

Stories of Learning and Becoming:
Emerging Programming with/in a First Nations Child Care Programs

by

Stephanie D. Hayes
BCYC, University of Victoria, 2014

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisor

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Co-Supervisor

Corinne Sagmeister (Director–Indigenous Engagement and Policy, Ministry of Children and Family Development)
Community Member

Abstract

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There is growing interest in emerging ECE programming that is situated in and emerges from and within the local culture and context. Emergent approaches, such as the municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and New Zealand's early learning framework *Te Whāriki*, provide inspiration for communities that are creating emerging programs. Of key importance for ECE programs in First Nations communities is that emerging programming is guided by Indigenous knowledges and local knowledges. This report describes a community engagement project with early childhood educators in a British Columbia First Nation community that was designed to introduce some emergent approaches into their preschool and child care programs. The report provides an overview of the project, describes its activities, and provides a literature review that served as its framework. The literature review focusses on emergent approaches in ECE, particularly in the context of British Columbia, important considerations for culturally appropriate pedagogies in Indigenous communities, the influence of postfoundational perspectives in ECE, and the process of pedagogical narration as a tool for planning emergent programs. The literature review is followed by an analysis of the project through three pedagogical narrations that emphasize learning and becoming as emerging through human and more-than-human relationships. The analysis engages with postfoundational theories, Indigenous scholars, and the feedback of the educators who took part in the project. The report concludes with some considerations on the process and impact of documentation as a way to live curriculum and engage emergent pedagogies in First Nations programs, as well as key project learnings that may serve as a resource for emerging early learning programming in First Nations communities.

Key words: *early childhood education, emergent approaches, pedagogical narration, Indigenous ECE, living curriculum, Indigenous knowledges, postfoundational ECE.*

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Chapter 1: Developing an Emergent Pedagogical Project

Many Indigenous communities are exploring ways to shape their early childhood programs to reflect the unique cultural knowledge and values of their Nations (Smith-Gilman, 2015). Greenwood, de Leeuw, and Fraser (2007) explain that “programs built on community knowledge have a much greater chance of success and applicability than those developed outside the community” (p. 16). The municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and New Zealand’s early learning framework *Te Whāriki* are two examples of approaches to early learning that are rooted in and emerge through the local community and cultural context. Such examples can provide inspiration for early years programming in British Columbia by highlighting the ways that the community and the cultural context are integrated within these emergent programs (for examples of these programs see Hewett, 2001; Hughes, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2017; Nagel & Wells, 2009; New, 2007; Smith-Gilman, 2015). Bringing Indigenous and local knowledges to this inspiration is a promising path for First Nation programs interested in emergent programs.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to be involved in a community engagement early childhood education project in an Indigenous community. The goal of the project was to introduce some emergent programming approaches that would inspire their new preschool and child care programs. This report provides an overview of the project (Chapter 1), a literature review that formed the foundation of the project’s theoretical and pedagogical approach (Chapter 2), and an analysis of the project activities (Chapter 3). It concludes with some considerations on storying in the project, followed by some insights on learning and becoming with documentation and stories for emerging programming in First Nations programs, and, lastly some key learnings and thoughts from the project (Chapter 4).

In this first chapter, I begin by describing how a community engagement project in a British Columbia First Nations preschool and child care programs came to be, and lay out the detailed rationale behind the project. I then outline the project's context, participants, and goals, and my role and my responsibilities as a project leader. I also provide an overview of the project's timeline and activities.

Beginning a Journey Together

The journey of this project began in July 2016 in response to a First Nation's interest in bringing Reggio Emilia-inspired and emergent learning approaches into the new preschool and child care programs in their community. The First Nation's community council and my supervisory committee and I met in the community to discuss the project. There was agreement that the community engagement project would not involve research, and therefore ethics approval from the university was not required. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drafted to form an agreement between the University of Victoria supervisory committee members and the First Nation community council members who were in attendance (see Appendix A). That fall, I prepared a detailed project proposal that was accepted by my supervisory committee and by the community council in January 2017.

Rationale

The *British Columbia First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework* advocates early learning programming for children and families that is “culturally connected and spiritually rooted in the traditional language and histories of their families, communities and Nations” (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011, p. 13). Greenwood et al. (2007) suggest that Euro-Western developmental approaches to early childhood education (ECE) that do not prioritize culture and context are not culturally appropriate for Indigenous early learning

programs. According to the First Nations Early Childhood Development Council's (2011) framework, ECE programs for First Nations children in British Columbia should focus on cultural knowledge and language. Indigenous scholars, therefore, explain that Indigenous knowledges lie at the heart of early learning programming that is culturally appropriate and ethical for First Nation programs (Greenwood, 2009; Rowan, 2017). This project report cites widely accepted Indigenous knowledges and philosophies by largely referring to Cree Scholar Margo Greenwood (2005, 2009, 2013) but also Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007), Coleman, Battiste, Henderson, Findlay, and Findlay (2012), Kimmerer (2013), Little Bear (2009), Styres (2011) and Watts (2013). To support cultivating programming that emerges from and within the local context, I also reference local Indigenous knowledges that I learned from the educators and from the community members.

To meet their cultural and community needs, some Indigenous communities that are planning early learning programs are turning to emergent approaches for inspiration (Hughes, 2007; Smith-Gilman; 2015). Emergent early learning approaches, such as in Reggio Emilia and *Te Whāriki*, both of which are influenced by culture and context, serve as positive examples to inspire emergent learning approaches for First Nations early learning programs. Hewett (2001) explains that the Reggio Emilia approach “is strongly influenced by a unique image of the child and is deeply embedded within the surrounding culture” (p. 99). The approach values participation and forming meaningful relationships, and, therefore, educators strive to promote schools as communities where everyone can belong (Rinaldi, 2013).

Similar to Reggio Emilia is the New Zealand framework known as *Te Whāriki*, which values the local culture and relationships within the local context. New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2017) explains that *Te Whāriki* is a flexible approach to early learning that is

grounded on the Indigenous perspectives of the Pacific peoples and the aspirations of the children and families that attend the child care centres. *Te Whāriki* emphasizes Māori values such as family and relationships (Nicholls, 2004). The emergent approaches of Reggio Emilia and *Te Whāriki* both promote participation and relationships, which is compatible with Indigenous knowledges that value nurturing harmonious relationships (Greenwood, 2013).

