my participants have with their (trans)formative places were also difficult for them to put into language.

### Place invigorates agency, pride, and hope

Iona was proud of her connections to the people, places, and stories of Northern British Columbia. Over the four days of traveling with her from Prince Rupert to Stewart, she recalled many stories of the people, connections, and events that she engaged in throughout her diverse career. As the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, Iona's jurisdiction was widespread, and she was expected to connect with communities in all corners of the province. Yet, she said that one of her proudest moments was returning to the Nass Valley with her official cadre where she was welcomed as a friend, supporter, and as family. She talked about the series of events that led up to the Nisga'a treaty and related it back to her time under the sidewalk ([Interactive 4.44](#)).

Iona connected this pride of the completion of the Nisga'a Treaty with notion of hope in [Interactive 4.45](#). This hope stemmed partially from the visit we had with some of the administrative staff that she referred to in [Interactive 4.46](#). Seeing friends and relatives of friends prompted her future aspirations for the multiple generations that are working towards justice and equity within the challenged First Nations landscapes of British Columbia.

One public participant also spoke about his/her connection to place with terms of agency: **Exploring Kings Park's** post talks about

[INTERACTIVE 4.44](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo visits her childhood home at North Pacific Cannery (1:54 - 2:54)



[INTERACTIVE 4.45](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo revisits the Nass Valley (0:00 - 3:38)



INTERACTIVE 4.46 Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo revisits the Nass Valley (4:24 - 4:56)



maintaining a lifelong relationship with King's park and subsequently returning there to engage young kids in enjoying its splendour:

*As a University student, I worked as a summer camp counsellor at Mini-U and we would bring the kids to the park to connect with nature. I remember one camper telling me that he was not use to doing things outside but he was having fun.*

Other participants referred to connection in ways that show up in other memes, yet notions of hope and pride were present partially in their interest in sharing their places online. Whether it was **Glenora Point, Dundee, New York** talking about stopping fracking or **Learning the value of diversity** in Cuba talking about a continued deepening connection to **nature**, agency and hope was common among many of the submissions.

## Nick looking nearby place invigorates agency, pride, and hope

Agency, pride, and hope are invigorated by (trans)formative places through the processes of feeling connected and supported by the communities in which they are interrelated. For Iona a sense of agency was self-motivated and was stemmed by the experiences of growing up where inequality was rampant, institutionalized, and commonplace. She saw a community that she could support through her life and career and by helping them, she also was helping herself be part of the community.

After 100 years of Nisga'a governments trying to negotiate a settlement with the Crown, Canada, and British Columbia, this modern treaty was finalized in 2002. Iona was a great supporter of the process, and the final positive outcome stemmed from her influence, and as she articulates, from her early relationships with young First Nations. Not only did the activities and landscape of the North Pacific Cannery influence her actions, but she suggests that it is "these kinds of places" that influence many of the people who ended up working on the Nisga'a Treaty and other related projects.

The moments that Iona experienced at North Pacific Cannery could be labeled as release events within the adaptive cycle, since they were the stochastic or critical events that precipitated a release or change in her values and ways of living, eventually breaking current social norms. For Iona, the release stage, and the subsequent growth stage can be plotted from this experience in the mid 1940s through today. The culmination of her work, (and perhaps the equilibrium stage) is found in the Final Nisga'a Agreement and the realization of a functioning Nisga'a Lisims government:

*I think it is important that we say that each generation is supplanted by a new generation with new responsibilities and a wholly new set of challenges to face, but they are here and they have the great tradition to fall on. I am very hopeful as I sit here [in front of the Nisga'a Lisims Administration Building].*

Iona finds hope in seeing her friends' sons and daughters working in the administration of the new Nisga'a Government. This hope is part of a growth that has culminated over the course of her life, finally reaching a place of ease and conservation in her mind. This next generation are now working on their own projects and are adapting through their own panarchy cycles.

The act of sharing a (trans)formative place with others, whether it was online through the collaborative mapping page of this research projects or with a group of kids at camp, resembled a form of pride of place. Despite the barriers to uploading and sharing online such as the length of time it takes to choose a place, log-in, and write about it, my participants took the time to articulate their connection. Through this agency, hope, and pride, a person exhibits a sense of connection to that place by being its champion and also its companion.

## Place is a community catalyst

Iona's description of the friends and colleagues that she connected with from her early days through the Nisga'a Treaty to this present day could be considered an example of place acting as a community catalyst. Notice that she talked extensively about her communities throughout each of her films. One I will point out is her school community at Inverness Cannery ([Interactive 4.47](#)).

[INTERACTIVE 4.47](#) Excerpt from Iona Campagnolo remembers growing up on Skeena Slough (0:29 - 3:10)



As identified in other film clips within this section, Iona explained that many of this community of Japanese and First Nations children ended up being life-long friends and influencers of her career and personal life.

Wade talked about his connection with the Tahltan First Nation in a similar way. He described his relationship as being an informal "longitudinal study" yet he does not "act the anthropologist" when he comes into the Spatsizi area ([Interactive 4.48](#)). Wade's commitment to

the Tahltan and this area is well-known through his role as National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence and his work for the Sacred Headwaters (a large area south of the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park). This video excerpt highlights his intentional connection with the Tahltan community through more personal relationships.

[INTERACTIVE 4.48](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (13:13 - 14:35)



When Claudia referred to community, in addition to her large family, she talked about the families that lived in the other side of the duplex house. In particular, she described the smells from the kitchen, the taste of the traditional foods, and the friends she made ([Interactive 4.49](#)). She stated that despite moving out of this house at five-years-old, she had more vivid memories from here than other houses she lived in. She also remembered how traditional Chinese culture was being practiced all around her, in the food, stories, and child-rearing.

INTERACTIVE 4.49 Excerpt from Claudia Li visits her childhood home ( 5:08 - 6:08)



May's community helped look after her ([Interactive 4.50](#)). With only her father and her sister growing up together, the community that she lived in helped to keep an eye on her when she was out collecting water, buying food, or playing along the shoreline. "So there were only three of us that lived here. Our neighbours would have to look after us when dad was at work."

The public participants wrote about community being invigorated by place. This was evident in the afore-mentioned post by **Bold Moss, Saint Helens, Merseyside** where a coal mine was regenerated and through that process a community was also regenerated. Perhaps one of the most resonant posts was by **My Neighbours Backyard** who talked about the boundaries between houses being pulled down so that the community children could play with each other, and so created a playful and responsible community:

*If you zoom in, you will see my house, which has the lovely cement parking lot as a backyard. Fortunately, I had*

INTERACTIVE 4.50 Excerpt from May visits TI'ulpalus (6:10 - 7:43)



*neighbours that opened up their backyard to me, as well as the children in the neighbouring houses. I believe there were nine of us. I remember going there nearly every day after school to laugh, smile and play. We invented games like swingball, which is essentially kickball on swings, told stories, and played. I remember feeling a sense of responsibility and power by being able to go out on my own (I now know my parents were usually watching as they cooked dinner in the kitchen). What would I have done if the neighbours were not as generous? Would I have played in a parking lot? The experience would not have been the same. I have so many great memories none of which would be possible if my neighbours had not opened up their yard to us. When they rebuilt their fence, they included a gate that connected my "yard" to theirs! I am very thankful for their kindness.*

## Nick looking nearby place is a community catalyst

The meme, *place is a community catalyst*, could be described as a distinct notion within this research as it speaks to the power of place as a catalyst for community growth, connection, and agency. The place itself represents a player in the socio-cultural arena, whether it is the backyard setting that helps neighbouring families provide a safe and joyful place for each other's kids to play or it is the site for Wade's campaign for protection from extractive industries.

In environmental circles, places often becomes the subject of campaigns for protection. Yet, human relations to place are more complex than only the process of fighting for protection, they represent nurturing contexts for community development and societal paradigm shifts.

Distinct from places and families, places catalyze across socio-economic and political boundaries and engage humans with other-than-human organisms and elements. To engage in place-based activities, my participants exhibited compassion, where they saw themselves in-relation-to place. What is more fascinating is the activities that are catalyzed by places are layered and diverse; they are an holarchy of activity. For some a backyard can be a cultural teaching ground and for others it can be where games are invented. Further still, (trans)formative places represent community support networks and restoration of ecological integrity.

Places can be community catalysts, yet no one catalyst is exactly like another. Within the universality of place-connection there is also a specificity that occurs. One person's connection to place might be differently catalyzed than another person's connection to that same place.

## Place connects subconsciously

Wade had a dream when he was five-years-old. This dream is well documented in his own work and he also recounted it in both of his interviews with me. Wade stated that his dream contributed to his decision to become an anthropologist by sparking an inner curiosity. It eventually led him to Ealue Lake where he engaged the memory of this dream as a realized vision ([Interactive 4.51](#)).

[INTERACTIVE 4.51](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis and Gail Percy remember early connections to Northern BC (9:49- 11:31)



To Wade, this place and the dream that helped manifest it were part of his life-story and acted as a spiritual solace spot where he connected with **nature**, his family, and a community that he deeply respected. In [Interactive 4.52](#), Wade touched on this dream again and used it as rational for why he feels so deeply connected to Ealue.

[INTERACTIVE 4.52](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (4:35 - 5:00)



There are no references to subconscious connections to place within the public participants' posts. I would have to further interview these people to engage any nuances of their relationships to place. However, statements such as **MWW's**: "I find we're longing to give our own children much the same formative experience I had." and **East Sooke Regional Park's** "This is the place I imagine in my mind when I think of nature." exhibit a melding of the subconscious and conscious.

## Nick looking nearby place connects subconsciously

This meme of *place connects subconsciously* relates to an **endogenous** motivation or call to purpose that my participants describe. Acknowledging and then acting on these calls to purpose is likely the hardest part of this process. In the case of Wade's dream, I believe that when he attended to his vision he was responding to his own subconscious which was calling for him to engage in a nature-

based livelihood. Wade has bridged the gap between an internal motivation and action. This research does not have the ability to thoroughly investigate the evolutionary reason for a subconscious connection to place. Yet, it does have the ability to describe it as a function of Wade's life experience. No one experience could be said to have motivated him to follow his dream that led him eventually to live at Ealue, since, as he describes in the rest of his interviews, much of his motivation had to do with his early exposure to nature. He attended summer camps, worshipped the Coureur des bois, and led young anthropological expeditions across the boulevard to the French community. These, coupled with the memory of the dream that he interpreted as premonition, encouraged his curiosity, and ultimately led him to realize his ultimate goal in life: "to be in the woods."

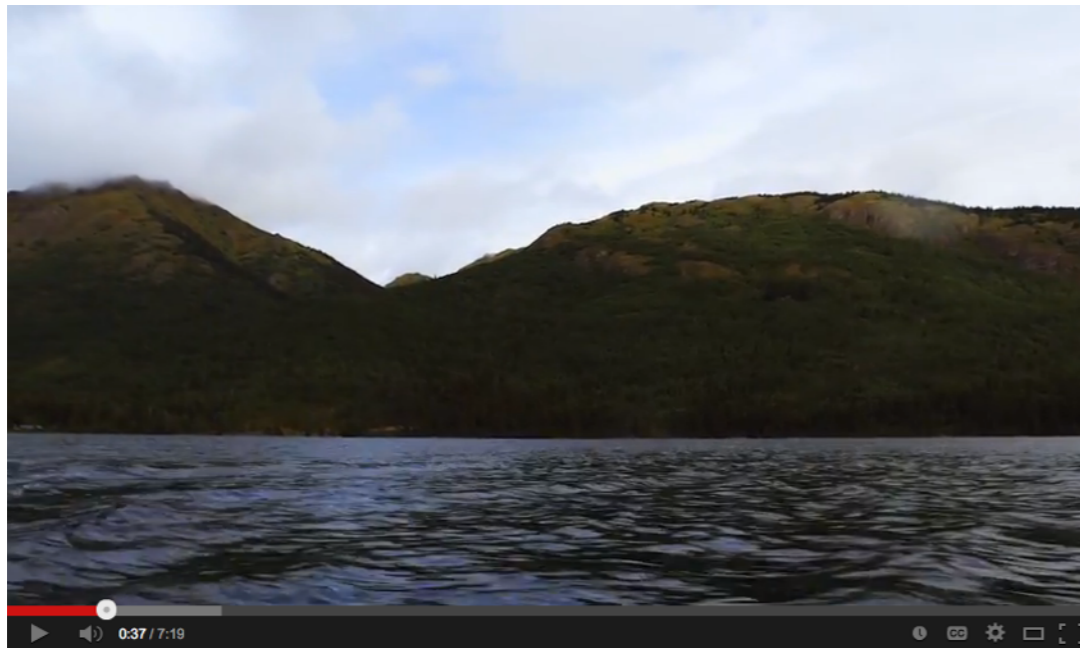
Paying attention to one's subconscious can be a surprisingly difficult task. It requires a reflexive metacognitive approach to considering one's relationships to self and other and can be supported through acts of slowness, meditation, and mindfulness.

Perhaps Wade's dream was easiest to identify in my research data as a subconscious connection to place, but some of the public participants' statements also elicited this including longing, imagination, and connection. I believe there is further research needed in this area to could help articulate the human connections to place and the role of the subconscious.

## Knowing a place and being home

Wade has returned to Ealue Lake and the Spatsizi area almost every year since his early twenties. After this ongoing relationship with the place, he knows this land intimately. Yet, he had a hard time describing what that means to him ([Interactive 4.53](#)). “There is something about knowing a piece of ground....”

**INTERACTIVE 4.53** Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (0:00 - 0:37)



Wade discussed this idea of knowing a place through its familiarity. He pointed at land features where he practiced particular activities like meditation and finding solace, or where he has cut trails for walking. His connection to this area was not always easy, however. When he first came to the Spatsizi area as the original park ranger, the place felt hostile and dangerous. Through his continued visits, he found an increasing ease with being here that helps him identify this place as “home” ([Interactive 4.43](#)).

*I just feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to come to know a place in Canada so well and to feel so comfortable in it that it really is home. It will always be home. This is the lake where my ashes will be spread....actually I will probably put some of them on top of the mountain.*

Claudia also talked about this concept of home through her sense of familiarity ([Interactive 4.54](#)). In this excerpt you see how Claudia reacted to being back in her childhood backyard. She spoke slowly, looked around carefully, and repeated many phrases. It was an emotionally charged experience returning to this place that seemed familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

**INTERACTIVE 4.54** Excerpt Claudia Li visits her childhood home (3:26 - 4:58)



Comfort in place was talked about in some of the public participants' posts. Five of the ten posts specifically referenced their home or houses as being adjacent to their (trans)formative places.

**Lincoln House Point swimming's** post mentions his childhood home as right next to the patch of ocean in which he found greater connection:

*My father died when I was 12. My mother and I stayed in the house we had lived in for years -- it was above a beach, housing a fish house as well as soft sand and a small boat yard. The beach, about a half-mile long was curved. On the left was a point -- Lincoln House point, -- jutting out into the bay.*

**Glenora Point, Dundee, New York's** post talks about how fortunate she feels to be linked to a place:

*I feel extraordinarily fortunate to have my life linked to this place... The natural beauty of the lake and surrounding hillsides encourage almost everyone who visits to slow down, breathe deeply, open their hearts, and connect to the place as well as each other in a special way.*

For this person, sharing his/her home could be part of the distinct pleasure of being at home.

## Nick looking nearby place knowing and being home

The notion of knowing a place and being home is likely nuanced by feelings of connectedness, groundedness, or settledness. This can be understood through considering where home is in relation to where one's own house exists. For some people these are the same place and for others they are not. For my participants who talked about

home, there was a certainty of its location. May Sam described returning to Meluxulh as being home, despite not having her own memories from that place. Claudia's memories from the backyard in Burnaby are from when she was less than five years old, yet she describes it as being deeply familiar to her, despite its changes.

Wade Davis and Gail Percy are world travelers, having recently returned from living in Washington D.C., where Wade worked with National Geographic, and Gail raised their two children. The couple typically travel more than nine months of the year. Wade has been coming to Ealue Lake and the Spatsizi area almost every year since he was the first park ranger of the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park in the mid 1970s. Despite his long-term devotion to the area, what is fascinating about his relationship to this place is how scale plays a part. The Spatsizi park and surrounding land is immense. It is one of the largest wildlife preserves on the planet and contains within it a requisite rich biodiversity. Yet its physical size is no match for Wade's world as an anthropologist. In his role with National Geographic, he has the opportunity to travel around the world to places that exist only in the dreams of most of the population. Even with these opportunities, Wade and Gail continue to return to Ealue Lake every year, devoting their summer months to living in a small lodge and hosting a few guests. They also work extensively for the protection of an adjacent area, named the Sacred Headwaters, from extractive industries; something keeps drawing them back year after year. I believe this need to return is a sense of place that represents both comfort and curiosity.