Aligning with both Indigenous knowledges and emergent curricular approaches, the project was underpinned by postfoundational viewpoints that support both human and more-than-human relationality (Hodgins, 2014b; Ingold, 2008). With anthropologist Tim Ingold's (2008) conceptualizations of land, environment, and materials, I aimed to explore pedagogies that look beyond anthropocentric viewpoints. To help experiment with emergent curricular ideas using postfoundational perspectives, the educators and I engaged with pedagogical narration (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). Pedagogical narration is a relational and collaborative process that provided opportunities for the educators and I to dialogue about ECE practice-related issues by capturing concrete, tangible traces of practice that were helpful in facilitating dialogue. A *trace* is a segment of ECE practice that is observed and documented in one of a variety of ways (e.g., photographs, written notes, audio, video). Pedagogical narration functioned in this project as a useful process for the educators and other interested participants to begin to create an emergent program that is uniquely their own by having concrete traces of practice to *think with* and opportunities to discuss these moments. These pedagogical and theoretical approaches are described further in Chapter 2. The following subsections provide some of the background information about the project including its context and participants, its goals and objectives, and the project leader role. This is followed by an overview of the project activities.

Context and Participants

The context of the project was a British Columbia First Nation community consisting of fewer than 200 people. The community's child care centre, licensed for 28 children from 0-5 years of age, was the central location for the project work. I used the pseudonym Spirit Bear throughout the report when referring to the community's child care centre. The staff at Spirit Bear included a coordinator, a holistic worker, two ECEs, five assistants, a culture teacher, and a cultural language teacher. Within the project, I used the title "educator" to refer to an adult who was directly involved with the children and the programs at Spirit Bear or who contributed to the project work in other ways (e.g., by suggesting programming ideas). The participants directly involved in the project included the educators and the children at Spirit Bear, with the families taking part as they wished.

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of the community engagement project was to lend support to the educators of this British Columbia First Nation community for the implementation of emergent and open-ended activities for their new child care and preschool programs. To meet this goal my objectives for the project were as follows: (a) to be a project leader in the current programs through four scheduled two-day visits to the community; (b) to share Reggio-inspired, engaging practice approaches with the educators and discuss them in terms of relevance to their curriculum; (c) to use pedagogical narrations to capture traces of the current programming and ECE practices, as well as any new curricular elements or provocations that were brought to the children, educators, and centre, for the purpose of providing strengths-based feedback and creating opportunities for dialogue about practice; and (d) to provide the community with a review of the project(Appendix B) and resources for the programs In my role as project leader, I

worked toward these goals and objectives by participating with the educators, the children, and the other participants in a respectful way.

Project Leader Role

As a leader in a community-engagement project, I was also a visitor, an observer, and a participant. Being attuned to these elements in the project leader role, I was particularly attentive to be respectful and collaborative in my interactions. Trusting and respectful relationships that begin in the first stages of a community engagement project can set a foundation for a strong collaborative partnership throughout the project (Ball & Janyst, 2008). Ball and Janyst (2008) explain that students “who hope to engage with Indigenous people need to be able to account for themselves, for example, by providing details of their ancestry, family life, scholarship, and intentions” (p. 38). Therefore, I account for myself in the following way. I am a white, third-generation Canadian woman of European heritage. I am married and have two grown daughters and two granddaughters. I realize that throughout my life I have had many opportunities due to unearned white privilege. My parents, who are both teachers, passed on to me a love of learning that influenced my path, leading to a career as an ECE and to further studies in child and youth care. My childhood home was located on the Gorge waterway – on Songhees territory – where my brother and sisters and I spent a lot of time outdoors exploring the shoreline. I respectfully acknowledge that I dwell and study as a visitor on the traditional territory of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples. I am grateful for having had this opportunity to collaborate with Indigenous ECEs in their programs in their territory and community.

In my role as a project leader, I collaborated with the educators to introduce some programming activities into their early learning programs. As a project leader, I:

- used pedagogical narration to model (and invite) observation, documentation, critical reflection, and critically reflective sharing;
- collected traces of practice during the family day event and used traces of practice to engage in a critically reflective dialogue with educators and children; and
- used a trace of practice to engage in critically reflective dialogue with the educators.

I followed all the guidelines laid out in the MOU (see Appendix A) to safeguard documentation and confidentiality. As per the MOU, I did not share any documentation or specific community information outside the community without consent. I protected the confidentiality of the documentation (i.e., notes and photographs) that I took for the project by storing these documents on my password protected personal computer. I shared the photographs that I took in the community with the educators. I did not take any photographs with me when I left the community without the written permission of the educators. I used all documentation solely for activities related to the project.

Project Activities

In this section, I describe the project work that I did at Spirit Bear during eight days spent in the community over a period of three months. During those visits I joined the educators in the infant and toddler centre, the 3-5-year-old centre, and the afternoon preschool class, and I also did preparation work that I completed in-between community visits. The project was delivered in three phases. In the first phase, I established relationships with the educators, gained an understanding of the participants' expectations of the project, and began sharing information with the educators. In the second phase of the project, I expanded my involvement in supporting the educators' programming interests. In the final phase of the project, I focused on closure with

the educators, the children, and the community. In the following subsections, I explain the activities that I completed in each of the three phases.

Phase One Engagement

Before the first visit to the community, I shared the project proposal with the educators by email. I asked the educators what mode(s) of communication they preferred, their expectations and goals, and any cultural considerations that I should be aware of. I also asked in advance if I could give a presentation on early learning programming. In addition, I asked the educators if we could meet sometime during each of the two-day visits to share programming insights. We referred to these gatherings as Reflective Meetings. I attached a brief introduction letter for the educators to post on the wall at Spirit Bear so that the parents would know who I was and why I was there (Appendix B). Before planning the first activity, I asked one of the educators what the children were interested in. She told me that recently the children were enjoying painting and mixing colours. I decided that a “natural paintbrushes” activity would provide an opportunity to paint using organic materials as paintbrushes and that they could mix the colours if they wanted to. I collected branches, sticks, and pinecones from outside and purchased paint. I also planned another activity, which I called the “forest activity,” that was based on my own interest in the land and the forest. I collected moss, feathers, leaves, branches, small toys, and containers made of plastic and glass. With the preparations in order, I was ready to begin the project activities at Spirit Bear.

My first visit to the community took place February 15 to 16. On the first day, I met the educators and learned about their programs. The day began with what they call their culture time, a time for singing and playing drums, followed by heritage language lessons. These are a daily part of the programs. Later that morning I introduced the “natural paintbrushes” activity in the 3-

5-year-old centre. On a table I set out a large piece of paper, some small branches, some pinecones, and sticks, and three bowls of paint, each a different colour. As four children painted with the branches, pinecones, and sticks, I documented through note-taking and photographs. In the evening I reflected on the day and added to my documentation notes with some further reflections from the day.