Wade and Gail describe their connection to this place as somewhere that evokes many emotions. It is where their children developed

independence, where they witnessed losses and gains, and where Wade will eventually be laid to rest (21:10 - 22:31):

*I remember going into the Spatsizi [in the 1970s] being acutely aware of the danger of bears, because the two parks planners the year before had been mauled by bears and the government forced us to carry around this ridiculous shotgun... Where as now, the whole Spatsizi feels like a garden to me. I know every plant. I know the habits of every animal. I can anticipate the weather. I never feel threatened by anything. I feel like I can walk through that country with such ease. It has really become my home. In a way there is no corner that I haven't visited. That is how I feel here....*

Wade is a consummate storyteller, yet if you watch this part of the interview, you will notice an easing of his face and rate of speaking. I think this demonstrates him speaking with more spontaneity; he could be described as showing his heart as it relates to this place.

Wade and Gail's sense of place seemed to deepen as the complexity of their own interactions with it increased. This represents a function of scale. Their connection to this place were once based on the enormity of this area and are now much more specific, localized, and nuanced. For instance, Wade and Gail have many personal relationships with the local Tahltan people and support their interests in self-government and cultural connections to the land.

Wade and Gail exhibit an adaptive and ever-evolving relationship to Northern British Columbia. Their relationships to this place could be described by their increased familiarity with the ecological systems in the area and their increased interest in conservation. Thus, viewing

transformation through the lens of scale can be a rich descriptor of the human relationship to place.

The natural beauty of the lake and surrounding hillsides encourage almost everyone who visits to slow down, breathe deeply, open their hearts, and connect to the place as well as each other in a special way. The meme, *place knowing and being home*, is a form of connection that begins to describe a sense of belonging to place, where one feels comfort and love of the surrounding ecological systems.

## Place is visceral and emotional

Claudia's visit to her childhood backyard was an emotional experience for her. I saw these emotions from the outset of Claudia returning to her place. She physically reacted to entering the backyard. In [Interactive 4.55](#) you can watch her first steps into the backyard after 20 years. She made small noises indicating apprehension and as she came around the corner, her arms curled and tightened. She said, "It's different....It's different."

[INTERACTIVE 4.55](#) Excerpt Claudia Li visits her childhood home (0:00 - 1:27)



Similarly, Wade described returning to Point Claire, his childhood home outside of Montréal as being a visceral experience. Our plan originally was to return there together, however, due to my budget constraints we were unable to go there for this research. He had recently returned there for a book he was writing and he talks about it in [Interactive 4.56](#).

[INTERACTIVE 4.56](#) Excerpt from Wade Davis talks about his connection to Ealue Lake and Montréal (1:52 - 2:51)



When he talked about every blade of grass resonating with memory, you can see that he was struck by his reaction to the change that occurred in Point Claire since his youth. "Shadows marked the ground where trees had fallen in my absence." Wade's memory of that place was drastically different to what it looks like now.

Many of the public participants' posts use emotional and visceral language to describe their connection to their (trans)formative places. Instead of choosing a couple of these as indications of deep-rooted connections, a short survey across any of them shows descriptions of storms, frozen ponds, mosquitos, playing, learning, and challenges. Imbedded in many of the descriptions you see words like love, connection, longing, and feeling.

## Nick looking nearby place is visceral and emotional

Connection to place can often be a visceral and emotional experience arising from triggered memory events. This meme was most apparent with participants returning to their childhood and adolescent places after a long hiatus. Iona's fascination with all aspects of the North Pacific Cannery was a good example of this. We toured the entire space looking at where she worked as a child packing cans and each of the houses that her family lived in along the sidewalk. She was also very excited to return to the place under the sidewalk where [Interactive 4.12](#) is primarily filmed. The activities that my participants ended up doing in these places were relatively benign, despite having the opportunity to get in a boat or re-enact the play that used to occur there. Yet the smells, sounds, tastes, and textures were resonant enough to remind the participants of experiences in those places.

I could see that my participants could read the land as if it were a book of their memories, yet they were not reading in the common sense of the word. In some ways, my participants' memories were a corporeal experience rather than one deriving from their brains. They were physically drawn to specific sites within their (trans)formative places and these sites acted as the memory-catalysts as well as talking points. The places were communicating to them in a way that is nested with layers of story and was engaged in through them physically being on the land.

The public participants' posts proved more difficult to parse out the visceral and emotional experiences mostly due to them being entirely memory-oriented activities rather than revisiting experiences. However, the language that my public participants used was rich with imagery and emotionality, suggesting that this meme is one that could be

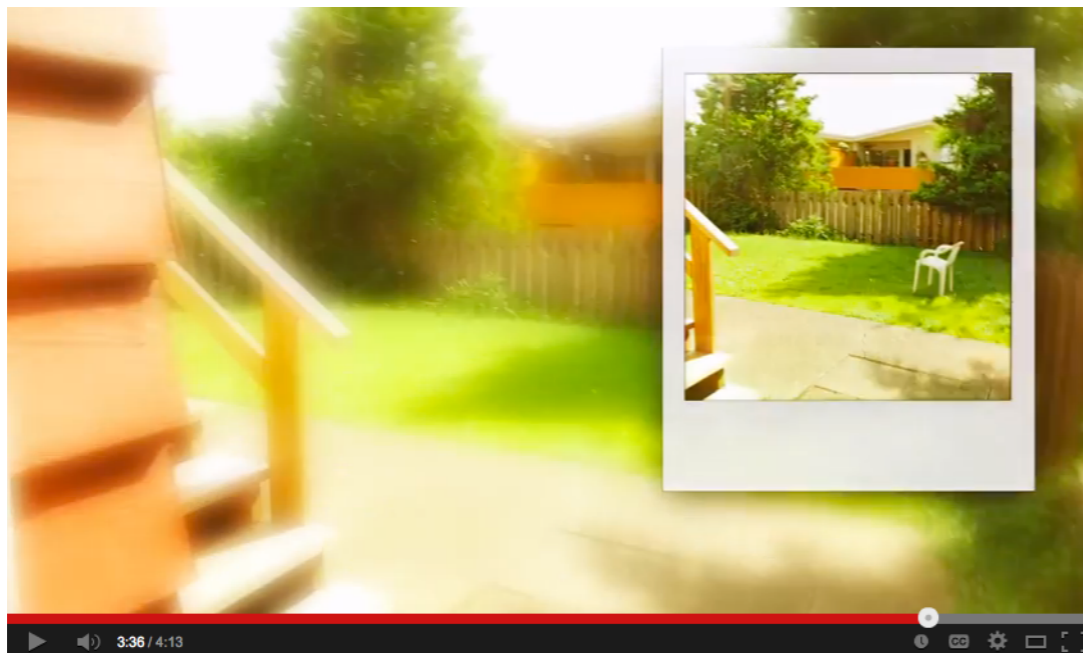
further ground-truthed by interviewing more people while returning to their (trans)formative places.

## Place engenders bliss and appreciation for life

Claudia referred to bliss, appreciation for life, and how the simple smell of a tomato transported her back to her five-year-old-self learning from her **Apō** ([Interactive 4.57](#)). This feeling of bliss was very poignant for her. She mentioned it a number of times through her interviews with a culminating thought that:

*...[this place] taught me this kind of appreciation of life. Because when I think back to that moment I keep thinking of the word bliss. And you can only appreciate it really deeply, like from your head to your toes.*

[INTERACTIVE 4.57](#) Excerpt from Claudia Li remembers her childhood home (2:20-2:52)



Bliss represented a time when love was uninhibited for Claudia. This memory and the sense of bliss also helped frame her connection to the

wonder of life, something that she reported that she brings to her work on a daily basis ([Interactive 4.58](#)).

[INTERACTIVE 4.58](#) Excerpt Claudia Li visits her childhood home (3:26 - 4:58)



May also exhibited an appreciation for life through her discussion of Khowutzun. It is apparent in the last few moments of our interview when she picks a berry in order to give it to the camera man. We convinced her that she should eat it ([Interactive 4.50](#)).

*To think of everything that is happening today, the violence and everything... ...So glad that we were okay....[May then eats the berry she has been holding in her hand]...mmm so sweet. Huy ch q'u [thank you and all my relations in HUL'Q'UMI'NUM'].*

This simple word is offered as a thanks to all her relations for the sweetness of the berry. Thankfulness is an act of appreciation that many **Indigenous** people practice as part of ceremony.

Similarly, throughout the film of Iona at the North Pacific Cannery, you see her playing with the riverside sedges in her hands (2:20). For this interview, she quite willingly sat on a stump after walking down there with us, despite a recent hip-replacement operation. You can also see her looking into the distance at times with a look of contentment (6:18). She mentioned multiple times since our interviews that she appreciated this opportunity to revisit her important places since they helped her find direction in her own life.

The public participants also resonated with the notion of appreciation and bliss. **My Neighbours backyard's post** was thankful for the kindness of his neighbours opening their yard to him. **MWW** wrote that the memory of his farm was “rejuvenating and exhilarating, somewhat in the same way I imagine childhood play once made me feel.” **Lincoln House Point swimming's** post reports a blissful experience of coming of age, where comes to terms with his/her existence through the freedom of swimming, “I knew I was a small -- but not totally insignificant -- creature in a vast cosmos.”

## Nick looking nearby place engenders bliss and appreciation for life

Learning with and in (trans)formative places may support the development of appreciation of life. For May and Iona, these moments were not overtly discussed, but rather tangentially apparent through their interactions with the places. Looking wholly at my interviews with those two, I can see that they took me on a celebration of their life through the lenses of significant outdoor places and that celebration was as much for them as it was for the places themselves.

Wade's interviews, though structured slightly differently, also spoke to this appreciation and bliss, in that we arrived at the beginning of a protest by the Tahltan First Nation against a resource extraction company that was setting up camp in their traditional territory. Wade indicated that he wanted to take us to this protest to show solidarity with the Tahltan after we had a chance to do my interviews. We travelled three hours up an unused rail-bed to show our respects to the camp. Yet Wade did not want photos or video taken of him or the camp since he was most interested in showing his support as a human being and neighbour to the Tahltan people, and did not want to be a celebrity. At one point during this side trip he said: “I am inspired by the Tahltan and their relationship to the land. They have been coming to this site for thousands of years to hunt and have every right to. Yet they conduct their protest with utmost respect to the engineers, surveyors, and negotiators.” Wade's relationship to the Spatsizi could be described as one of reverence and appreciation for the place and the people and he continually mentioned how much he has to learn from them both.

The appreciation for life and the relationships among humans, other-than-humans, and the land was something that Claudia's interviews helped articulate more fully. So much of Claudia's interview focused on her reverence for her grandmother, that at one point I asked if she felt like her grandmother, now passed, was still present in her life. She stated that she could sense that her grandmother was here still and at the same time, returning to this place made her appreciate her community that is currently alive ([Interactive 4.16](#): 8:46-10:17):

*I feel like I should have done more to share some of these memories when she was still around...I know regret's not a good way to live by. But it just reminds me that you never know what you have until you lose it...It encourages me to*

*reach out to my elders and try to make sure that I can do that with them while they are still around...I think a big part of being able to do that is to let go of all the crap that is between you and the other person so that you can show them love. So yeah, so mostly it is a memory of joy. But I think in some ways to experience really true deep joy it is often tied to some sense of deep loss or sadness or pain. When you are in the darkness and you see just a tiny bit of light, it's just that much greater.*

Claudia's relationship to her childhood backyard is not necessarily rooted in the ecology of the area or the stunning vistas, but it is a connection to her grandmother and the wisdoms she shared. This memory of her grandmother represents an interrelationship of generations, where this backyard provides the context for rich and visceral memories.

Claudia traced her current work as an activist with the Asian Canadian communities back to the teachings of her grandmother. That sense of love, peace and awe she experienced as a young girl with her grandmother is something she keeps close to her heart in her work. She frequently felt bliss from the memory of this place. She described this as a very deep appreciation for life and noted that this appreciation is not only for people and the family, but for the larger world. She understood this memory as a function of joy, love and appreciation for other lives and for the Earth as a whole. By understanding the connections to her ancestors and bringing this learning forward to her community, her experience exemplifies a cross-scalar dependency. She sees the value of tradition as shown through her reverence to her grandmother, yet seeks to find new ways to support her culture to embrace more sustainable behaviour as shown by her work with [sharktruth.org](http://sharktruth.org) and the Hua Foundation.

Similar to the other memes within this *place and connections* cluster, bliss and appreciation for life are challenging to discern from the public participants' posts. Perhaps the language of place-connection is rooted in a non-verbal space, where an in-person collaborative experience is necessary to witness it.

5

## (Trans)formed how?

*...the body is psychically, socially, sexually, and discursively or representationally produced...and in turn bodies reinscribe and project themselves onto their sociocultural environment so that this environment both produces and reflects the form and interests of the body. (Grosz, 1995, p. 242)*



Mt. Klappan foothills, Sacred Headwaters, BC

## Endogeny, Indigeneity, and (trans)formative memes

This chapter further examines the data, with an attempt at maintaining a wholistic view of the memes discussed above in the “Nick looking nearby” sections. Three distinct clusters of meanings were identified in this research: place and family, place and transformation, and place and connection. Though on their own the terms are benign, they can represent a profound collection of notions about human relations to place and the underlying processes of learning.

When I was identifying each of the memes, I realized that each term was interrelated to other memes and that representing them through heirarchy, dendritic, or linear models would misrepresent these relationships. This became evident to me when I identified an excerpt

of video and reported on a (trans)formative meme. I realized that imbedded within that single clip, there were many other memes represented. Memes were concurrently being presented by my participants. For instance, the memes, *place is visceral and emotional*, *place heals people and families*, and *place elicits nostalgia and a sense of loss* are all bound together within the moments under the wooden sidewalk at North Pacific Cannery with Iona Campagnolo. Thus, these notions are less basic units of meaning and more memetic in their relationships, where a notion exists as an organic entity influenced and contextualized within the larger socio-ecological realm.

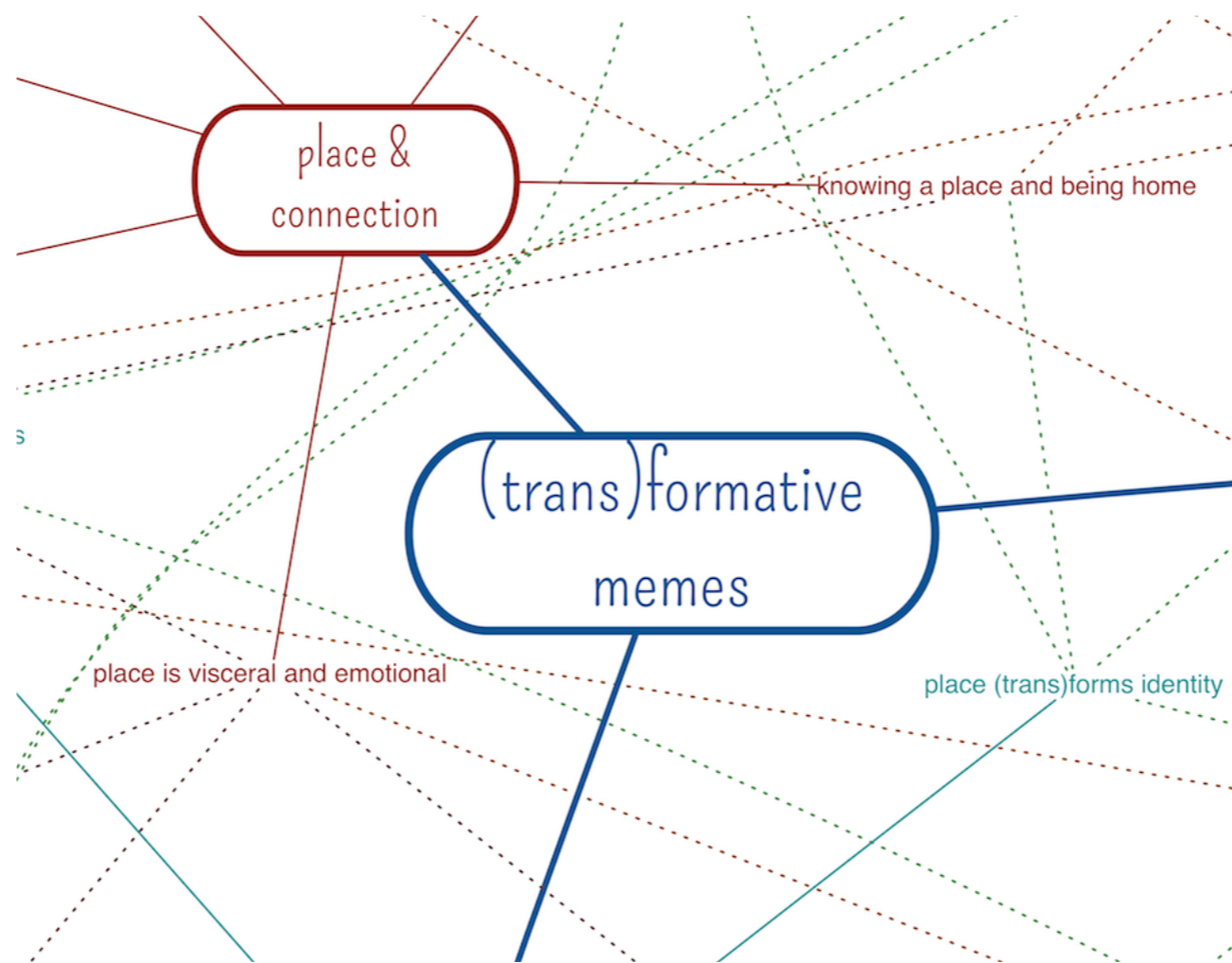
To see the data as a whole, I wanted to see how the memes interact among each other and the three clusters. To do this, I plotted them into the **mind mapping** software, Omnigraffle with the intention of linking memes that related, overlapped, and interconnected ([Interactive 5.1](#)).

I then used the data presented in the previous section to help link memes that might be simultaneously presented. With the **mind map**, I was able to represent the complexity of interrelations of the memes. The predominant value of this was to show the richness and intricacy of meaning that derived from peoples' relationships with their (trans)formative places. However, I believe that this map does only partial justice to presenting the relationships as complex, nested, and interrelated since it is hard to discern the multiple relationships that connect with one meme. Thus, I looked for further software that might provide a better sense of these relationships as both nested and cyclical.

Using the free **mind mapping** software called Spicy Nodes, found online at [www.spicynodes.org](http://www.spicynodes.org), I was able to represent my data as an

interactive **mind map** where each meme that is clicked becomes the central notion off which other related memes radiate. [Interactive 5.2](#) shows these memes and their inter-relationships as clickable mindmap. Since it is flash-based [you must view it on a computer](#) rather than iOS.

INTERACTIVE 5.1 Memes plotted as a mindmap



The Spicynodes **mind map** illustrates the relationships among the memes as cyclical and non-linear. For instance, follow the cluster of **place and connection** through to the meme, *place connects* *subconsciously* you will find three related memes: *place (trans)forms identity* and *place is (mis)remembered* from the **place and (trans)formation** cluster, and *place and family are teachers* from the **place and family** cluster. If you then click through *place and family are teachers* meme, you will see more memes that relate to that meme, and a link back to the overall cluster of *place and family*. This software allows for a relational approach to

representing data. This representation does not mean that every meme is directly connected to each other, rather that some memes which might be predominant in a video clip also can represent other memes.

INTERACTIVE 5.2 Interactive mind map of the connections among the (trans)formative memes



Each meme cluster is represented by coloured text (red = place and connection; yellow = place and family; teal = place and (trans)formation). This interactive only works on a desktop or laptop computer - not on an iPad. Click the link in the text on the previous page.

The insight I gained from mapping my data in this way was the ability to see the notions and language of my participants beyond a reductionist unit-approach to a more contiguous approach that resembles cycles similar to the **panarchy** model. It also provided a tool with which I could view the data through each conceptual framework lens. Throughout chapter five, I provide analysis and interpretation of the data using my perspective from chapter four (Nick looking nearby sections) with reference to those frameworks presented in chapter one, two and three.

## Endogeny and (trans)formative memes

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Much, if not all, of the human experience is framed within the socio-ecological realm, yet certain reactions can be described as rooted from a personal, intuitive, and internal dispositional motivation. Despite recent research that suggests that some cultural norms are inherited through epigenetics (Wallace & Wallace, 2011), our intuitive motivations are still somewhat of a mystery from the modern social and physical science domains (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Collins, 2000). These intuitive motivations can be categorized as emotional reactions, spiritual knowing, or callings. For this research, I frame the use of **endogeny** within the context of humans' connections to **nature**. Those connections are the actions and reactions that continue to motivate humans to connect with their (trans)formative places, whether through memory or physically.

Viewing this data through an **endogenous** lens begs the question: How might (trans)formative places, arguably an external-to-self concept, relate to internal motivations or intuition of a person? I saw **endogenous** reactions of each of the participants through their body

language. It was obvious that they all had visceral connections to the places that they shared with me. Not only did they talk about this connection, but I could feel it in the energy of the interviews, and see it written in their faces, what they were drawn to in the landscape, and even in their pauses between talking. I spent many days with each of the group one participants during this research process and I experienced a dispositional change with each of them when we returned to these places.

Let me point out two examples of these non-verbal cues and explore the memes that it relates to. First, the visceral connection and **endogenous** understanding of place was obvious in Claudia's body language seen at the beginning of her video of returning back to her Burnaby home. The noises she was making mixed with her wrists curling towards her body suggested a reluctance and apprehension. However, she kept going into the backyard. She was drawn to see how the place had changed or how her memory had changed her perception of it. Only moments later, when I asked her about what she learned from this place, she was able to tie the notions of bliss and appreciation for life that she felt as a five year old to her current work and attitudes towards the environment. I traced this experience through the interactive **mind map** and found the following memetic pathways ([Interactive 5.3](#)). Each image in the interactive identifies relevant memes that relate to Claudia's experience as an unfolding array of meanings. You will see interpretation at the bottom of each of the images of the **mind map**. Notice that each new meme is chosen from the related memes. Plotting Claudia's experience of returning back to her childhood home can highlight some of her **endogenous** responses to her (trans)formative place.

INTERACTIVE 5.3 Memetic path of Claudia re-visiting her childhood home in Burnaby



Three clustered (trans)formative memes



I believe that Claudia's experience of returning to her childhood backyard was more profound than the process of looking through old photo albums or watching home movies. The backyard itself engaged Claudia's memory by presenting a number of familiar and unfamiliar elements. Claudia walked into the experience with a set of expectations that were mostly unconscious, or at least only recently considered due to the pre-interview, and the process of walking into the backyard with different sights and sounds challenged those expectations. She then articulated those feelings as a mixture of sadness and of joy and through those feelings she described the bliss and learning to appreciate life and life processes. I believe that the

backyard prompted these reactions, not necessarily the questions that I posed to her. In a way, the backyard stored those questions through its own interiority, only to be unlocked through the process of revisiting.

Places, therefore, may affect our internal, emotional, and intuitive processes despite being biophysically external to our bodies. In addition, places may act as a geo-spatial storage location for memories and teachings. If our arms and legs are considered extremities to our bodies, so too are these (trans)formative places corporeal entities. We are intrinsically linked to them. The act of visiting them evokes emotional responses that could only be experienced through the proximal nature of being there. When these relationships to place are broken, due to development, climate change, emigration, or other means, so too could the responses to revisiting the places be painfully and emotionally visceral.

The second example of non-verbal **endogenous** relationships to place occurred in the interviews with Iona. Her moment under the North Pacific Sidewalk was a synergistic experience in that many divergent elements came together at one time. Let me contextualize the experience before explaining how these relates to **endogeny**.

After picking her up at the Prince Rupert Airport shuttle, I fixed the flat on our research wagon, while my father-in-law chatted with her and they tried to help my filmmaker recover from a particularly nasty nose bleed. She then announced "let's go to my spot." I had not considered that we would be traveling directly to her place since I had just spent two days driving 1500 kms and was rather weary. I then reminded myself that Iona is the former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and was excited to be here. I also realized I should probably jump when she says to jump. So we all piled in the wagon, complete with new tire, and drove back along the Yellowhead highway and onto

the bumpiest road in British Columbia, Skeena Drive. She launched directly into the history of the area mentioning names and connections and important moments while I urged my filmmaker to turn his camera on and I took awkward notes in the backseat (my father-in-law was driving). We soon realized that this was not working in terms of data collection so stopped writing notes. Meanwhile, we went bumpily by the sign for Inverness Cannery. “STOP! STOP!” said Iona. This was where she wanted to do the pre-interview with me to describe the memory of her (trans)formative place. Only it did not really happen that way; you can see in [Interactive 4.10](#), Iona talking about walking to Inverness Cannery for school and some of the history of the canneries along the Skeena Slough. She only hints at what she was thinking about telling me at the North Pacific Cannery: “I’ll tell you at North Pacific, a specific memory.”

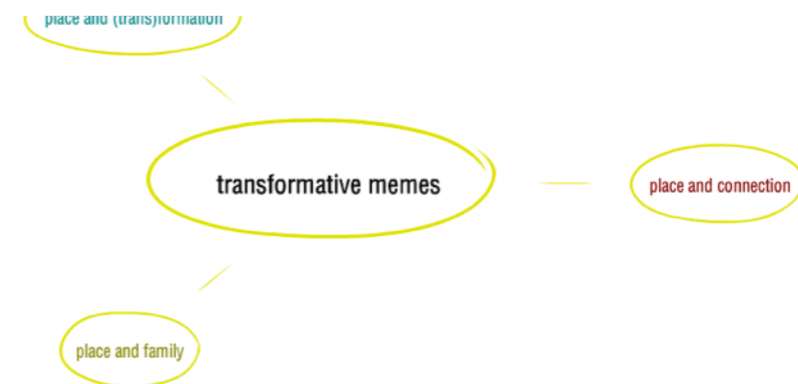
We then travelled to North Pacific, where Iona moved when she was seven years old, and after negotiating a small donation to the museum that now occupies the place so I could bring the filmmaker in with Iona, I asked her what she wanted to do. “Go down right to the end of the sidewalk and film me walking to you. That is where I want to go.” This, I found out later, was past her old houses, past where she used to put lids on the tops of the cans of salmon, past the mess hall and bath house, past the convenience store and head office, to a funny little ramp that led to the shoreline and under the sidewalk. We all b-lined to the end and she was right behind us. She was totally focused on her place, her story, and wanted to tell it to me right away. We went down under the sidewalk and before she was even settled on the stump, she started to recount what happened there ([Interactive 4.12](#)).

I wanted to share this pre-amble as context for Iona’s story to show how intent she was on sharing it. I had confirmed that Iona was going

to be part of the research in the Spring of 2013, and told her that she should not think too much about the story before we go there. It should be somewhat spontaneous. She had taken this quite literally, and I felt that she was bursting to let it out. And it is because of this need to share her story, that the main meme that showed up for her was so profound. The meme I saw within that moment, and also in all of the other videos with Iona was *place invigorates agency, pride, and hope*. This agency, pride, and hope was both born of the place, and also born through her own disposition.

I used the same technique of **mind mapping** and meme pathways as I did with Claudia’s videos with Iona’s visit to the North Pacific Cannery. I

INTERACTIVE 5.4 Memetic path of Iona re-visiting North Pacific Cannery



Three clustered (trans)formative memes



found that similar **endogenous** responses show up, but through a different memetic pathway ([Interactive 5.4](#)). Iona's feeling of pride and agency were influenced by the social circumstances from the place and also related to the place itself.

She is known for her support of both First Nations' rights as well as environmental activism throughout her late career, all of which were invigorated by her **outdoor** childhood experiences. Therefore much of her development of agency throughout her life is both internally motivated and externally supported. She learned from the people and the land that her own aspirations for leadership could be developed in congruency with equity, reconciliation, and self-government for First Nations in BC.

These examples of **endogenous** memetic pathways are likely two of many permutations of the pathways that could have been chosen to represent these revisiting experiences. In addition, the pathways should be considered non-linear and not only examples of **endogeny**. Rather, the internal and external work together to influence development throughout life. Though the predominant **endogenous** meme was chosen as an entry point into the **mind map** of memes, each memetic node could be an entry or exit from the process.

## Indigeneity and (trans)formative memes

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Looking at the memes through an **indigenous** conceptual framework gives some insights into the relationships that were created with (trans)formative places that originate from and with the land. This resonates with some **Indigenous** cultures, where ways of knowing are steeped in ceremony and nuance. **Indigenous** views of place contain specific knowledge to that place. Manulani Aluli-Meyer, the Hawaiian Indigenous epistemologist, helps articulate the relationship between specificity and some universalities among **indigeneity**. Long a critic of some Western idealisms regarding Indigenous universalities, she proposes that the Hawaiian view of the world has some universal views that help articulate Indigenous ways of knowing, and perhaps all knowing:

1. *Knowledge that endures is a spiritual act that animates and educates.*
2. *We are earth, and our awareness of how to exist with it extends from this idea.*
3. *Our senses are culturally shaped, offering us distinct pathways to reality.*
4. *Knowing something is bound to how we develop a relationship to it.*
5. *Function is vital with regard to knowing something.*
6. *Intention shapes our language and creates our reality.*
7. *Knowing is embodied and in union with cognition.*

(Aluli-Meyer, 2008, p. 141)

As you can see in Aluli-Meyer's universalities, **endogenous** ways of knowing are in fact complicit, if not holarchically nested within the **indigenous**.

Below, I provide two examples of **indigenous** knowing as they showed up for Wade and May within my research. Look for the relationships between internal knowing and knowing that occurs from their (trans)formative places.

Wade Davis' interviews were an example of deep understanding that derived from and with the land. Together with Gail and their family, Wade connected with the local Tahltan First Nations as both a friend and ally. This suggests that he not only has connected to the place itself but to the cultural practices of the people who belong to this land.

There was a moment when interviewing Wade in his little red motored canoe that sticks out in my mind as representative of his relationship to Ealue. After talking about his daughters relationship to the lake, stories from Edziza, his friend Big Al, the shaman, and longitudinal anthropological studies, he took me out in his canoe to show me a particularly special spot where he used to meditate. However, it was not this spot that provided insight into Wade's relationship to place. It was when he scanned back along the lake, towards his lodge and the hill behind it when he described "there something about knowing a place..." To me it looked like he was acknowledging an old friend, like one that you have experienced positive and negative moments with, but your love for them is constant. This moment helped me identify the meme, *knowing a place and being home*. It was here that I saw an **indigenous** relationship to place he embodied the seven tenets set out by Aluli-Meyer. The concept of home is both internal and externally influenced, but Wade's relationship to home is one that is **indigenous**.

Despite traveling around the world nine months of the year, Wade finds home in the Spatsizi area, and this is because he is able to ground himself there through his own creation story (the red canoe dream), the revitalization of cultural practices (support of Tahltan sovereignty), and his affective memories for the place. Following the (trans)formative memes with his interviews and an **indigenous** lens illustrates this ([Interactive 5.5](#))

INTERACTIVE 5.5 Memetic path of Wade re-visiting Ealue Lake and Spatsizi Area



Three clustered (trans)formative memes



With reference to [chapter one](#) and the principles of an **Indigenist** research paradigm, Wade could be considered someone who acts as an ally to **Indigenist** research. He told me that his ancestors originate from Ireland, strictly speaking, he is Irish-Canadian. Yet, he has been welcomed, named, celebrated, and invited to participate in sacred ceremonies with **Indigenous** peoples around the world. This is particularly true with his relationship with the Sacred Headwaters,

Ealue, and Spatsizi Wilderness Plateau Provincial Park. It represents one of the places he has spent the most time on Earth and therefore he relates to it through story, myth, and ceremony. In a way, his red canoe dream acted as a creation story for him connecting to his place. He was called into its existence through his subconscious.