The next day, I continued to get to know the educators, the children, and their programs by spending time with them throughout the day. That morning I introduced a second activity, an impromptu one, that I called cotton ball stamps. I gave the children paper towels, cotton balls, and yellow and orange paint. While the children were engaging with the materials I continued to document with photographs and written notes. I planned to share these traces of practice in my presentation for the educators the next day and in the upcoming reflection meeting.

The educators and I decided that I would give my presentation on emergent ECE approaches later in the day so that all of the educators could attend. This request was inclusive, and therefore followed traditional Indigenous customs, in which meetings and activities often include community members of all ages (Nicholls, 2004). The children who were still at the centre could engage in activities, including the “forest activity,” that I set out for them near where the educators were sitting. At my lunch break, I added a couple of slides to my PowerPoint presentation to show the natural paintbrush activity and the cotton ball activity as examples of experiential activities, and to offer the educators a trace of practice as an introduction to the use of pedagogical narration in planning programming. Eight educators attended my presentation, and several offered their insights on children’s learning and their ideas for the programs (i.e., giving children time for exploration, picking berries, making drums, using recycled and inexpensive materials). One of the educators took some photos during the

presentation that she later posted on the Spirit Bear Facebook page. The presentation sparked a time of sharing ideas and insights among the educators and proved to be a positive conclusion to the first phase of the project.

Phase Two Engagement

This phase included two, two-day visits to the community. The second visit to the community took place February 27 to February 28. Before this visit, I prepared a handout on emergent programming and organized the materials for a canvas-painting activity, something two of the educators had previously told me that they had seen at another centre and wanted to try. On the first day, we set up the canvas-painting activity for the children in the 3-5-year-old centre, draping the fabric over a round table that we found outside and moved indoors to a bright location by the window. The second day, we offered the canvas-painting activity to the toddlers in their centre. That afternoon, the educators and I set out the canvas-painting activity in the 3-5-year-old centre again so that they could continue their exploration of the materials. During all the activities, I documented moments of practice that stood out for me. I shared some of these traces of practice with the educators during our reflection meetings.

We had our first *reflection meeting* that afternoon at the children's naptime. I shared a trace of practice from the notes that I had previously documented when observing the children's engagement in the natural paintbrushes activity. I then asked the educators the following questions: What do we know about paint? What do we think children like about paint? Why do we offer children paint in our programs? Two of the educators shared their memories of art experiences that they enjoyed as children. I asked them about their cultural traditions of using paint. The educators shared how masks and carvings were painted, berries were used to dye clothes, and charcoal was used for colour and for writing. They also shared great ideas on

cultural programming activities for the children (i.e., growing and picking berries, making jam, setting up an aquarium with edible aquatic life). One of the educators noted that their community is focused on revitalizing their culture, and another educator discussed the importance of children growing up knowing who they are as Indigenous people. That evening I reflected on the week's activities along with the insights from the educators at our reflection meeting and recorded some possible implications for cultural and emergent early learning.

Preparation for the third visit consisted of arranging with the educators the date for the parent and family social and creating an invitation to this social for the families. The educators had shown an interest in recycled items and loose parts which were part of my presentation in Phase One, so I prepared an activity that I called "come and create." This consisted of recycled items (e.g., cardboard, paper towel rolls, small boxes, plastic containers, small glass jars, etc.) and a few rolls of colourful duct tape. I printed some photographs of the children engaging in the activities and attached them to a colourful poster board and labelled them according to the activity. I planned to have these photographs on the table to invite the children's and parents interpretations. I also organized an activity to make paint from berries, as the educators had told me that berries are important to their culture. I created three handouts for the parents and the educators on "learning through play," "loose parts," and "The Reggio Emilia Approach" (Appendix C). My intention was that these handouts would build on the educators' interests, provide the parents with information on emergent approaches, and serve as complementary resources for the "come and create" activity.

My third visit to the community took place March 13 to March 14. On the first day, March 13, the educators and I reflected on the canvas-painting activity from the previous visit and shared ideas on ways that the activity could be extended in the future. That afternoon I

prepared for the Parent and Family Social in the Elder's room, which is located next to the 3-5-year old centre, by setting out the parent handouts, the photograph board, and the materials for the "come and create" activity. At the beginning of the social, three children from the preschool came over and engaged with the materials, and the educators from the infant/toddler and 3-5-year-old centres took turns coming to the social. One parent came to the social as she was picking her child up from preschool. In hindsight, while the social had been organized well in advance, the event may have been better attended if it had been held in the infant/toddler centre or the 3-5-year old centre as parents could have participated when they came to pick up their children. One of the educators put copies of the handouts in each of the children's cubbies, where the parents would find them. That evening I bought a bag of frozen blackberries and a sieve to strain the juice in preparation for the blackberry paint activity that I would implement with the afternoon preschool group the next day.

The next day I spoke about the programming with the lead educator of the preschool class. She told me that she was interested in offering the preschool children cultural activities or projects and had several compelling ideas (i.e., making a button blanket, a weaving project, and learning about robins). Another educator joined the conversation and the three of us came up with ideas for bird-related activities (i.e., make bird feeders, put up birdhouses, make bird nests, learn poems and rhymes about birds). That afternoon in the preschool program, the children, the educators, and I made blackberry paint. Later that day the educators and I had another reflection meeting, which I introduced by verbally sharing a trace of practice from the "come and create" activity. This led to a discussion on process and product in ECE programming. The reflective sharing at the meeting touched on the following aspects: having opportunities for children to be creative, offering loose parts made out of natural materials, and gardening with the children.

Later that evening I reflected on this third visit and took notes, particularly on the educators' ideas and insights.

Phase Three Engagement

The fourth and final visit to the community took place March 27 to March 28. In preparation for the fourth and final visit to the community, I created and emailed a project feedback questionnaire for the educators to reflect on and fill out when they had time (see Appendix D). I also wrote a letter to thank the educators for their time and for sharing their knowledge with me, and for their involvement in the project. We organized a thank-you lunch that would close out our project, as had been discussed and agreed upon in Phase One of the project.