May Sam is connected to the land as a First Nations elder, an **Indigenous** leader, and cultural practitioner. The films that I presented of her four places only partially exhibit her sense of place and her knowledge of the Cowichan area. Like so much research, the whole experience, despite when the filmmaker was recording or not, influenced my understanding of how she related to that area. Whether it was over lunch in the Doghouse café with her whole family, when many families got up from their table to greet her, or the moment when she played with baby Josephine amongst the crabs on the beach, May felt at home. But the experience was more than simply driving around to properties to look at run-down buildings or hillsides with overgrown bushes. I felt that the land was also greeting her. The weather was glorious, her family was engaged in hearing her stories, and we were able to get to all of her sites without hitches. The land seemed to rise up to meet her energy and filled her with a vibrancy of story-telling, and she honoured its presence in the last few moments of the T'lulpalus video with a simple thank you. Like Wade, May also manifests Aluli-Meyers' statement that "she is Earth." The relationships she created with the Earth acted as an educative experience where place and family were teachers ([Interactive 5.6](#)).

May's relationship to the Cowichan Valley is embedded in Khowutzun, which to her means more than the place name of the valley. It is an existential statement to be from Khowutzun. Her family is Khowutzun, knitting is Khowutzun, the river is Khowutzun, and the teachings are

INTERACTIVE 5.6 Memetic path of May re-visiting Cowichan Valley



Three clustered (trans)formative memes



Khowutzun. May is connected through this concept as a person, but she also represents the place herself. Therefore, when I said the land came to greet her, in a way she was greeting herself.

Each of the memetic pathways of this section ended at the meme *place (trans)forms identity* intentionally. The interactions, processes, and relationships that are formed through and with (trans)formative places always shape and (trans)form our identity. We are inexorably entwined with the places we engage.

This chapter started with a quote by feminist and urban geographer Elizabeth Grosz. She works primarily in the realm of cities and built environment, but she also had clear statements about how humans relate to nature. The attempt at creating some dualistic binary between

interiority and exteriority falls flat when considering the complexity of how we perceive ourselves in and of nature:

*The body and its environment produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other. (Grosz, 1995, p. 242)*

In other words, Grosz is saying that we make up the environment as much as it makes up us. This leaves me with the question: If we see these connections, are we able to live in a way that honours those connections as real?



Fish Counting on the Nass River, BC

## Panarchy and (trans)formative memes

Considering the interrelationships of the **endogenous** and **indigenous** realms of how people connect to place, there still remains an investigation of the processes that are occurring in and with (trans)formative places. I believe that **panarchy** theory, a form of complexity theory, can help identify and articulate the processes at play for my participants' relationships with their places. Below I explore each component of **panarchy**, with particular reference to the adaptive cycle and the adaptive capacity (resiliency) of each of the four initial participants. Where appropriate, I also reference some aspects of the ten public participants.

## Holarchy and (trans)formation

Remembering the role of individual and social holons being nested within a holarchy ([chapter two](#)), many memes found in my data can be identified as holarchical. Consider the meme *place, family, and community strengthen respect*. This meme has distinct holons that form a whole concept as it relates to May Sam's interview. There was the individual holon: May, made up of individual and social holons (her mind, emotions, and body), with functional artifacts (stories and memories) together with the social holons (her family and the ecological systems). As I list the various parts that were present in these

interviews, you can see how complex it can become when considering nested systems. Yet, May's understanding of this area is relatively elegant. In May's view, her relationships with her family are also her relationships to the land. She believes she is Khowutzun, she is everything and everything is her. This even includes her cultural practices, family, and the places where she grew up. This understanding of the nestedness of systems is a holarchical understanding and suggests an acknowledgement of the complexity and through that acknowledgement she builds respect for self, family, community, and ecological systems.

Yet this meme of *place, family, and community strengthen respect* is not the only meme that is an example of holarchy. All of the memes are holarchically related, but the following memes are excellent examples of the holarchical quality of (trans)formative places:

#### **Place and family:**

- *place, family, and community strengthen respect (seeing self, family, community, and ecological systems as nested and related and worthy of respect)*
- *place heals people and families (the physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments experienced by individual/social holons can be healed through processes occurring in a (trans)formative places)*

#### **Place and (trans)formation:**

- *place induces worry about integrity (worrying about the ecological integrity is often grounded in an ethnocentric view. It can also include an acknowledgement of the larger's*

*ecosystem's affect on the nested holons of human integrity and health)*

#### **Place and connection:**

- *place is a community catalyst (place acts as a binding context but also engages its human citizens in activity through the artifacts of **place-attachment**)*
- *place invigorates agency, pride, and hope (individual holons make meaning from their (trans)formative places which helps identify personal passions, agency and senses of hope)*

The meme cluster *place and family* is more represented by the holarchy element with specific reference to my work since I am concerned with the human social and emotional relationships to place. If I were looking through a different lens, say strictly biophysical or psychological, these memes might appear differently - and the understanding of how holarchy is represented by (trans)formative places might also be different.

The acknowledgment of the holarchy of systems supports engaging with the world through non-linear and even post-structural techniques (the rejection that the world can be interpreted through definable structures with binary opposites). If places have the opportunity to influence our worldview such that, even if subconsciously, we alter how we see ourselves connecting with each other, ourselves, and the outer world, then their presence in our lives suggests a fundamental opportunity for formative and transformative movement.

## Scale and (trans)formation

In **panarchy** theory, scale refers to a chrono-geo-spatial level in which the system-in-question is examined. This means that scale is both time and land-based. To fully understand any system, the appropriate scale(s) should be considered. In relation to the holarchical system, this might mean that you choose your upper and lower levels of holons as boundaries and consider how they might be interacting. As described in chapter two, scale forms a major basis for this area of research through place-based education, ecological identity, **solastalgia**, and sense of place.

Scale can also be seen in the memes identified within this research. For example, the meme *knowing a place and being home* provides a rich example of scale. In knowing a place, we are engaged in seeing it through all its scales from the microscopic soil characteristics to the macroscopic landscape understanding. Whether we acknowledge this understanding or not is almost irrelevant to the act of knowing, since part of the development of this relationship derives from experiences. Sometimes knowing about a place might be more an embodied knowing than a cognitive knowing. This embodied knowing could come through gardening and recognizing differences in soil types to witnessing weather patterns render a familiar landscape unfamiliar through its intensity. When places become home-places, they transform in scale even further. Our sense of their scale becomes intimate, an extension of our identity and self.

Wade and Gail's connection to their (trans)formative places have become increasingly nuanced as they continue to return to Northern British Columbia every summer. The relationships themselves are scalar, in that they both relate to Ealue Lake and Northern BC through

large and small scales concurrently. For instance, Wade connects to the enormity of the topographical expanse that is all of the Spatsizi area, in a way that is concurrently discrete, pithy, and subtle. Both Wade and Gail work with local First Nations, collect food from native plants, and see layers of personal history among the valleys and peaks of their summer lodge.

Scale is represented within the memes found in this research through a number of interpretations as well. Below are the main themes that represent scale:

### **Place and family:**

- *place engages shared stories (shared stories can represent a diversity of views of scale. Iona's sense of scale is likely different than many of her contemporaries from under the sidewalk)*

### **Place and (trans)formation:**

- *place is (mis)remembered (our memory can play tricks on us through the process of imagination, omission, or rosy lenses. Scale is a commonly cited manipulation of perception for people returning to childhood places: "it seemed so big at the time")*

### **Place and connection:**

- *knowing a place and being home (many different levels of scale can be represented through knowing a place [micro to cosmological]; this is further complicated through the process of identifying home)*

Understanding geographical scale is a ubiquitous activity in schooling systems around the globe. Rarely does the opportunity come up to examine our relationships to various scales of landscape through emotional or psychological lenses within these same schooling systems. This is especially true of cherished landscapes. The closest I can see this occurring is through the increasing trend in community mapping projects and post-modern geography (ex. <http://www.cmnbc.ca>). Still, learning to map places, and being in a place such that you might identify it as home represent a different intensity of acknowledgement.

Like holarchical views of the world, understanding scale with an increased appreciation for the human-**nature** relationships can help form and (trans)form our behaviour on Earth. Like Wade's, the human relationship to place can go beyond seeing superficially, to include the protection of the place's integrity, which in turn is protecting the multiple scales of integrity above and below it.

## Time and (trans)formation

I am convinced of the interpretation of time by aspects of the Kantian view, which refers to time as a construct of the human perception of the world (Golob, 2012). Of course Newtonian time, a realist sequential view of time, helps in the realms of natural sciences for understanding adaptation and change but falls short of describing the human experience of time that can be distorted. Heidegger's aforementioned concept of **dasein** helps us see time through a different lens that might also explain what is occurring in the time-space of (trans)formative places. That the passing of seconds is a continuous passing of "nows" suggests a constant experience: "Time...is a sequence of nows precisely because in every flowing now it is a now, even another

now" (Heidegger as cited in Golob, 2012, p. 363). This view of time allows for the consideration of projecting historical events into the present and even the future. It also provides a philosophy for which returning to place, is both a new event as well as an echo of some previously experienced "now."

Time is of critical importance to this research and shows up in a number of ways throughout the process. Time is presented as a function of feeling connected, like the public participants sharing stories of nostalgia and **solastalgia** through the online website such as **Glenora Point, Dundee, New York's** post. This participant's long exposure to that site has created a bond that is rich with emotional and relational language.

Similarly, the four participants of group one have multiple relationships with time and their (trans)formative places. First there is the function of the amount of time that has elapsed since revisiting the (trans)formative places (ex. 75 years for Iona; 20 years for Claudia). This elapsed time likely affected their responses. For Claudia, the experience was more immediately emotional. Whereas Iona, ever diplomatic, took a little longer to respond emotionally to the place. Wade and May both had less emotional responses to the places but they have been returning to their places somewhat frequently in their adult life, which perhaps affected the visceral memories that elicit emotional responses. The differences among my participants responses, however, could be explained by a number of factors that are beyond the scope of this research, like personal disposition, integrity of the place, and memory abilities.

Each of my group one participants were chosen because they were engaged in their community as a leader and are seen as **exemplary** amongst their communities of practice. When I asked each of them

what they have learned from their (trans)formative places, they all responded by drawing a line from experiences of that place to their current work. These responses are represented by a number of memes, but one that stands above the rest in relation to the concept of time, is *place invigorates agency, pride, and hope*. In particular, Iona's sense of agency throughout her life was derived, in part at least, from those moments under the sidewalk. Iona's experience at North Pacific still resonates with her. Time played a critical role in Iona's development as a leader. She sees the full circle that connects her under-the-sidewalk-experience with the visit to the Nass Valley and her friends and colleagues at the administrative building of the self-governed Nisga'a Nation. It is this circular relationship she has to time that resonates so well with the Heideggerian approach to understanding its role in our lives. She could be considered **dasein** in those moments, a being that considers their own being.

Similar to the other components of **panarchy**, time plays a critical role in all of the memes. Some highlighted memes that I found representing time as it relates to human connections to (trans)formative places include the following:

#### **Place and family:**

- *place heals people and families (healing through any trauma requires time in places. Engaging (trans)formative places as part of the healing process could provide insights, power, and support whether the **(trans)formation** was negative or positive)*

#### **Place and (trans)formation:**

- *place elicits nostalgia and a sense of loss (Similar to the healing aspect, time plays a role in our sense of loss. Loss*

*might present with more immediacy if less time had elapsed since the alteration to the place or the memory)*

#### **Place and connection:**

- *place invigorates agency, pride, and hope (Time in (trans)formative places support an invigoration of agency, whether it is to protect, support, or see future goals through the lens of time and place.)*
- *place connects subconsciously (even when we are away from (trans)formative places, they continue to play a role in our psyches, be it conscious or subconscious)*

Heidegger's view of time and being has been linked with aspects of buddhism (James, 2000; Nelson, 2012). Relationships to time that support paying attention to the present moment are foundational to meditation practices, reflexivity, and mindfulness. Through the practice of being present in the moment, we can often see and experience the world through insightful ways. This is linked both to our **endogenous** state, and the **indigenous** relationships in which we are engaged. So time, in a way, plays its most powerful role as the relationship with "now-ness." That Iona was able to articulate the power of the site under the sidewalk, Claudia could come to terms with the changes in the Burnaby backyard, Wade could reflect on the ever-changing and always visceral Montréal neighbourhood, and May engaged four-generations of her family through the reflexive exercise of her childhood homes, suggests that **(trans)formation** requires time to be interpreted with circularity. That is, change and personal development seems to be supported through the returning to these places (physically and in our mind) throughout our lives.

## Cross-scalar dependency and (trans)formation

Considering that **panarchy** systems describe multiple states of equilibria among subsystems, cross-scalar dependency suggests that in social systems, multiple worldview states may co-exist and interact. This might be true even in the face of conflicting worldviews, were a stasis might be reached through processes of pluralism. The process of the adaptive cycle is entrained through the process of cross-scalar dependencies (Varey, 2011). Varey's use of **panarchy** theory to describe psychological systems enables further understanding of the psycho-social aspects of (trans)formative places and their cross-scalar dependencies:

*Cross-scalar connections and dependencies in different levels of organization of thought are primarily evidenced by non-level-specific psychological tensions. The complexity of these tensions relates to every interaction, between every level of organization, for each scale of observation. They enable the entire system to have resilience and maintain integrity in response to small perturbations at different levels of complexity. (Varey, 2011, p. 518)*

Relationships with place and in particular (trans)formative places suggests an acknowledgement of cross-scalar dependencies that humans have with nature. Beyond the simplicity of the basic needs of water, shelter, and food, the relationships we form with each other, and with (trans)formative places can enhance the richness of our existence. These relationships to place are necessarily complex, enabling movement and adaptation within oneself as a form of resiliency. If we are truly (trans)formed by places, then our thoughts and behaviour have adapted from those experiences. Through this adaptation, we can also learn what it feels like to adapt (or at least have the opportunity to

acknowledge adaptation). This process of learning about personal adaptation enhances our ability to live mindfully, and further ties us physically, psychologically, and emotionally to the land.

Cross-scalar dependency ties each of the memes together as an interrelated evolving set of experiences. Of course, not all of them exist with the same intensity for all people at all times. This is the value of approaching systems thinking using a cross-scalar view. Each participant might be engaged in multiple equilibria of thought or emotional relationships, connected with multiple equilibria of ecological relationships, connected with multiple equilibria of social systems. Movement in some systems affects movement in other systems. The memes that represent this the best are likely found in the meme cluster *place and connections*. For instance, the meme, *place engenders bliss and appreciation for life* is a form of human relation to the cross-scalar dependent processes that are occurring for Claudia when she returned to her former Burnaby home.

Claudia's connection to her ancestors, and her understanding of the need for change in her cultural communities represents cross-scalar dependency. Without the relationships with family, community, and culture, she would not be able to have a voice in these places. This appreciation derives from early experiences with her grandmother, tending to her tomato plants. She is driven by the respect she has for her grandmother and the sense of bliss that she experienced working with her in the garden. None of the components of this social system can exist without the ecological system and thus they are integrally inter-related. To connect with her Asian Canadian communities, she must simultaneously recognize and engage the social, cultural, ecological, and spiritual belief systems which all interact and inter-relate with each other.

Other memes that help illustrate cross-scalar dependencies are shown below:

### Place and family:

- *place, family, and community strengthen respect (the diversity of systems represented through the process of connecting to place among the holons of individual, family, community, and ecological communities represents a cross-scalar system of dependency)*

### Place and (trans)formation:

- *challenge and resiliency are rooted in place (relationships to place enable an adaptive cycle process where challenges and stochastic events represent interventions to the status quo and thus engage humans in ethical and moral processes which can engage resiliency)*

### Place and connection:

- *place engenders bliss and appreciation for life (seeing beyond the superficiality of relationships with **nature** and places can support feelings of euphoria and appreciation for the processes of life)*

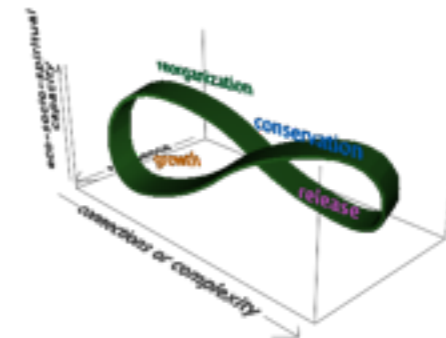
Cross-scalar dependencies can be articulated as inter-relation or Nhất Hạnh's **interbeing**. Recall the love letter to [interbeing](#), presenting the concept of systems thinking through clouds and their relationship to paper. When we start to recognize the dependent relationships that place has with our own psyche, we engage in the processes of systems thinking, which when linked to compassion can be powerful skills and values for “living like we plan on staying” (Dr. R. Kool,

personal communication, March 2006; Astbury, Huddart, & Theoret, 2009, p. 167).