On the first day of the final visit, I prepared the food that I was bringing to the final gathering and helped one of the educators rearrange her room and sort out some of the art supplies. On the final day, we had a superb lunch with the educators and children from both centres. I thanked the educators for being involved in the project and for sharing their knowledge of ECE and of their culture with me. I gave them a card and letters and let them know that the canvas from the painting activity was my gift to Spirit Bear. The educators thanked me and gave me a beautiful handmade button apron, a crocheted headband, a keychain necklace, and a thank-you card. In the afternoon, I met the educators who were available and talked with them individually about their experiences of the project, gathered the feedback sheets (Appendix D) from the other educators, and had a final discussion on ways of incorporating reflective documentation into their programs. Some of the educators told me that the project activities gave them inspiration for their emerging programming. I found my time with the educators and the children at Spirit Bear, and the activities that we engaged in, to be both pedagogically and

personally meaningful. I share further some of my learning through pedagogical narrations shared in Chapter 3.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the development of a community engagement project that introduced and implemented some emergent approaches within a First Nation's early learning preschool and child care programs. This project supported a small First Nation community to implement emergent and open-ended activities into their early learning programs. The project was developed to (a) plan early learning programming that is culturally appropriate by engaging with Indigenous knowledges, (2) use emergent approaches that are shaped by culture and context, (3) think with postfoundational perspectives as theoretical underpinnings, and (4) engage in pedagogical narration during the project as a process for planning programming. Chapter 1 concluded with an overview of the project's timeline and a description of the activities involved in the project. Moments from these activities are drawn on for exploration in Chapter 3.

This introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which details the literature review that served as a point of reference for the development and implementation of my project. The literature review describes key concepts for approaching emergent curriculums and pedagogies, some of the postfoundational perspectives that underpin this project and support emergent programming, and integral considerations for developing culturally appropriate practices. Chapter 2 also reviews ECE curriculum approaches within the context of British Columbia, including the process of pedagogical narration as a tool for critically reflective, emergent ECE. These theories and approaches are put to work in the pedagogical narrations that are presented in Chapter 3 and in my final considerations in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2: Emerging Pedagogical Approaches in Emergent ECE

Chapter 2 is a literature review of emerging pedagogical approaches in ECE that served as a reference point for the development of my project. This chapter is divided into three sections to provide an overview of (a) emergent pedagogical curricular approaches, (b) ECE curriculum approaches within the context of British Columbia, and (c) the process of pedagogical narration. The first section of this chapter reviews emergent approaches to curriculum, focusing on the municipal schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy and the early learning framework of New Zealand called *Te Whāriki*. This section concludes with a summary of key postfoundational concepts that underpin these emergent approaches and shaped the development, implementation, and analysis of this project. Included in the second section's summary of ECE curriculum and pedagogy in British Columbia are considerations about culturally appropriate programming for and within First Nations communities. I conclude this section by touching on how Indigenous knowledges also shaped my project approach (as described in Chapter 1) and analysis (see Chapter 3). The final main section of this chapter describes the process of pedagogical narration, which the Government of British Columbia (2008b) promotes as a tool for emergent curriculum and pedagogy, and which I engage with in Chapter 3 to explore some of the project's activities.

Emergent Approaches to Programming

As described in Chapter 1, this project emerged in response to the community's interest in bringing Reggio Emilia-inspired and emergent learning approaches into their new child care and preschool programs. This section describes some of the key approaches found in the municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Rinaldi, 2006), and in the New Zealand early learning curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), both of which provide examples of emergent and community-based approaches to early learning and care for this project. Jones

(2012) points out that in an emergent curriculum, co-constructed learning occurs when educators take the time to observe children's interests, build on their strengths, and encourage children to ask questions and seek answers. Emergent early childhood approaches vary according to culture and context, as is evident when comparing Reggio's emergent approach to the emergent approach in New Zealand's curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). However, emergent approaches tend to have the following in common: (a) an articulated image of the child, (b) valuing relationships and family involvement, (c) a sociocultural perspective, (d) a social constructivist approach to learning, (e) recognizing the role the environment plays in learning and development, and (f) using some form of reflective documentation process (Government of British Columbia, 2008b; Hewett, 2001; May & Carr, 1997). Reggio-inspired and emergent ECE programs typically recognize educators and children as collaboratively shaping the early learning program (Heydon & Wang, 2006).

Reggio Emilia's Approach

The Reggio Emilia approach to ECE has intrigued educators worldwide with its unique philosophy that values working in a way that allows pedagogy to emerge from the interests of children and educators. Reggio's system of ECE began after World War II when educator and visionary Loris Malaguzzi and a group of concerned parents advocated for innovative education in which young children "could acquire the skills and values of collaboration and critical thinking" (New, 2007, p. 6). Hewett (2001) explains that, while Reggio's innovations have drawn upon many theoretical approaches, it has continued to evolve over the years [73 years]. The evolution of Reggio has been shaped by its openness to an ongoing dialogue that invites questioning, reflecting, and adapting of ideas "within the context of the unique culture of Reggio Emilia, Italy" (p. 99). As the approach has emerged in a unique cultural and historical context, it

is not something that can be duplicated in other contexts. Rinaldi (2013) points out that each early learning and care program location has unique histories, cultures, and materialities that influence it. This is why many other early childhood programs that are based on aspects of Reggio Emilia's pedagogical practices refer to their programs as using *Reggio-inspired* approaches.

A central construct that lies at the foundation of Reggio's pedagogy is the "image of the child" (Moss, 2016). Reggio's image of the child is one that is "rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all connected to adults and other children" (Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993, p. 10). Hughes (2007) explains that "children are viewed as having ideas, questions, and theories, and the strengths of children are assumed" (p. 50). This image fuels the participatory approach that is taken within the schools. Rinaldi (2006) states that the Reggio approach requires the participation of parents, teachers, and children, and that participation can only emerge within and through relationships. She explains that Reggio Emilia schools nurture relationships through communication and care for both individual and collective wellbeing. This relational value shapes their constructivist approach to pedagogy (Swann, 2008). Learning happens *through interactions with others*. Children, parents, educators, and others all learn with each other, as well as with the environment around them.

Reggio educators set up provocations and projects with the children to support the co-construction of knowledge, rather than following a prescribed curriculum to inform their pedagogical actions (Soler & Miller, 2003). The term provocation here can refer to "a stimulus that arises naturally within a learning experience" (Kinney & Wharton, 2008, p. 7) or refer to a stimulus "that is provided by the adult to extend the learning" (Heydon, Crocker, & Zhang, 2014, p. 12). Through provocations within both short-term and long-term projects, educators challenge

children through experiential opportunities and discussions about a topic. Children are encouraged to expand their theories and concepts, while at the same time to listen and to negotiate with the other children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2007) explain that projects and provocations are typically accompanied by a process of careful listening and documentation followed by a reflective discussion that includes planning for another provocation to further expand the children's learning. This process is referred to as pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation assists children and adults to co-construct knowledge and to strengthen communication and relational skills (Rinaldi, 2006). Used as a regular process in the learning environment, pedagogical documentation also works to support the growth of relationships.

In keeping with their values regarding relationships and co-constructed knowledge, Reggio educators recognize the necessity of allowing time for meaningful learning to unfold. They are respectful of children's need to have time to explore their interests and to engage in relationships. They acknowledge this by being "mindful of children's own sense of time and natural rhythms, and plan encounters at their pace" (McNally & Slutsky, 2017, p. 1926). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) explained that the Reggio philosophy follows a "pedagogy of listening" that requires actively listening and respecting each child's point of view. Educators understand that young children communicate in many symbolic ways, a concept that Reggio Emilia's founder, Malaguzzi termed "the 100 languages of children" (New, 2007). Attuned to this, Reggio educators create school environments that encourage children to express themselves, for example, by providing pedagogical specialists (i.e., pedagogistas) and trained art teachers (i.e., atelieristas). Vintimilla (2016) explains that a pedagogista is an educational leader who offers pedagogical guidance to children and educators in the schools. An atelierista is a teacher

who specializes in art education and facilitates the visual art experiences and projects in the atelier (i.e., an art studio) and in the classroom (Moss, 2016). The atelierista, pedagoga, educators, children and all who are interested can take part in the process of pedagogical documentation (Rinaldi, 2006). It is through this process of collective engagement that knowledge is co-constructed and lived.

New Zealand's Te Whāriki Approach

Te Whāriki, New Zealand's national bi-cultural early years curricular framework, was originally published in 1996 with the goal to “unify a diverse sector around a shared aspiration for children and an agreed framework of principles, strands and goals that teachers, educators and Kaiako [teachers, educators, adults who care for and educate children] children, families and whānau [extended family] would use to weave their own unique curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 7). *Te Whāriki* has a broad conceptualization of curriculum, “taking it to include all the experiences, activities and events, both direct and indirect, that occur within the ECE setting” (p. 7). Nicholls (2004) points out that *Te Whāriki*, the Māori word for a woven mat, “identifies principles and strands which are woven together to create the integrated curriculum for all young children within early childhood services in Aotearoa/New Zealand” (p. 29). Nicholls (2004) also explains that *Te Whāriki* was developed within a specific cultural context, one that emphasizes Māori values such as family and relationships. As promoted through *Te Whāriki*, families' languages, cultures, and values must be an integral part of the curriculum that is respectful of each child and family (Ministry of Education, 2017; Nagel & Wells, 2009). Like in Reggio, *Te Whāriki* promotes early learning that takes place in an environment in which there is understanding and respect for the local culture as well as the cultures of the children and families that attend the centres.

Also similar to Reggio's approach, *Te Whāriki* has a strong vision of children as “competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 2). Further, Cooper, Hedges, and Dixon (2014) suggest that the view within *Te Whāriki* is that all children are recognized as capable and self-reliant learners. It also presents an image of families and communities as knowledgeable, influential, and collaborative. The Ministry of Education (2017) notes that the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* give voice to the framework's vision of children, families, and communities.

To ensure that early years programming meets the needs of their local children, families, and communities, educators are encouraged to collaborate with children, parents and the community when creating and implementing their programs (Ministry of Education, 2017). *Te Whāriki* includes goals and learning outcomes to guide educators in planning and evaluating a co-constructed curriculum, including the assessment of children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2017). Nagel and Wells (2009) explain that educators consult children and their families, as well as each other, for their input in the program planning and assessment. Educators use various documentation strategies to document children's learning in several ways such as written observations, photographs, and audio or video recordings, to collect traces of children's various curricular engagements for what *Te Whāriki* calls “learning stories” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 63). Zhang (2017) points out that, like pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, learning stories aspire to make young children's learning visible. The Ministry of Education (2017) explains that children use learning stories to assess their accomplishments and to plan their goals and that educators use them for supporting and assessing children's learning.

Postfoundational Perspectives

Reggio and *Te Whāriki* approaches align with postfoundational perspectives in several ways. Hodgins (2014b) states that postfoundationalism is “an umbrella term for theoretical positions that trouble such assumptions as Truth, generalizability, and essentialisms” (p. 82). Under this umbrella term are several posts: postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism and post-developmentalism. What these perspectives have in common is that they challenge assumptions about “knowledge, truth, reason, power, the subject, objectivity, reality, science, normal and so forth” (Hodgins, 2014b, p. 44). Reggio and Te Whāriki are approaches that welcome multiplicity, which has the potential to challenge single stories of (children’s, educators’, communities’) being and becoming. This aligns well with postfoundational intentions. Educators who bring a postfoundational lens to documentation (i.e., Reggio’s pedagogical documentation, New Zealand’s learning stories, and British Columbia’s pedagogical narration, which is described in the section that follows) can disrupt dominant discourses on ECE and create space for multiple views on pedagogy because they view these documents beyond simple, singular representations of the truth of practice (being). Sharing narratives of significant practice moments that happened with the children “with the purpose of engaging others (children, colleagues, parents) in critical dialogue *where assumptions about early childhood pedagogical practices and children’s identities are made visible and open for disputation and renewal*” (Berger, 2015, p. 131, italics added) is key to postfoundational emergent curriculum and pedagogies. Such an approach questions and resists dominant discourses to ECE that may not be socially just for children and their families (Moss, 2017). Moss (2017) points out that resistance to dominant and normalizing approaches to ECE is demonstrated when communities design their own early learning curriculum that meet the local needs and desires of the children,

parents, and community, such as in the approaches of Reggio Emilia and *Te Whāriki*, rather than rely on universalizing discourses that have been inherited from developmental psychology that are taken up as normal, and continue to be dominant in traditional ECE practices in North America (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2013; MacNaughton, 2005).

Reggio Emilia and *Te Whāriki* put forward that children's learning emerges as they relate with other people and things in the environment. This points to another postfoundational perspective that underpinned my approach (as described in Chapter 1) and the analysis of the activities within this project (Chapter 3), the concept of human and more-than-human relationality. A postfoundational perspective can challenge humanist ontologies when the significance of both human and more-than-human relationships in the world is recognized. Nannes and Mehta (2004) note that postfoundationalism can trouble the inheritance of enlightenment ideas that regarded human (i.e., white, male, Western) logic as the source of knowledge and truth. When matter is understood to be agentic, rather than agency only being understood as something that humans and to some degree other species possess, what we as educators pay attention to and how we attend in the classroom changes (Hodgins, 2014b). Ingold (2008) conceptualizes human-more-than-human relationality as entangled with one and other in the environment.