## Adaptive Capacity and (trans)formation

Adaptive capacity can also be described with the term resiliency within **panarchy** systems and the ability to adapt in social systems is likely related with the psycho-social processes of acknowledgement leading to behaviour change. Encouraging humans to engage in the reflexive exercises of acknowledging the systems that they are connected with (including that of (trans)formative places) can contribute to adaptive behaviour that is also recursively self-sustaining.

### INTERACTIVE 5.7 The adaptive cycle (click to interact)



*Three dimensional panarchy model showing the relationship among potential, connectedness, and resilience within an adaptive cycle (Holling, 2001).*

The adaptive cycle model could be considered the most useful component presented by **panarchy** theory within social sciences (Stanger, Tanaka, Starr, & Tse, 2013). Notice that for each of the components that have been discussed, the phase-based process provides descriptive language for the transformation that has occurred. For example, Iona's process of release under the sidewalk at North Pacific likely moved through growth throughout her life to a place of conservation today. She would have reorganized her thoughts, attitudes, and belief systems throughout her personal and political career until she felt hopeful and comfortable with the current attitudes and approaches of the Nisga'a Nation in British Columbia. This form of adaptation is a long-view, allowing her to engage her early experiences under the dock as a source of inspiration and moral compass throughout her political career. As the Nisga'a treaty was signed, she could enter a last phase of conservation within the cycle. A system with high adaptive capacity allows for a continuation of adaptation, meaning that disruptions and releases can be handled within the current system through changes to structure and orientation. Iona's ability to maintain her interest in supporting First Nations throughout her complex life is an indication of high adaptive capacity and deep resiliency.

When applied to social systems, there can be value in using language that is grounded in ecological terminology. In other papers, I have suggested that ecological language is sometimes exploited incorrectly to create weak or misleading arguments (Stanger, 2011b). I believe that because **panarchy** was developed by ecologists for the purpose of understanding the role of resiliency within all systems, it provides a strong research-based lexicon for social sciences (Holling, 2001). In the three-dimensional diagram that represents the adaptive cycle ([Interactive 5.7](#)) notice that the z-axis, resilience, is increased through

the process of reorganization and early growth. Holling calls this "the adaptive capacity" of a system, something that my four interviewees demonstrate with their discussions of how their places have transformed them. As they reorganized from the experiences they had (and are continuing to have) from those places, they were able to acknowledge new combinations of the way they thought, thereby increasing their ability to adjust their paradigms, belief systems, and even worldviews. These cognitive and emotional adaptations play directly into their active lives, ultimately leading to their involvement in civic engagement and to their resiliency as humans.

**Panarchy** theory represents a new horizon in socio-ecological theory and can be beneficial in helping us to understand the ways in which change occurs. Also, being an ecological model, based in place, it is useful in describing the important role that place has on the transformation of people. Be it reflecting on one's childhood or reconnecting with an important place, social systems are constantly in motion. We have a choice as humans to pay attention to as much as we can or to ignore these changes. I believe that by paying attention not only will our human lives be better, but we will live better on this planet. For if we do, we might start living in recognition that everything is truly connected and that we are relationally accountable and responsible to more than just ourselves as a species.

6

## Continued (trans)forming

*I am intrigued by the possibility that culture shapes how biological scientists describe what they discover about the natural world. If this were so, we would be learning about more than the natural world in high school biology class; we would be learning about cultural beliefs and practices as if they were part of nature. (Martin, 1991, p. 485)*

Lichen and Moss encrusted Lava fields, Nass Valley, BC

My attempt to conduct this dissertation as a **transdisciplinary** research project led me to this critical point. Still I feel that an act of synthesis resembles a reductive process. In order to attempt to overcome this, I wrote this section with some knowledge of the specific disciplines that I have bumped up against. In a few cases I have done more than bump. Yet, embracing the prefix (trans) in all forms that it appears in this dissertation ((trans)formative, **(trans)disciplinary**, (trans)form), I believe that there are possibilities for the creation of innovative and powerful theories that are both new and old, in-between and adjacent, ephemeral and eternal.

Did I have to create something that was profoundly new for this dissertation? According to the process of receiving a doctorate at the University of Victoria it has to be original in almost all regards. Philosophically and ecologically speaking, I believe that originality is likely unattainable in most, if not all, fabrications of invention (Bowers, 1995). When teaching, I often tell my students that uniqueness is extremely rare. Unusualness is more common. Since one of the main tenets of this research suggests that everything is connected, then in no regards is my research new, unique, or original. Perhaps it can be considered unusual, and I would be glad of that.

Usual positivist research is done as a process of science with a question, a replicable method, and synthesized findings, which I have adopted in part; but I then moved this process into an arena of public interactivity, participatory action research, and media-sharing landscape, thereby extending beyond a usual relationship with data, results, and conclusions.

Usual research is presented in a linear chapter-based dissertation, which I have made some use of, but I also created an alternative

media-rich dissertation that allowed me to show raw data, interpreted data, and interactive data as part of my process and my results.

Usual research is designed to operate in a linear path where findings are shared with the public after final drafts are reviewed and corroborated. I will continue to endeavor to publish based on this research, but also during the research, I created iBooks that related to this work, published in peer-reviewed journals, developed an interactive website to present my data and asked the public to participate, and solicited written and radio press.

I hope that my work is unusual, and at the same time I acknowledge that it dances within the bounds of eco-psychology, environmental education, postmodernist geography, eco-feminism, socio-ecology, transformative learning, **Indigenous** education, and curriculum theory. I do not think that my unusual research is unique and I hope it contributes to those disciplines and beyond. I am comfortable working in the liminal spaces where I use the ever-changing tides of a complexity lens to understand the human relationships to Earth.

## Place-Attachement and this research

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In this research, my participants helped articulate that learnings that come from connecting to (trans)formative places were profound in a their life. Places can be teachers of respect, relationships, and ecological systems. They can engage us in story-telling, in humility, and in civic awareness. **Place attachment theory** (Scannell & Gifford, 2010) corroborates many of my memes, with the person, place, process model that is explained in [chapter three](#). I decided to cross reference between the data that I found in my research and Scannell & Gifford's model. The person dimension (with its individual and cultural/

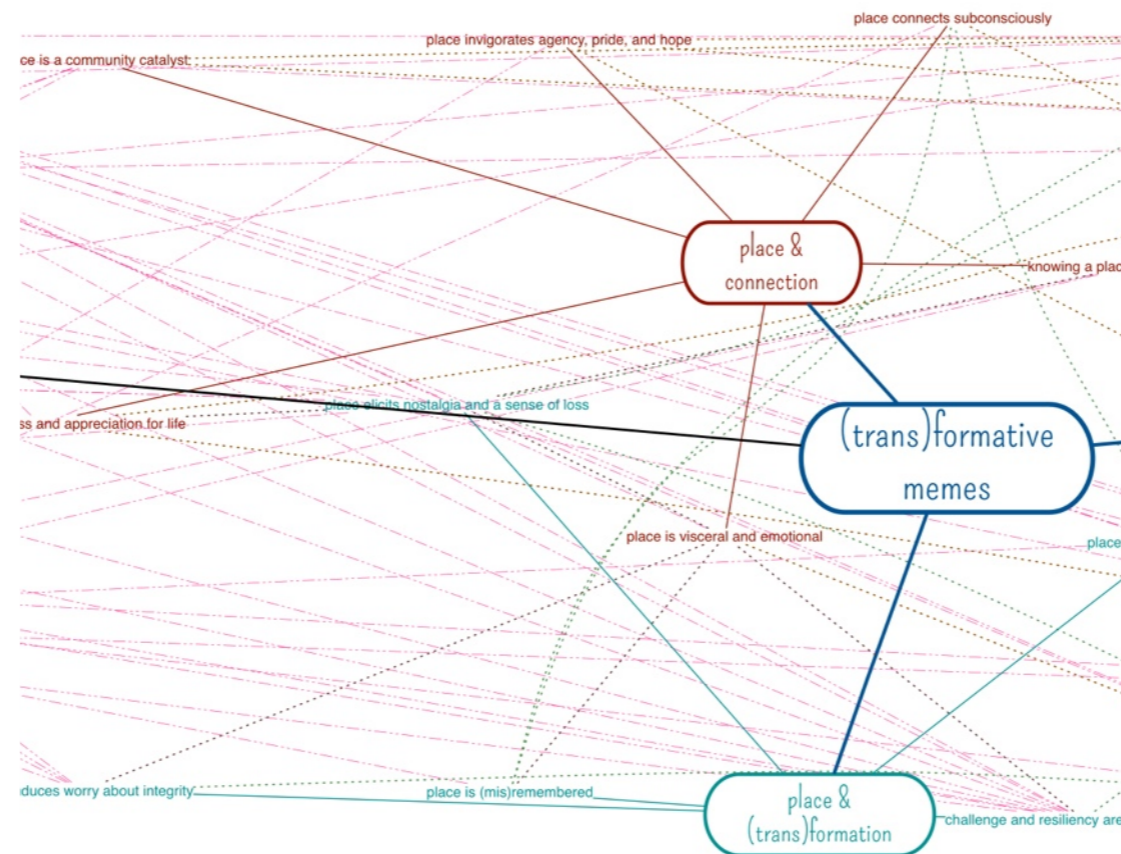
group levels) is captured by the memes collected in the cluster *place and family*. The place dimension is represented by aspects of both the meme clusters: *place and connection* and *place and (trans)formation*.

This is also similar to the psychological process dimension. I have mapped the connections amongst my memes and the dimensions and sub-aspects within **place-attachment** theory to show similarities and differences of the two models

(Interactive 6.1). Notice three different images. The first is where the models are presented side-by-side with pink dotted lines connecting the two. This shows the beginning of the process of connections. Then I arranged the models using a force-directed layout, which highlights nodes (memes/sub-aspects) that have more connections allowing for greater clarity of the nodes that are more often referenced. The circular layout shows the complexity of relationships and interrelationships where each node is equidistant from each other. From this diagram, you should notice that the memes that I identify in this project sync well with research around **place-attachment** theory. For instance, memes within *place and (trans)formation* and *place and family* directly link to components within the person and process categories of place-attachment. There are many overlapping notions like the connection between *place (trans)forms identity* and

*individual personal realizations*. In addition to synchronicity between these two models, I find the psychological processes dimension of **place-attachment** theory to be the most intriguing of all the models I examined. The three aspects, behaviour, cognition, and affect are directly related to memes within my research. For instance, within the cognitive aspect of this process, the sub-aspect knowledge represents the learning that occurs from **place-attachment**. I connected this to the memes, *place and family are teachers*, *knowing a place and being home*, *place (trans)forms identity*, and *challenge and resiliency are rooted in place*. As we acquire knowledge about a places, there are a number of processes that occur. Not only is the place contributing to knowledge creation, but it engages us in affective knowing which is both visceral and emotional. According to my research, these realms - knowledge and affective knowledge - are linked. They can be represented within the meme *knowing a place and being home*. Place also changes how we see ourselves through the process of overcoming challenges and increased resiliency. We learn about how we might be more resilient as humans by having (trans)formative experiences in place.

INTERACTIVE 6.1 Connecting the tripartite place-attachment model to the model presented in this research



First version of the process of connecting lines to explore the similarities between the two models



challenges and increased resiliency. We learn about how we might be more resilient as humans by having (trans)formative experiences in place.

My data helps further colour and extend the complexity of Scannel & Gifford's tripartite model, which the authors suggest requires more investigation around the developmental concepts within **place-attachment** theory. I agree that the educative aspects of place are not well articulated in many fields, including environmental education. With emotion, knowledge, and behaviour being central to the processes that occur for humans in (trans)formative places, I believe that this work has relevance to research in the developmental realms:

- *The creation of geo-spatial memories, where memories become contextualized by ecology, land-features, and people. These memories are tied directly to place and therefore act as reminders to our connections to place. Part of our cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development is therefore linked to our relationships to place because we are in some ways part of that place;*
- *The movement within a **panarchy** adaptive cycle, which can (trans)form thought, behaviour, and worldviews due to interventions, disruptions, and stochastic events can affect a person's normal routine. Place can help catalyze these events as well as nurture us through those events.*
- *The synthesis of life experiences, including a process of healing, catalyzing and identifying new priorities, can support the development of compassionate approaches to life. This seems to be particularly true when returning to previous (trans)formative places after many years.*

## How does place (in)form and (trans)form us?

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The three tributaries of ontology introduced at the beginning of this research are now spilling into the river that is my conclusive chapter. Floating on the tributary of **endogeny**, I was able to discern my participants' personal and intuitive relationships to their (trans)formative places. With the **indigenous** tributary, I heard and experienced my participants referring to the land as a character in their life-stories, influencing who they are as individuals. Through **panarchy** and complexity tributaries, I noticed their relationships to place were conducted through intricate dances within and among multiple systems. These tributaries have come to a confluence in this research, but continue to exist as separate and inter-related entities. I have traveled down the river now with all three, and have come to the delta of notions, concepts, and thoughts.

The original goal of this research was to explore the role that childhood and adolescent **outdoor places** have as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic engagement. To understand this, I enacted two objectives:

1. Investigate the emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological experiences elicited when **exemplary** citizens revisited their important **outdoor** childhood or adolescent places.
2. Examine the role that these places can play in awakening the relationships among social systems, citizens, and **nature**, to inspire learners about the value of living "as if the world mattered" thus engaging them in civic and ecological responsible actions.

These objectives were certainly ambitious, yet I felt that through the process of engaging the public and examining four participants'

interviews in detail, I was able to articulate some salient points when it comes to place and connection, place and engagement, and place and relationships. All research must return to its original question as a way to help communicate its own value. My original question was this:

*Does learning that occurs in childhood and adolescent outdoor places inform civic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual engagement or connectedness over the course of people's lives? If so, how?*

For the first part of the question, I feel that the simple answer is yes. But of course, I set myself up with a compounded inquiry. Can I say that my four interview participants and ten public participants provide enough representative material to warrant a yes? Perhaps...but not on all of the compounded civic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual fronts. I definitely heard, saw, and experienced answers for civic engagement and connectedness from many of the participants. Emotional engagement and connectedness was also present in the group one participants and somewhat represented by the group two participants. Physical engagement and connectedness was obvious in my group one participants as they walked, touched, and felt their way through their triggered memories. Spiritual engagement was only lightly discussed by the group one participants and all but not present from the group two participants. Spirituality might have been more apparent if we had spent longer together, or if I asked more pointed questions along the lines of spiritual resonances. I have a feeling that these connections existed for my participants, but my presence and newness in their lives might have prohibited them from sharing. Overall, I maintain that chapter four and five demonstrate the subtleties of human connection to place through the **mind map** and subsequent analysis. With fifteen memes clustered into three groups of family, connection, and (trans)formation, more language has been identified to

support the various fields of human-**nature** research. My work is qualitatively descriptive, so my yes answer represents the 14 individuals that I chose to study. Some of the results of this study could be adopted for quantitative research, thereby contributing to this line of inquiry that is scaleable to a societal level.

My question used the verb *to inform*, whereas the kernel of my focus is on the (trans)formative aspects of place. The reason for this amplification of language from inform to transform relates to the other important words in the question: *engagement* and *connectedness*. As my data shows, to become engaged and connected with place, my participants formed and transformed their behaviour, perception, and emotionality. Their places transformed them from some previous state of being into another state of being. To use the language of **panarchy**, each of the participants experienced a release event (or multiple release events) due to their (trans)formative place that fundamentally affected them, forcing them to reorganize their understanding of the world. Therefore, *to inform* feels inappropriate within the question. Instead of the verb *to inform*, perhaps more appropriate verbs could have been derived from the language distilled in my memes like: encourage, connect, elicit, induce, catalyze, engender, invigorate, and strengthen. Perhaps using the verb *to (trans)form* could act as a holarchy made up of these holon-sub-verbs. (Trans)form can be interpreted either negatively or positively, and it leaves space for formative events through its intertextuality. The question would read:

*Does learning that occurs in childhood and adolescent outdoor places (trans)form civic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual engagement or connectedness over the course of people's lives? If so, how?*

And my answer: Yes. (Trans)formative places encourage, connect, elicit, induce, catalyze, engender, invigorate, and strengthen the civic, emotional, physical and (perhaps) spiritual engagement and connectedness over the course of human lives through 15 different processes, relationships, and characteristics. These processes, relationships, and characteristics act as an interrelated net of memes to develop an ongoing connection to our places. I found that my participants' relationship to places were formed through family and community bonds, where learning occurs through shared stories, collective healing, and respect-building. Places transformed my participants through identity development, memory and anxiety, resiliency behaviour, nostalgia, and loss. Finally, my participants related to places through connective processes like knowing a place and being home, engendering bliss and appreciation, development of pride and hope and emotionality.

## For fear of losing our sense of connection

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I try not to approach my writing through a deficit mentality and have struggled in the past when listening to colleagues set up straw-dogs to knock down with their findings. Despite this, I believe that there is a critical challenge lying ahead for human-kind and other-than-humans alike. I believe that the very essence of our existence on Earth is about connection and the loss of quality in that connection is no straw-dog. It is a problem of heinous proportions.

Let me be clear here. I believe we are always biophysically connected to Earth. We have to be; there is no escaping the Earth system. Even space-exploration takes a toll on the Earth, since we take the Earth systems with us. The problem is that we have been very good at

hiding the damage of our current practices and borrowing from the future with our biophysical connections to Earth, whilst repressing, muting, and dumbing our emotional, civic, and spiritual connections to Earth. It is these notions of connection that act as the compassionate and reflexive voices in our minds.

But what is the human connection to the Earth? In a way my results help answer this from a North American worldview. Connection is about sharing and relating to place with families and communities. Connection is about relating to the ongoing transformations of place. Connection is about finding pride and agency in the places we know and love. Are North Americans losing these connections to place? I believe many North Americans are losing these connections. We spend less time outside. We learn in increasingly disciplined and abstract realms. We engage with families and communities through dislocated and anonymous digital methods. We are obsessed with the material world of buying more stuff and being more successful. All of these actions (dis)locate us from our connections to Earth. I believe we need to (re)place ourselves in **nature** in order to learn with and from **nature**. This means we need to (re)place our whole beings in **nature**, not just go outside for fresh air. We need **nature** to be represented and celebrated in the work we do, the families we raise, the houses and cities we build, the policies we write, and the parks we protect.

It is not beyond my realization that the mobilization approach that this research takes represents an ironic act, further confining readers to some digital screen inside. Also, I don't mean to provide some binary argument that **nature** is good and technology is bad. Far from it. Technology is an interesting and valuable tool, that seems to have invaded most parts of North American (and others) society. Our use of it resembles an addictive sickness. Perhaps it is the endlessness of

online worlds that are so compelling. We have forgotten the value of technology and have fallen into the traps of techno-salvation (Gifford, 2011) when we look to some future innovation to solve our current problems.

As a way to step out of the usual dissertation method, I have written the next part of my dissertation as a call to action statement, a manifesto for engaging humans in the act of creating and identifying (trans)formative places. This manifesto acts as an outgrowth of the data and analysis presented. Similar to movements like the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights in California (Jacobs et al., 2010), the Children and Nature Network's programs (Charles, 2009), and the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada's Hatley Park Charter (Peart, Stanger, & Hoskins, 2009), this manifesto sets out my intentions for helping people to (re)place themselves in **nature**. One difference I see in my manifesto compared to the others mentioned is that it is primarily concerned with the quality in which people engage with and in **nature**. This manifesto might also serve to achieve my aim of decolonizing my research for it calls for the (trans)formation of our current government, economic, and social structures.

Though there are five principles represented in the manifesto, by no means is this list a complete representation of either my participants' journeys and sharing or a presentation of all the ways in which humans might connect with nature. My intention in creating it was to contribute to the dialogue of the human-nature connection with which readers might further explore and enact their own processes.



14-17 year old youth participating in the Child and Nature Alliance's Get Outside BC Youth Leadership training, Cheakamus BC

# 1. Going outside is an essential human act

It does not matter your age, your ability to identify plants, or if your work is restrictive: go outside as if life depended on it; It very likely does. Going outside is both a act of civility and of celebration. I realize that for much of the world, this means lobbying bosses, teachers, family members, or other power-holders for the right to go outside, but please endeavor (see principle four of this manifesto for support). Going outside is the first step in this process of connecting with (trans)formative **outdoor places**, since going outside can be the most profound barrier for many people. Many of us live and work in relatively climate-controlled spaces so the comfort and convenience of being inside deludes us from our desire to connect with **nature**.

But we can not simply go outside and expect (trans)formation. We need to go outside; and do it well. Going outside is good, but going outside and doing it well is better. How do we go outside well? Consider this research as a cheat sheet for creating (trans)formative **outdoor places**. Each of the memes presented in [Chapter four](#) and [five](#) are in themselves actions. They can be used as guidelines or things to notice when engaging with **nature**.

To create new (trans)formative places, we should find opportunities for new experiences in **outdoor places**. This might mean return to a familiar spot, and trying something unfamiliar. Of course, these experiences cannot always be prescribed or planned, but the

opportunity for (trans)formation from an **outdoor place** is only increased with spending time outside well. This means trying new activities, going to new places, returning to forgotten places, playing, building a fort, sharing a place with a loved one, or even returning periodically to a place as a way to find solace.

With all of the potential for learning, synthesizing, and development that arise from outdoor places why then are personal and community connections to place mostly extirpated from educational systems in the privileged parts of the world?

Funnily as I wrote this section of text, the first lines of Paul Simon's hit song about nostalgia came flooding into my head:

*When I think back  
On all the crap I learned in high school  
It's a wonder  
I can think at all  
And though my lack of education  
Hasn't hurt me none  
I can read the writing on the wall*

(Simon, 1973, track 1)

The writing on the wall is clear to me. It is difficult to find school systems that celebrate and utilize places as teachers of engagement, interaction, emotional attachment, and connectedness.

Despite the most hopeful future-view of the reformations of our current education systems, profoundly short-sighted foci maintain archaic curricula that continue to ignore the fundamental relationships of humans to, with, and on Earth. The notions of connection are so abstracted through current disciplines, that our society assigns little

value to the natural world (Orr, 2004). If modeling behaviour provides one of the best approaches to achieving behaviour change in society (Bandura, 2001), then our curriculum must enable teachers to be role models for living as if the Earth mattered.

Even calls for the emancipation through the democratization of information have further tied us to the mind-numbing digital worlds, which promise a sense of community, but may be displacing us further from our communities (Boulianne, 2009). They are displaced even for the popularized notion of "third space" where the acceptance and celebration of new identities online fall short of the essential needs of humans - that is connection to the Earth.

So how does this relate to going outside? If the structure will not change, then we need to change it. Stand up, grab your water, a jacket, and announce you are going for a walk. Disrupt the norm and take a break outside, no matter the weather. As my colleague Colin Harris has articulated through his catchy t-shirt "Ask your teacher to take you outside" (Harris, 2013).



Natural Leaders Network Legacy Camp, West Virginia, USA

## 2. Being present and breathing awakens humans

This means putting down your gadgets, looking up and around you, and literally focussing on your breath. Our fast-paced world is fraught with busy-ness and because of this, many of us experience a terrible quality of attention to the world around us.

...Breathe...

When we focus our attention on our breath and the immediate world that we are interacting with, we become Heideggers' **dasein**. Think of Claudia's notion of bliss. Her grandmother had a powerful gift of engaging Claudia in the backyard garden, and taught her the wonder of slowing down and paying attention. It was such a powerful

experience for her that she continues to be transported back to bliss with something as simple as the smell of tomato in a grocery store. I link this notion of bliss to the complexity that we call time as articulated in [chapter two](#), where I introduce [slowness](#), [flow](#), and [dasein](#). By being present, we enact the values of slowing down, where we can experience the processes of getting to know a place with intimacy and detail. I believe that my understanding of Claudia's sense of bliss is in resonance with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). When we engage in something that presents a challenge within the realm of our personal passions and skills, we lose track of time, and experience being totally absorbed. Curiously, this process can

elicit the feeling that time has been altered. Many readers of this dissertation will have a childhood memory of playing outside that was so absorbing that it felt like time slipped away. Bliss and flow indicate that the human relationship to time are likely more complicated than the linear Newtonian approach that controls so much of our lives. In that moment of five-year-old bliss, Claudia was a being that considered her own being. In that moment she was **dasein**.

Practicing presence through breath, slowness, flow, and **dasein** is an act of mindfulness. Mindfulness is an emerging trend in the education realm (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000; Willard, 2010; Rotne & Rotne, 2013). It helps us relax and contributes to our general health. More than this, it engenders a sense of contentment and ease with our environment and social circumstances. Yet, when it was first introduced to me, I had an uneasy feeling about the term *mindfulness*. It prompted visions of a disembodied cognitive act. I could not have been more wrong about the concept of mindfulness once I learned more about it: it is less about cognition and more about sensing. Wilson (2009) suggested that mindfulness should be described as beingfulness, which articulates that physicality of presence. I would move it a bit further and suggest integrating Nhất Hạnh's vision of **interbeing** (Nhất Hạnh, 1998) with beingfulness to create the neologism, *interbeingfulness*. This blending of terms is done with some tongue in cheek but also seriousness. Since interbeingfulness really is just mindfulness of **interbeing**, which if you look carefully is also **dasein**.

By relating to time and place through a mindful approach, with all of the nuances of a beingful presence, I believe that humans may transcend our common linear temporal perception. Time starts to distort. Perhaps Wade's subconscious was warping time in this same way with

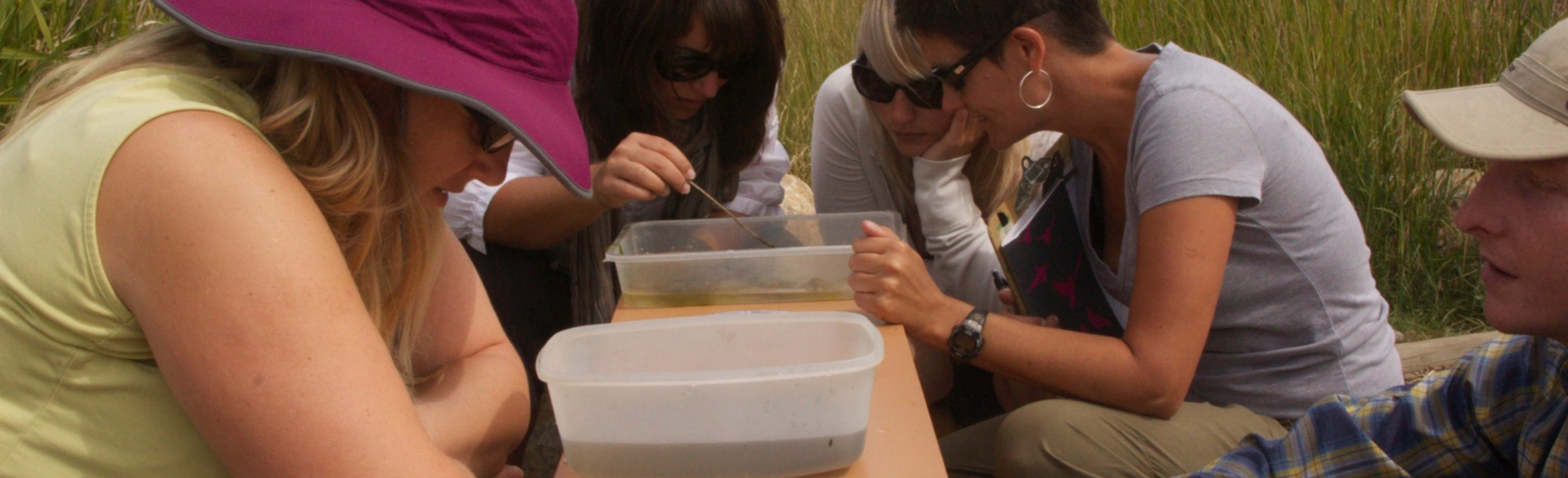
his childhood dream. His dream with the red canoe called him to live in Ealue or a place like it. He was seeing his future, and through the enactment of that vision, he also fulfilled his life goal of living and being in the woods.

When we practice presence, time becomes irrelevant to our feelings. Acts of beingfulness are a disruption to our increasingly scheduled lives. We start to pay attention to the natural references of time. Time is cyclical within ecological systems; whether it is circadian rhythm, moon and tide cycles, or seasons, we are surrounded by the ongoing processes of death and rebirth. Witnessing these cycles requires a quality of attention that goes beyond our day to day rushing, it requires becoming present in the now-ness. It also requires an investigation of our own emotional status. How am I reacting to this event that I am witnessing in front of me? When we consider time and being of **nature**, we are also inviting the consideration of emotions.

Our (trans)formative places may influence the relationships we have with our emotions. We sometimes visit them to find solace away from some other trauma, like Claudia's backyard away from the turmoil that occurred inside the house. We also visit places and find joy, pain, longing, or connection, like Iona's relationship to the site under the dock that was a joyful moment amongst a hard life for her friends who were being whisked off to residential schools and Japanese internment camps. Despite some (trans)formative places having traumatic memories, which also can serve a purpose in our development and learning, the experience in these places often acts as teachers. (Trans)formative places can provide deep and rich, sorrowful and painful, and connecting and sometimes disconnecting experiences. By practicing breathing and presence, these teachings might be easier navigated.

May's visit to her places resembled this level of comfort. Her relationship to place had an ease about it that was welcoming and respectful. When she invoked the concept of Khowutzun into our interviews, it profoundly affected me. I was astounded by the way she matter-of-factly stated that she was Khowutzun and therefore she was the land, her family, and everything of the valley. She had related the concept of **interbeing** to me with humility and grace. This concept represented her groundedness and presence on Earth. She feels part of Earth and through that connectedness feels valuable and valid.

The obsessive and misguided search for leading what is termed “a happy life” in western culture might be partially rectified if we followed step one and two of this manifesto. Exploring our emotionality as it relates to our (trans)formative places, might engage us in a meaningful, engaging, and pleasurable life, where we are able to dance in an amongst the changes that we experience. Go outside, be present, and breathe.



UBC Okanagan Student Teachers, Vernon BC

### 3. Sharing stories results in conservation

Louise Chawla has long been a proponent of the idea that special places are created through interaction with special people (Chawla, 2003). When we interact with these places and our friends and families, we engage in a process of storytelling and shared experience that shapes our cultural and ecological understanding. An example of this was when May Sam asked her family to join us during her interviews. She recognized the value of family and stories and saw our interviews as an opportunity to share some of her teachings and relationships to place. She also asked me to make these videos available to the Cowichan and Malahat First Nations so that her communities might have an account of her relationship to the land.

Shared stories become part of our ecological and geo-local identities (Scott, 2010). Scott suggests that we engage in a dialogical approach, both with our human communities and other than human communities when we engage contemplative and mindful practices outside:

*Developing a dialogical awareness of enveloping ecologies through the rigors of becoming aware, confirmation, and inclusion—which can be developed through artistic, contemplative, and pedagogical practices oriented towards I-Thou relationships—offers students opportunities to*

*develop more caring, sustainable relationships with their worlds, both locally and globally.* (Scott, 2010, p. 146)

Dialogues through shared stories act as cached memories within our own minds as well as geo-cached memories within the landscapes themselves. I had predicted that my participants' memories would be triggered by their visits, but I was surprised by the richness of these memories and how intensely they were shown. Iona's moment of vulnerability is an example of this. Normally stoic, she found returning to North Pacific Cannery challenging for a number of reasons. The realization that the friends she made there are mostly passed overwhelmed her when I asked how it felt to return to the cannery. Her shared stories of that place are threatened by mortality, and this concept in part encouraged her to share her story with me. It was her way of capturing it for her family.

[As discussed earlier, I too put myself through this methodology](#) as a way to understand what it might feel like to return to a (trans)formative place. From my study, I realized the effect that these places can have on people, including how returning to (trans)formative places is at once exciting and also painful. Memories, even like Claudia's (mis)remembered backyard, contribute to our expectations about returning to (trans)formative places. This makes me wonder how Albrecht's concept of **solastalgia**, the pain of losing one's solace space, is experienced when very little has changed to the land, but much has changed for the person? This was certainly the case for me. The place that is highlighted in the video linked above exists within a park and though the park has an increased invasive species problem, the form and function of the place remained identical. Or at least biophysically identical. Yet my expectations of returning were dashed almost immediately. It was both familiar and utterly unfamiliar at the same time.