For millennia, Indigenous thinkers have engaged with cosmologies “that enmesh people into complex relationships between themselves and *all* relations” (Todd, 2016, p. 6, italics in original). Poirier (2008) puts forth that from an Indigenous viewpoint “non-humans refer to ancestors, deceased relatives and spirits of various kinds, as well as to places, animals, plants, rocks, winds, water, meteorological phenomena and any other beings, entities or objects that are

bestowed with agency—that is, consciousness and intentionality” (p. 76). Relationships between human and more-than-human entities are a dynamic and inherent ways of local dwelling in the world (Poirier, 2008). Poirier (2008) explains that “in indigenous understandings and experiences of the world, the agency of non-humans is a fact of life; it is a real and true phenomenon” (p. 77). Postcolonial considerations will be discussed further in a subsection of the next section, Curriculum and Pedagogy in British Columbia. All of the postfoundational points brought forth within this subsection are put into action in my pedagogical narrations in Chapter 3 and brought to my reflections in Chapter 4.

Curriculum and Pedagogy in British Columbia

In British Columbia, a particular curricular approach is not necessarily mandated, though all registered ECEs in British Columbia follow the *Child Care Act* (Government of British Columbia, 2001) and the *BC Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies* (Government of British Columbia, 2004). To assist in pedagogy and curriculum choices, the Government of British Columbia (2008a, 2008b) developed the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework (ELF)* as an educational resource. The *ELF* was designed to assist educators “to create rich early learning experiences and environments that reflect the latest knowledge on how best to support young children’s early learning and development” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p. 3). The principles underpinning the *ELF* serve as a guide for planning learning experiences that are holistic and strength-based. Educators are encouraged to apply the ideas in the *ELF* in ways that support the capacities and the needs of children in their settings. Reflecting on the ideas in the *ELF* also means recognizing that “social and cultural diversity [also] characterize the nature of family life and the context for early learning in BC” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p. 6). Like Reggio and *Te Whāriki*, the contextual and cultural considerations of early learning

are also integral to the *ELF*. The *ELF* recognizes that cultural considerations for Indigenous early learning programs include authentic, cultural teachings.

Living Curriculum

In this project, the educators and I understood curriculum to be all the experiences spontaneous and planned that occur in the early learning environment. Farquhar (2015) suggests that “the real curriculum exists where teachers are working with children – it is in the everyday micro-practices that impacts are felt and freedoms played out” (p. 68). In the Government of Saskatchewan’s (2008) early learning framework, *Play and Exploration Early Learning Program Guide*, curriculum is described as “the whole array of experiences, planned and unplanned, that takes place in a young child’s learning environment” (p. 66). This definition is compatible with a constructivist approach to learning as it implies that “the child actively constructs knowledge through meaningful interactions with the learning environment” (Ogunnaike, 2015, p. 11). With its specific acknowledgement of “unplanned experiences,” the definition also implies a creative, flexible, and spontaneous approach to curriculum, which is the underpinning of the emergent early learning approaches of Reggio Emilia and *Te Whāriki* described in the previous section. While the *ELF* does not specifically use the words curriculum or emergent, it does outline a very similar approach to early learning and care.

The *ELF* was influenced by the emergent ECE approaches in northern Italy, Scandinavia (following the Reggio approach) and New Zealand (*Te Whāriki*) (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). These influences that can be seen in its “vision of the child” that sees “young children as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities, and their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p. 4). Influences of emergent approaches are also recognizable in

ELF's acknowledgement of the importance of meaningful relationships with children and adults. The *ELF* suggests that relationships can be strengthened, and children's learning capacities increased when adults follow and respond to children's interests. Additionally, the *ELF* encourages educators to support children's explorations and learning through co-constructing activities, opportunities, and experiences in the program. Following the *ELF*, I use the term "activities" for the educational experiences that I brought to this project, as described in Chapter 1 and analyzed in Chapter 3. Similar to how provocations are described within Reggio Emilia curriculum, Freeman and Karlsson (2012) define activities as opportunities that involve the direct experience of those involved. They may be planned and carried out by children and/or educators and may be either individual or collective experiences.

Culturally Appropriate Curriculum

With the Government of Saskatchewan's (2008) definition of curriculum pointing to the importance of considering the child's learning environment, it illuminates the need to consider the context in which children are developing, which for this project was within a rural British Columbia First Nation community and culture. One of the community members in this project pointed out that the word *development* was never part of their language, and instead she uses the word *care* rather than development, especially when conversing with Elders. I have also had the experience of hearing an expressed distaste for the word curriculum. At the International Indigenous Early Development Gathering that I attended in July 2016, there were several occasions when this was detectable, including one instance when I heard an educator say vehemently, "If you get rid of the curriculum, you can see the child!"

These reactions may have to do with Canada's history of Eurocentric approaches to schooling (Greenwood et al. 2007), which the word curriculum may conjure. A Eurocentric

approach forms the basis of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) that advises educators on how to care for and educate young children, typically as defined through particular developmental stages (see Hoffman, 2000; Kirova, 2010; Lee & Vagle, 2010). Stairs and Bernhard (2002) conversely suggest that “care, education, is not bounded by school or body-mind-spirit fragmentations or by stages of life” (p. 324). Many argue that early learning curriculum based on Euro-Western approaches that compartmentalize learning in these kinds of fragmentations and stages are unethical as they do not align with non-Euro-Western cultural views and beliefs and yet are systematically applied to anyway (Greenwood, 2006; Janmohamed, 2010; Munroe, Lunney-Borden, Murray-Orr, Toney, & Meader, 2013; Stairs & Bernhard, 2002). Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, and Sanchez (2015) suggest that one way to combat the dominance of Western DAP discourses is for educators to take a postcolonial stance. Through such a perspective, “they can contest and question the power relations embedded in the universal categorization of all children under the normative gaze of Western neoliberal models of early childhood development and care” (p. 33).