In addition to the complexity of how memory can be altered in regards to a place, the act of describing our experiences also alters the meaning of our relationships to place. That is, language itself can be misleading and misrepresentative. All of my participants, including group one and two, were conscious of an audience for their stories. Whether it was a relatively solitary experience of posting pictures and writing a short story online, or it was an interview with my cadre of helpers, my participants were in dialogue. This forced them to shape their stories into language and symbols, which is likely more abstract than their own interior dialogue with the landscape itself.

Through the listening of other's stories of place and evidence of their connection, we become part of their place-relationships. Listening is an act of compassion that engages your friends and families by asking them to share their places. This can be an extremely intimate and vulnerable activity which in turn encourages bonding with each other and the place itself.

Therefore, shared stories of (trans)formative places can create a common sense of purpose; they engage communities in conservation, in re-imagining the future, and in the restoration of natural places. These activities tie us to these places with even greater richness. Wade's commitment is a testament to these ties. He has been working tirelessly to protect the areas adjacent to the Spatsizi, the Sacred Headwaters. His commitment stems from his long-term relationship to the area coupled with his internal sense of purpose.

When sharing stories with friends and families, we often go deeper than the symbols generated through language alone. We form salient, visceral, and emotional bonds to places and these bonds, in turn, encourage us to continue to nurture our relationships to Earth.



Bear Glacier Crevasses, outside of Stewart BC

## 4. Speaking truth compassionately changes the world

The stories we tell about places exist within the ethical realm. This means that when we share our understanding of a place, we are relationally accountable to it (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). We become advocates for that place. Part of the conundrum that plagues the work of climate change and environmental activists is societal paralysis towards this accountability (Nagel, 2005). Even if our (trans)formative places are threatened, I would hazard that many of us do not engage in a civic process for its protection or re-envisioning its future (Gifford, 2011). Gifford suggests that the barriers to climate change adaptation and environmental action, for instance, are mostly governed by the psychological realm:

*Environmental or climate-related inaction seems to have three broad phases. Genuine ignorance certainly precludes taking action. Then, if one is aware of a problem, a variety of psychological processes can interfere with effective action. Finally, once some action is taken, it can be inadequate because the behavior fades away, makes too little a difference in the person's own carbon footprint, or is actually counterproductive. (Gifford, 2011, p. 291)*

I believe that when we reconnect to the early developmental moments that (trans)formative places represent, we can (re)ignite a fire to help overcome this process of inaction. My participants seemed to exhibit

this drive to engage in civic processes to support environmental causes, despite not identifying as environmentalists themselves. If their (trans)formative places act as extensions of themselves, keepers of memories, and catalysts for community action, they are also sources for inspiration. When we relate to these places, through story and also action, we must do so with both compassion and ethics. That is, as we engage through a civic process for the protection of these places, our personal judgement, whether derived emotionally, spiritually, ecologically, and/or otherwise should be central to our communication. This communication should then be articulated through compassionate methods. As Joanna Macy (2007) describes, once we see the world as lover, and not as a battlefield, we will move beyond our reactionary and simplistic attitudes towards living on Earth:

*It is my experience that the world itself has a role to play in our liberation. Its very pressures, pains, and risks can wake us up -- release us from the bonds of ego and guide us home to our vast, true nature. For some of us, our love of the world is so passionate that we cannot ask it to wait until we are enlightened. (Macy, 2007, p. 23)*

This process of releasing our egos before communicating about our (trans)formative places helps us see each other and the Earth with more compassion. When I find myself in a governmental office lobbying an official for a particular policy change or funding for a project, I often ask that person about their (trans)formative place. I then practice principle two, remember presence and breath. This enables me to listen to their relationship to Earth. I find that this conversation often leads to conducting our meetings with compassion as a central focus. Annie Leonard's *Story of Change* articulates this as a process of becoming "change-makers" that engage civically instead

of only environmental cosmetics (recycling, changing lightbulbs, and buying green) (Leonard, 2012).

Speaking our truth with compassion can also be described within the **panarchy** model. My research touches on how human development is linked to the (trans)formative experiences that occur in places. I articulated this development through the adaptive cycle where a stochastic event or release instigates the process of adaptive capacity building. When we use the teachings from the land to then engage others in further (trans)formation, we continue to foster the process of the original release. In Iona's case, she continued to refer to the respect and hope she gained under the sidewalk as a catalyst throughout her life. She spoke her truth with compassion and through her, change occurred for the better.

By engaging with compassion we are moving beyond the language of the battlefield. We are creating resilient communities through our mutual complicity and relational accountability



Peeling arbutus bark, Victoria BC

## 5. Celebrating complexity transcends ego

This last principle is a respectful reference to the systems theorist, Donella Meadows, whose own manifesto, *Dancing with systems*, has been a guide for me through the murky waters of **complexity theory**. Referred to in [chapter two](#), Meadows (2002) suggested a fourteen principle approach to enacting systems thinking for a more sustainable world. Number 13 on her list is Celebrate Complexity. This is part of its explanation:

*There's something within the human mind that is attracted to straight lines and not curves, to whole numbers and not fractions, to uniformity and not diversity, and to certainties and not mystery. But there is something else within us that*

*has the opposite set of tendencies, since we ourselves evolved out of and are shaped by and structured as complex feedback systems. Only a part of us, a part that has emerged recently, designs buildings as boxes with uncompromising straight lines and flat surfaces. Another part of us recognizes instinctively that nature designs in fractals, with intriguing detail on every scale from the microscopic to the macroscopic. That part of us makes Gothic cathedrals and Persian carpets, symphonies and novels, Mardi Gras costumes and artificial intelligence programs, all with embellishments almost as complex as the ones we find in the world around us. (Meadows, 2002, ¶ 56)*

(Trans)formative places have the ability to engage us in seeing beyond our self as the centre. We can see ourselves as a holon within a system of other holons. This requires reframing and resisting our tendencies to construct linear and binary-obsessed perspectives. Arguably this is an perspective that is hard to enact.

When humans celebrate complexity, they may be able to shake the limitations of conservatism and protectionism and acknowledge that we are part of a system and perhaps see ongoing changes and movement within a system. Called the rigidity trap in **panarchy** theory, the movement from conservation, through release and reorganization can become “blocked” due to bureaucratic or maladaptive physical and psychological structures (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). I believe that many humans will fight to maintain convenience and comfort while ignoring the changes that are occurring around them (Nagel, 2005). Yet, when we enact Meadows’ suggestion of celebrating complexity, and seeing that change offers new opportunities even in the face of environmental disasters, we also can adapt and change as humans. In some ways, embracing adaptation as an opportunity could help us transcend our ego-centric society. We might start seeing the ecological systems we engage in as relational and essential to life on Earth, leading us towards a more eco-centric approach to living.

Each of my participants in group one exhibited adaptation through their relationships with their (trans)formative places. Claudia’s movement through the adaptive cycle was multi-staged, likely occurring as a five-year-old, but then also in the moment of our interview when she articulated her desire to connect with her elders and forgive their previous hurts. Iona’s movement through the adaptive cycle occurred throughout her career, likely stemming for some major release under the dock at North Pacific Cannery. May’s occurred during time with her

sister and father, where cultural values were celebrated and taught through the land itself. Wade’s ongoing relationship to the Spatsizi area resembles a celebration of complexity. When he interacts with his lodge, family, and larger community when at Ealue Lake, he continues a storyline of connection to place. This has helped him develop ongoing memories, relationships, and understandings of the place that are also increasingly complex.

So much of our lack of relation to the Earth in the 21st century revolves around problems of perception and lack of connection. By adopting a worldview that celebrates complexity, rather than demonizes it, we might find that the principles that this manifesto puts forward become our cultures’ normative behaviour rather than the abnormal behaviour. This in turn would support a society that might prioritize our relationship to **nature** rather than exploit it for short-term gains, greed, and power.

The connections we make through perceiving the world with a complex lens engenders resiliency. Our physical, psychological, and emotional integrity as humans relies on the ecological integrity of the planet.

My group one and group two participants articulated their relationships through complex lenses, seeing the connections and interactions of a place through space and time. For some, these complex perceptions resounded in adolescent coming-of-age stories, while for others it was a first memory.



Malachite Kingfisher, Swaziland

## Everyone has (trans)formative places

I believe that (trans)formative places are only partially limited by socio-economic, accessibility, cultural, gender, and language barriers. I acknowledge that these barriers always exist but they also help form the diversity of relationships to place, which we should celebrate as I articulate in the manifesto. Despite where we are born and the challenges we might face throughout our lives, we all have relations in and with ecological systems. Even hospital-bound individuals can find solace through a view of a patch of sky or a tree outside a window (Kuo, 2010). I do not believe that my principles of going outside, being present, sharing stories, speaking truth, and celebrating complexity

require a privileged life to enact. Quite the opposite. I believe that if we enact these in our lives we will be living the privileged life.

Does a 15-year-old boy who has lived in a high-rise his whole life in a dense city have a (trans)formative **outdoor place**? I believe he does. It might be a pocket park, a tree on a street, a tomato plant, or even a back alley. He might not have acknowledged it at this point. At least, he might not have acknowledged it in the way that I have been fortunate enough to do with my research. I believe, in our society we have a high potential for (trans)formation through experiences that arise in outdoor places, despite the complexity of constraints and limitations of our current cultures.

We all have multiple (trans)formative places. Take a moment to consider where your (trans)formative **outdoor places** might be. Would you have one for each season? time of day? mood? activity? Would it depend on who you were with? Whether you had eaten or not?

I dare you to go back there! Then share your experience at [www.transformativeplaces.com](http://www.transformativeplaces.com)

Future research in this field might explore the socio-economic, psycho-social, and cultural variables as they relate to (trans)formative places. This research could be conducted through a mixed-methods approach by engaging big data, social and ecological indicators, and case studies. As indicated before, this research was conducted through a transdisciplinary approach. Therefore, there are many areas that I could continue to pursue this work, and help develop some insights into the human relationships to places and nature. Each of the areas is further elucidated through research questions that arise directly from this research:

### Ecopsychology: Solastalgia, emotion, mortality and psychoanalysis

- a. How does loss of place engage us in considering our own mortality?
- b. How do we engage with places that no longer exist such as the places destroyed in war-torn countries?
- c. Do environmental or conflict-based refugees or immigrants reconstruct relationships to old places or find new places to connect with? if so, how?

- d. How do negative experiences in (trans)formative outdoor places teach us throughout our lives?
- e. Can outdoor places perform a counselling role for emotional challenges?
- f. Does terror management theory help articulate relationships to place?
- g. Can eco-critical framework help us understand the concept of home?

### Transformative learning, environmental education, and socio-ecological systems

- a. Developmentally, do **outdoor places** support us in becoming active citizens?
- b. Are there structured societies, organizations, or policies that support the development of positive (trans)formative place connections?
- c. Is there a relationship between pro-environmental behaviour and (trans)formative outdoor places?
- d. What are nuances of learning that occur from our (trans)formative places?
- e. Do educational systems that engage students in place-based education develop (trans)formed ecological citizens?

## Indigenous education and Indigenist Research Paradigms

- a. How might First Nations approaches to place-connection help engage living as if the Earth matters?
- b. Does **indigeneity** require **Indigenous** roots to place?
- c. Can **Indigenist** methodologies be practiced effectively to help research be less intrusive?

## The delta that is research

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Returning to the analogy of the three tributaries of ontologies coming to a confluence as a delta, these principles act as both the outward mode of this research, but also an entry point for many concepts, ideas, and dialogues. From tributaries to river, from delta to ocean, this research continues to be in motion. When each of the conceptual frameworks tributaries come together as one river, a complex interaction exists. Sometimes the water that represents these frameworks combines well and sometimes they maintain their own identity. A reader of this work might enter through a number of the arms of the delta from the ocean that is knowledge. This idea that the ocean represents knowledge is not a new one, and is very likely a cliché, yet it still holds strong in its meanings. Humans know very little about the biodiversity and systems of the ocean. Sometimes I feel this way too in our general approach to ontology. The often quoted Rachel Carson describes her relationship to the ocean:

*To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist moving over a great salt marsh, to watch the flight of shore birds that have swept*

*up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years, to see the running of the old eels and the young shad to the sea, is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be. (Carson, 2011, p. 24)*

Rivers can flood, tides can ebb, and flotsam and jetsam can get caught in and around pilings, rocks, and shorelines. I hope that this research gives you opportunities to engage in your own (trans)formative places so that you might float in its delta for a while. Perhaps you will get caught in the ebbing tide and find yourself being transformed. Pay attention and breath!

When thought domains (trans)form into worldviews, when belief systems engage each other as holarchies, when taking time to slow down elicits flow, and when changing perspective contributes to understanding complexity, our innate sense of curiosity about life and desire to connect to the Earth allows us to appreciate place as **panarchy** and place as teacher.

# Postface - The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry (1968)

When despair grows in me  
and I wake in the middle of the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting for their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

(Berry, 2010, p. 36)



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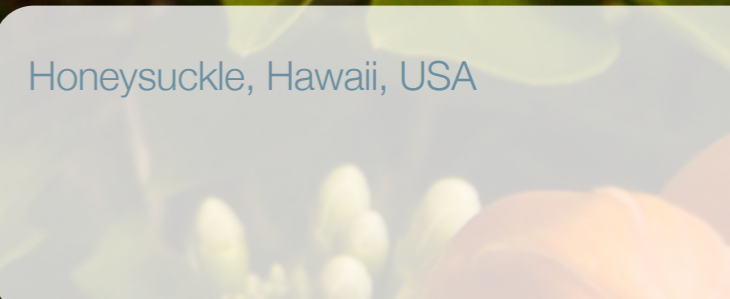
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8

# Appendices



Honeysuckle, Hawaii, USA

## Appendix A: Invitation to participate in the research (Group 1)

[UVIC EDUCATION LETTERHEAD]

INVITATION EMAIL GROUP 1

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**Dear {person's name}**  
**Address (if applicable)**

My name is Nick Stanger, I have been given your contact details by XXXXX. XXXXX indicated that you might be interested in participating in research that looks at the effects of childhood places (and the experiences that occurred in them) as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic engagement. This is an invitation to participate in this study that will help develop further understanding of childhood experiences in nature, a field that is somewhat understudied through an educational lens. The title of this research is: **(Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans.** This research and the dissertation that manifests from it will help complete the final component of my Doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies at the University of Victoria, Faculty of Education.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

*If you were asked to remember your special outdoor place as a child, where would your mind go?*

The chances are, that you just thought of a significant stream, back-alley or playground that was introduced to you through family or friends. Everyone has a childhood memory of the outdoors that remains significant to them through their lives. This significance is what lies at the heart of this research: that nature-connection is an emotionally engaging experience when portrayed through a very personal lens. The concept is to take a small group of well-known North Americans on a journey back to their childhood haunts – their transformative place in the outdoors. Then ask the North American public to respond through online creative means by returning to their places.

### **Importance of this Research**

Despite considerable North American video-based documentary programming that focusses on the research that concerns climate change, education, special places, and behavioural change, few action-based research and media projects have been conducted that consider all of these topics. Further to this, most of the research that can help change the world seems to be limited to scholarly journals, library shelves, and short-term policy intervention. North Americans spend decreasing amounts of time in nature and are experiencing Nature Deficit Disorder. This alienation from ecological systems that nurture us, teach us, and engage us in meaningful activities, further disconnects us from living like we plan on staying on Earth.

### **Your role**

This research will culminate in the creation of a unique social media and video-based interactive website that will tell the stories of ten well known North Americans as they revisit their childhood transformative places.

*Concept. You will take me to one of your childhood or adolescent transformative places to explore the role of those places in your life.*

You will be among nine other North Americans who have been recognized for their success in a variety of fields. Due to this, my work will attract attention from communities not normally

engaged in environmental discourse, and help argue the value of childhood environmental experiences. This community of ten will represent some diversity of North Americans including Indigenous Elders, recent immigrants, and speakers of other languages. You will be involved in the planning, editing, and investigating this research to the level that you want to be. This could mean helping to plan how and what we do in a transformative place, help select certain clips that you want shared online, and help corroborate my findings as they arise.

You will be asked to engage in three separate interactions as part of this research:

1. Pre-interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted in person, on the phone, or on Skype.
2. The interview 'in-place' will take approximately 3 hours on site (with variable travel times).
3. You will be asked to review the initial findings as a participatory process (2-3 hours).

*Interaction. The North American public will be invited to interact with their own childhood transformative places and express their stories through art, music, written word, and other creative means as a response to the ten well known North Americans.*

Engaging the North American public in their own place-based stories enables an opportunity for rich storytelling. These expressions of connection to place might include videos, stories, artwork, creative writing and other forms of media that reflect on returning to their own places and changes they have witnessed over the course of their lives. Your video will be part of a larger website that looks to engage the public in returning to their places and create videos in response to yours.

If you have further questions for me, please contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email [nstanger@uvic.ca](mailto:nstanger@uvic.ca). This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jason Price. You may contact him at XXX-XXX-XXXX. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Thanks for your consideration,

Nick Stanger MA, PhD (ABD)  
www.nicholasstanger.ca  
SSHRC Doctoral Fellow  
University of Victoria - Faculty of Education  
Chair - Child and Nature Alliance of Canada  
www.childnature.ca

## Appendix B: Consent to participate in the research

[UVic Letterhead]

*Participant Consent Form Group 1*

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### **(Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled (Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans that is being conducted by Nick Stanger.

Nick Stanger is a doctoral candidate in the department of Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email [nstanger@uvic.ca](mailto:nstanger@uvic.ca). As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jason Price. You may contact my supervisor at XXX-XXX-XXXX. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

My goal is to study the effects of transformative childhood places as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic environmental engagement. I will be primarily viewing my data through complex systems thinking and Indigenist lenses, meaning I will be looking for synergies of complex relationships, forms of spiritual, compassionate, and respectful mindfulness, and a sense of responsibility for transformational outcomes of the research. To achieve a deeper understanding of returning to these childhood places, my first objective is to investigate the emotional, physical, spiritual and ecological experiences elicited when a diverse group of distinguished North American participants revisit one of their transformative childhood places. My second objective is to examine the role that transformative childhood places can play in revitalizing the relationship among education systems, North Americans, and nature, to inspire learners about the value of living “as if the world mattered” thus engaging them in civic and ecological responsible actions.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Young and adult North Americans spend an average of 8.6 hours each day in a sedentary state, with six or more hours of this time in front of a TV or computer screen. These numbers are steadily rising with the proliferation of technology. This, coupled with a media-perpetuated fear of natural and social environments, socio-political North American governmental system where environmental policies and procedures have been systematically gutted, and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples by public and private sectors has led to a culture where North Americans are increasingly physically, mentally, and spiritually disconnected from nature, the communities they live in, and each other. This disconnection remains despite decades of directed environmental education, health programs, community outreach, reconciliation, and research that points to the critical importance of understanding and working with the natural world for human’s continued global survival and well-being.

Despite considerable research in environmental education, place-based learning, and sustainable behaviour, few action-based research and knowledge dissemination projects have been conducted that examine these topics through the integrated and interbeingful lenses of an eco-sociological framework, where social and cultural systems are recognized as (inter)imbedded in ecological

systems. Much of the research that purports to help ‘connect humans with nature’ has had limited impact on educational practice and human behaviour, due in part to standard methods of knowledge dissemination – primarily through academic journals, libraries, and short-term policies and initiatives, which rarely engage active public participation in research production. However, recent movements of authors and figureheads such as Richard Louv, Louise Chawla, Joanna Macy, David Sobel, David Suzuki, and Robert Bateman have helped galvanize the production of research and action around nature re-connection. It is through their inroads, and other scholars that have supported their work, that we have some basic understanding of the challenges at hand and the importance of place, nature, and connection.

### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are well known and well respected in your community. I define well-known as leaders who are known and celebrated within the context of their own community, be that a First Nations reserve, TV audience, political party, or business community. By choosing well-known individuals, I will be able to appeal to a wider audience for the second stage of this research, thus increasing my likelihood of a larger data set for the second phase of this research. If you choose to bring a family member or significant child with you to this visit, permission for their involvement must be secured through another consent form like this one. The consent must be signed by a third party parent or guardian to the original participant partaking in the research.

### **What is involved**

I am seeking your participation in the research in three distinct ways. First, you will be interviewed in a mutually agreed upon space about a significant outdoor childhood or adolescent place. We will then travel to that place together with a videographer to film it. This film will be produced as an interactive website. Second, you will be asked to participate in the development of activities in that place, as well as the analysis of the results (ie. How the story is portrayed for film). Third, you will engage in the analysis of the results and help engage public participation in the website (where the public is encouraged to film themselves in their childhood places and upload these films). I will be submitting my findings as a dissertation to Dr. Price, my academic supervisor.

The approximate timelines for the three stages are outlined below:

1. The Pre-interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted in person, on the phone, or on Skype.
2. The interview ‘in-place’ will take approximately 3 hours on site (with variable travel times).
3. You will be asked to review the initial findings as a participatory process (2-3 hours).

Your video will be part of a larger website that looks to engage the public in returning to their places and create videos in response to yours.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the amount of time needed to participate and the emotional exposure that is required.

### **Risks**

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include the emotional risk of revisiting childhood places due to unwanted or unsettling memories being elicited. This might cause stress and emotional discomfort. Also being filmed and shown on an interactive website could also affect your privacy. To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken. First I will brief you on the potential affects of returning to these places. Second, I will have professional psychologist on site if you need one or that we can pay

for your own psychologist/therapist to be present or available by phone. Third, I will give you the editing power to remove and delete any unwanted captured events or actions from being used in the film or research.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a renewed connection with place that you haven't connected with recently. It will also benefit society as it will engage a wider audience by advocating for healthier and more active lifestyles of visiting their own childhood places. Finally it will benefit the state of knowledge we have around connection to place, as so little is understood at a temporal level. What happens to those childhood memories and experiences over time and how can reconnecting with place support living as if the Earth mattered?

### **Compensation**

\$100 honoraria will be given to help offset travel expenses.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed and not included in the study. You will still receive the full compensation.

### **On-going Consent**

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will check-in with you throughout the term of the study by reiterating your ability to not participate at any point. This will act as a verbal renewal of consent.

### **Anonymity**

This project, by its nature of being public online will not protect your anonymity, it will protect anything you do not want to be shared by being a participatory research project.

### **Confidentiality**

Your participation will be mostly public. However, you will be given the right to edit or remove any material that they see as being harmful to them. Only video that is useful to the study will be included in the final production, such that any embarrassing or exposing material will be destroyed.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways, interactive website, apple iBook, dissertation and presentations, published article or book, and directly with you.

### **Commercial Use of Results**

This research will not lead to any commercial use. All findings will be free online or through Apple.

### **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be not be disposed of for archival purposes. Your data will not be sold or used beyond the commercial use described above. You will be given full copies of your video.

I will have limited control of the online and iBook material which will limit the ability of third parties to duplicate the videos for their own purposes.

**Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Dr. Jason Price as mentioned above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*NAME OF PARTICIPANT*                      *SIGNATURE (Parent or Gaurdian)*                      *DATE*

**Visually Recorded Images/Data** Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials, *only if you consent:*

- Photos may be taken of me for: Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_
- Videos may be taken of me for: Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Even if no names are used, you may be recognizable if visual images are shown in the results.

**Confidentiality** *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant to provide initials)

**Future Use of Data** *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant to provide initials)

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.*

## Appendix C: Pre-interview SQUIN (Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative) (Group 1)

Pre-amble: Please close your eyes. Travel back in your minds-eye to a time and outdoor place from your past that helped (trans)form you into how you identify as a person today. This could be a cottage, park, backyard or alley. Try to remember who shared this spot with you, what did it feel like, and what it even smelled like. Just be in that place for a moment.

Can you please share a story from a significant outdoor place in your childhood or adolescence? Please start wherever you like and say whatever comes to mind. Take the time you need, I'll listen first and won't interrupt you.

Following the participants' initial response, I will use their own language and ask for further narrative and elaboration (Wengraf, 2001), particularly in any details on how we might revisit this place now.

## Appendix D: Semi-structured interview tool (Group 1)

Pre-amble: Now that we have arrived at your (trans)formative childhood and adolescent place, remember that you are co-constructing this research. If you have questions that you would like to ask yourself or activities that you want to do, please feel free to engage in them. This might mean interrupting what we are doing as memories arise. It also might look like re-exploring this place through adult eyes. I have a few questions that might help ELICIT memories and current feelings about being here.

1. What does it feel like to return to this place? Tell me about any emotions, thoughts or memories that are coming up for you.
2. What did you learn in this place?
3. Was there a formational or (trans)formational moment that happened here that you could describe?
4. What do you notice has changed in comparison to your memory of this place?
5. How would you share this place with a significant young person in your life?
6. Could you describe any spiritual connection to this place?
7. Take me through an activity that you might have done here.

A follow up SQUIN would occur three or more months after visiting the site:

*We visited a significant place for you a little while ago. Tell me about that experience and any thoughts or actions you have had since that visit?*

After this initial question, we would review the film of their experience and any preliminary analysis of the research and discuss any potential synergies or insights that they might have that is relevant to the study.

## Appendix E: Invitation to participate in the research (Group 2)

[UVIC Letter head]

*INVITATION TEXT GROUP 2*

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You are invited to participate in research that looks at the effects of childhood places (and the experiences that occurred in them) as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic engagement. This is an invitation to participate in this study that will help develop further understanding of childhood experiences in nature, a field that is somewhat understudied through an educational lens. The title of this research is: **(Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans.** This research and the dissertation that manifests from it will help complete the final component of my Doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies at the University of Victoria, Faculty of Education.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

*If you were asked to remember your special outdoor place as a child, where would your mind go?*

The chances are, that you just thought of a significant stream, back-alley or playground that was introduced to you through family or friends. Everyone has a childhood memory of the outdoors that remains significant to them through their lives. This significance is what lies at the heart of this research: that nature-connection is an emotionally engaging experience when portrayed through a very personal lens. The concept is to take a small group of well-known North Americans on a journey back to their childhood haunts – their transformative place in the outdoors. Then ask the North American public to respond through online creative means by returning to their places.

### **Importance of this Research**

Despite considerable North American video-based documentary programming that focusses on the research that concerns climate change, education, special places, and behavioural change, few action-based research and media projects have been conducted that consider all of these topics. Further to this, most of the research that can help change the world seems to be limited to scholarly journals, library shelves, and short-term policy intervention. North Americans spend decreasing amounts of time in nature and are experiencing Nature Deficit Disorder. This alienation from ecological systems that nurture us, teach us, and engage us in meaningful activities, further disconnects us from living like we plan on staying on Earth.

### **Your role**

You are asked to interact with a unique social media and video-based interactive website that will tell the stories of ten well known North Americans as they revisit their childhood transformative places.

*Concept. You are encouraged to respond to the ten well-known North Americans by developing stories or creative submissions that derive from your own childhood and adolescent places*

To participate in this part of the research, you will engage in the project in your own time and submission processes for your work will take approximately 5 minutes to upload. All submissions that are appropriate for the site will be made public and managed by me. Only ten of these submissions will be selected as part of the data analysis of this research. You will be contacted by email if your story is selected to ensure your consent to participate, and there will be no indication on the site that it is part of the research data.

If you have further questions for me, please contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email [nstanger@uvic.ca](mailto:nstanger@uvic.ca). This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jason Price. You may contact him at XXX-XXX-XXXX. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Thanks for your consideration,

Nick Stanger MA, PhD (ABD)  
[www.nicholasstanger.ca](http://www.nicholasstanger.ca)  
SSHRC Doctoral Fellow  
University of Victoria - Faculty of Education  
Chair - Child and Nature Alliance of Canada  
[www.childnature.ca](http://www.childnature.ca)

## Appendix F: Consent to participate in the research (Group 2)

[UVic Letterhead]

*ONLINE Participant Consent Form Group 2*

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### **(Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled (Re)placing ourselves in nature: A multimedia exploration of how transformative childhood places foster emotional, physical, spiritual, and ecological connectedness in North Americans that is being conducted by Nick Stanger.

Nick Stanger is a doctoral candidate in the department of Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email [nstanger@uvic.ca](mailto:nstanger@uvic.ca). As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jason Price. You may contact my supervisor at XXX-XXX-XXXX. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

My goal is to study the effects of transformative childhood places as catalysts of community, ecological, and civic environmental engagement. I will be primarily viewing my data through complex systems thinking and Indigenist lenses, meaning I will be looking for synergies of complex relationships, forms of spiritual, compassionate, and respectful mindfulness, and a sense of responsibility for transformational outcomes of the research. To achieve a deeper understanding of returning to these childhood places, my first objective is to investigate the emotional, physical, spiritual and ecological experiences elicited when a diverse group of distinguished North American participants revisit one of their transformative childhood places. My second objective is to examine the role that transformative childhood places can play in revitalizing the relationship among education systems, North Americans, and nature, to inspire learners about the value of living “as if the world mattered” thus engaging them in civic and ecological responsible actions.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Young and adult North Americans spend an average of 8.6 hours each day in a sedentary state, with six or more hours of this time in front of a TV or computer screen. These numbers are steadily rising with the proliferation of technology. This, coupled with a media-perpetuated fear of natural and social environments, socio-political North American governmental system where environmental policies and procedures have been systematically gutted, and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples by public and private sectors has led to a culture where North Americans are increasingly physically, mentally, and spiritually disconnected from nature, the communities they live in, and each other. This disconnection remains despite decades of directed environmental education, health programs, community outreach, reconciliation, and research that points to the critical importance of understanding and working with the natural world for human’s continued global survival and well-being.

Despite considerable research in environmental education, place-based learning, and sustainable behaviour, few action-based research and knowledge dissemination projects have been conducted that examine these topics through the integrated and interbeingful lenses of an eco-sociological framework, where social and cultural systems are recognized as (inter)imbedded in ecological

systems. Much of the research that purports to help ‘connect humans with nature’ has had limited impact on educational practice and human behaviour, due in part to standard methods of knowledge dissemination – primarily through academic journals, libraries, and short-term policies and initiatives, which rarely engage active public participation in research production. However, recent movements of authors and figureheads such as Richard Louv, Louise Chawla, Joanna Macy, David Sobel, David Suzuki, and Robert Bateman have helped galvanize the production of research and action around nature re-connection. It is through their inroads, and other scholars that have supported their work, that we have some basic understanding of the challenges at hand and the importance of place, nature, and connection.

### **Participants Selection**

You are being invited to participate in this study as a way to connect this research with public participation. You have volunteered through the website or other social media sources to participate in this project.

### **What is involved**

I am seeking your participation by asking you to respond to the key participants in the films that you have watched online. To do this you will need to film yourself within your transformative outdoor place. This could capture written songs, playing, painting, or any activity in those places that connects to the underlying vision of this research – the role of these places over the course of your life. Uploading and interacting with the website will take only 5 – 10 minutes. All submissions that are appropriate for the site will be made public and managed by me. Only ten of these submissions will be selected as part of the data analysis of this research. You will be contacted by email if your story is selected to ensure your consent to participate, and there will be no indication on the site that it is part of the research data.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the amount of time needed to participate, appearance on a website, and the emotional exposure that might occur due to visiting these places

### **Risks**

Very few risks will occur in your participation. There is no more risk in posting your story to the website for this research than online at youtube or other publically shared websites.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a renewed connection with place that you haven’t connected with recently. It will also benefit society as it will engage a wider audience by advocating for healthier and more active lifestyles of visiting their own childhood places. Finally it will benefit the state of knowledge we have around connection to place, as so little is understood at a temporal level. What happens to those childhood memories and experiences over time and how can reconnecting with place support living as if the Earth mattered?

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed and not included in the study.

### **Anonymity**

This project, by its nature of being online in public will not protect your anonymity if you choose to share it. However, you will be given the option of supplying an anonymous submission.

**Confidentiality**

All of your supplied data will be kept confidential. This includes name, address, and other basic information for creating a profile online.

**Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: website, Apple iBook, dissertation and presentations, published article or book, and directly with you.

**Commercial Use of Results**

This research will not lead to any commercial use. All findings will be free online or through the website or Apple.

**Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be not be disposed of for archival purposes. Your data will not be sold or used beyond the commercial use described above.

**Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Dr. Jason Price as mentioned above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (XXX-XXX-XXXX or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

By submitting your contribution , your free and informed consent is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

**PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR REFERENCE.**