Postcolonial considerations. The First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (2011) state that, “prior to colonization First Nations children were cared for and educated by family and community members according to the spiritual, cultural, and linguistic traditions of each Nation” (p. 6). Traditionally, young Indigenous children were taught cultural values by observing, interacting, and building relationships with their parents and family members in their home environments (Ball, 2012). Today, Ball (2012) explains, Indigenous parents, want their children to learn who they are, to know their relations, to know about their ancestors who have passed on, to learn their Indigenous language(s), to learn about the land, and to develop a spiritual identity. Hare and Anderson (2012) warn that,

A structured approach to learning and care (one that separates children from their family and community, and ignores the role of culture and language) invokes a particular tension for Aboriginal families and communities, as it reminds them of a past that devastated their families and communities. (p. 20)

Culturally appropriate early learning, therefore, embodies traditional cultural values and teachings and resists EuroWestern approaches that perpetuate colonization. Greenwood (2009) points out that, “if First Nations children are to become healthy citizens of their Nations and the world, it is imperative that they know, understand and internalize the values, histories, and ways of their culture and people” (p. 155). Greenwood (2009) also argues that one of the key sites for cultural transmission is the Indigenous community and the early learning programs that are located there. She explains that “this transmission of knowledge(s) may be viewed as pedagogy and seen to inform early childhood practices and change” (p. 55). Early learning curriculum within First Nations early learning and care programs, therefore, should be imbued with language and cultural learning from the Indigenous knowledges of the children’s Nation. Greenwood (2009) further explains that Indigenous programming that is shaped by the Indigenous educators, Elders, cultural teachers, children, family members and other community members is much more likely to meet the cultural needs of the whole community.

This kind of community participation is an essential element of culturally appropriate programming. For Indigenous programming to be considered culturally appropriate, it is often suggested that curriculum is developed, implemented, and evaluated by Indigenous ECEs, with the inclusion of family and community members, whenever possible. Ball (2014) explains that Indigenous ECE’s are preferred by many communities as they can serve as positive role models who can support young children’s cultural and language learning. In particular, *local* Indigenous

ECEs are perhaps in the best position to create an early learning curriculum that is in tune with the cultural knowledge of their particular community (Greenwood et al. , 2007). Stairs and Bernhard (2002) point out that Indigenous ECEs and other key community members are better suited to evaluate their own ECE programs than those outside the community, as they know the children and families that use the services, are familiar with the local Indigenous knowledges and cultural practices, and can evaluate their curriculum following culturally relevant (appropriate) evaluative practices, (e.g., narrative approaches).

Indigenous knowledges. Understanding the vital importance of local Indigenous knowledges for community-based early years programs in First Nations contexts underpinned my approach to (as described in Chapter 1) and analysis of (Chapter 3) the activities within this project. Greenwood (2013) explains that some Indigenous philosophies are widely accepted by Indigenous people but that these may be expressed in a variety of ways depending on location and context (Greenwood, 2009). Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) caution that, “Indigenous ways of knowing and being are as diverse as Indigenous peoples themselves” (p. 50). Indigenous knowledges begin in a specific place, and that place shapes people’s relationships with each other and with the land (Coleman et al., 2012).

According to Little Bear (2009), Indigenous knowledges are centered on relationships, and relationships are understood to be with everything in the cosmos. “Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews are inclusive of all beings and relationships, and therefore can neither be reduced to a single way of coming to know” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 69). Greenwood (2005) states that “the foundations of Indigeneity, then are comprised, in part, of values that privilege interrelationships among the spiritual, the natural and the self; reflect a sacred orientation to place and space” (p. 54). Indigenous knowledges and ways of being are learned through the land

and through Elders, teaching integral knowledges that have been transmitted from generation to generation (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Hare, 2012). “Language, songs, stories, and ceremonies act as repositories of knowledge in the minds of Aboriginal peoples” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 9). This is living curriculum. Ball (2012) suggests that “children who are raised in their own families within their cultural community are routinely exposed to an authentic ‘cultural socialization curriculum’” (p. 288). Early childhood programs built on Indigenous foundational values can support the flourishing of this kind of authentic cultural curriculum.

Pedagogical Narration

Pedagogical narration is an effective process for critically reflecting on and planning emergent early learning programming (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). The process of pedagogical narration may be useful for the development of locally situated and self-developed programs in Indigenous communities. As described in Chapter 1, pedagogical narration is the tool that the educators and I employed to experiment with emergent programming ideas, and is also the approach that I used to explore some of the programming activities in the project (Chapter 3). According to the Government of British Columbia’s (2008b) *Understanding the British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice*, pedagogical narration is the term used in British Columbia to refer to an ongoing, cyclical process that aims to make children’s learning visible and to develop critically reflective practice.

The process of pedagogical narration is similar to that of “pedagogical documentation in Saskatchewan, Reggio Emilia, Italy and in Sweden; learning stories in New Brunswick and New Zealand; and action research in Australia” (Government of British Columbia, 2008b, p. 13). While there are many ways to use documentation and many names that can be given to this process, the fundamental understanding that a “critical reflective practice is required” (p. 13) to

support emergent and innovative early learning programming is consistent in all of these approaches. The Government of British Columbia (2008b) points out that, throughout the process of pedagogical narration, educators use critical reflection to interpret what they have observed in order to make these interpretations visible to themselves and to others who take part in the process. Using critical reflection in this process requires examining our practice and confronting our assumptions, and then learning and becoming through these experiences (Government of British Columbia, 2008b).

The Process of Pedagogical Narration

The process of pedagogical narration consists of “observation, documentation, interpretation, dialogue, and (re)interpretation wherein a group (e.g., researchers, educators, and children) work collectively to experiment with interpretations and questions” (Hodgins, 2014a, p. 786). It begins with the careful observation and recording of practice. With a postfoundational perspective, these observations and recordings are always partial, always incomplete. Recorded are moments that are “usual” and “typical” as well as those that may be more unique or challenging (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). Hodgins (2014b) explains that educators can individually document these practice moments “through photographs, video, written notes, and children’s creations/artwork” (p. 99). These documented practice moments (i.e., traces) can illuminate some of the ways children are learning (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). Rinaldi (2006) notes that interpretation happens after the documented practice moment is over. When an educator (and others, such as children and families) critically reflects upon and interprets documentation, “intriguing questions and insights can be gained without requiring absolute certainty about the particular situation or occurrence” (Government of British Columbia, 2008b, p. 12). Individual interpretations only represent one person’s perspective on a

practice moment but the dialogue that follows is a collective experience in which multiple interpretations and insights are shared. According to the Government of British Columbia (2008b), an educator will share their documentation with a group of people (e.g., educators, children, parents, community members) and invite critically reflective dialogue. This group dialogue elicits diverse perspectives on traces of practice that “help us to recognize that our interpretations are always partial, always incomplete” (Hodgins, 2014b, p. 79). Sharing with colleagues, children, families and other interested individuals, educators generate more questions and gain further insights into children’s learning and children’s lives. Hodgins (2014b) refers to the last stage of the pedagogical narration cycle as (re)interpretation in which a group of individuals works collaboratively to probe and to inquire into the interpretations. Thinking deeply with interpretations give educators insights into children’s learning that helps them to plan and to extend programming (Moran, Desrochers, & Cavicchi, 2007). Ideally, educators will use this cyclical process of pedagogical narration as a regular part of ECE practice to inquire into children’s learning and to plan programming.

As previously mentioned, pedagogical narration can help to develop critically reflective practice, to make children’s learning visible (Government of British Columbia, 2008b) and to plan emergent programming, as the educators and I did in this project (described in Chapter 1). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) note that, when planning curriculum, “the emphasis is on the *process* of developing curriculum through pedagogical narration rather than on curriculum as *product*” (p. 114, italics in original). Engaging in this ongoing *process*, educators dialogue with colleagues [and other adults] on their programming insights and ideas and include the children in the discussions and the planning (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). According to the Government of British Columbia (2008b), when the children remember the activity or

experience by seeing and/or hearing the documentation, they may be inspired to suggest what could come next. Educators can offer the children materials or ideas related to the documentation to see if it is intriguing to them or if it inspires other ideas (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). In this way, pedagogical narration plays a significant role in promoting the co-construction of learning and curriculum (Government of British Columbia, 2008b). When sharing pedagogical narration with their colleagues, educators engage in dialogue on the children's insights as well as their own. Through this engagement with the narrations, educators work with "multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret children's learning and to plan curriculum" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 114).

Pedagogical narration is shaped by the theoretical perspectives that educators think with as they interpret the stories. Postfoundational perspectives offer a challenge to dominant, foundational discourses that can limit the scope of the interpretations and of ways to think about practice. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) explain that interpreting pedagogical narrations through postfoundational perspectives can help to surface habitual practices based on dominant discourses, which can mold and restrict ECE practice. Educators who critically reflect on narrations from these perspectives may become aware of specific aspects of their thinking and practices that they may choose to examine and transform. In this way, pedagogical narrations are not only about making children's learning visible but about making educators' learning and pedagogical choices visible as well. In this way, pedagogical narrations are not only about making children's learning visible but about making educators' learning and pedagogical choices visible as well.

Unlike dominant child development discourses postfoundational perspectives deeply attend to context in ECE as they "situate childhoods within sociocultural, historical, and

economic contexts” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 45). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) assert that applying postfoundational perspectives when working with pedagogical narration can also assist educators in taking up complex issues related to practice (e.g., gender, class, racisms, social injustices). Educators, for example, can turn to postcolonial viewpoints to look for “possibilities to acknowledge and resist the unjust effects of coloniality” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 34). Postcolonial viewpoints can provide insights for educators and others (i.e. Elders, cultural teachers, parents, other community members) working with pedagogical narration, to critically reflect and dialogue on ethical approaches to First Nation early learning programs. This can lead to group sharing on traditional Indigenous early learning and Indigenous knowledges and how these approaches can influence programming choices.

Engaging with multiple perspectives in the process of pedagogical narration includes educators thinking with theories in a range of disciplines, such as the arts, science, and philosophy, as part of their individual and collective interpretations. These varying insights are useful for critically reflecting on children’s learning beyond developmental understandings and for supporting a relational ontology perspective that moves beyond anthropocentric viewpoints. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) point out that, with these perspectives, educators can use pedagogical narration to plan curriculum “that builds on, the multiple and emergent influences of children’s relationships with social and *material* worlds” (p. 36, italics added). In Chapter 3, I draw on Ingold’s (2008) postfoundational views on human/more-than-human relationality and Indigenous knowledges related to human/more-than-human relationality to help me interpret my stories. This shaped what I noticed and how I showed how learning happens with human and more-than-human others. I also critically reflect on how emerging Indigenous programming

might resist Euro-Western ECE approaches that may not be culturally appropriate for First Nations child care programs.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 provided a literature review of emerging pedagogies in emergent ECE that served as a frame of reference for the development of my project. The first section of this chapter provided an overview of emergent approaches that included the municipal schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and *Te Whāriki*, New Zealand's ECE framework. This section included a summary of key postfoundational concepts that support emergent approaches and that shaped the growth, application, and analysis of this project. The second section provided an overview of ECE programming approaches and pedagogy within British Columbia, including considerations of culturally appropriate pedagogy and the Indigenous knowledges that support them and that influenced my project approach and analysis. The concluding section of the chapter described the process of pedagogical narration and some approaches to using it, including planning emergent programs. Chapter 3 follows with three pedagogical narrations from moments that emerged when the educators and I implemented the programming activities.

Chapter 3: Learning and Becoming With: Engaging Strategies in ECE

“Human and nonhuman, *all* entities take shape in encounters, in practices; and the actors and partners in encounters are not all human, to say the least” (Haraway, 1994, p. 65). In this chapter I share three pedagogical narrations that emerged from the activities that the educators and I implemented with the children within their early learning program. In reviewing the documentation from the project, it became clear to me that there were many stories of *learning and becoming with others*, stories that point to engagement as being foundational to early learning programming. I use the terms “learning with” over “learning from,” as learning from implies a one-directional process. I bring Donna Haraway’s (2008) use of the word “with” to highlight that learning is a dynamic and relational process that happens with human beings and more-than-human beings (e.g. things, animals, organisms, plants, and technologies), an approach I explore with Greenwood and Ingold throughout this chapter. Haraway (2008) refers to the entanglement of human and more-than-human others as “lively knottings that tie together the world” we live in (p. vii). She suggests that people come to know more about our world by engaging with the others in it rather than making generalizations about them (Haraway, 2008). While engaging with others in the world, children and adults are continually changing. Haraway (2008) refers to this changing, this becoming who we are through learning with others, as “becoming with.” Becoming with, for all life forms, happens through encounters with both human and more-than-human others (Haraway, 1994).

Rather than recognizing learning and becoming as separate, (Ingold, 2008) explains that learning and becoming are entanglements forming a meshwork of string and knots that entwine with one another and form bundles. For children and adults, learning and becoming occurs within a complex network of connections and relationships. From an Indigenous perspective,

living and learning in the world is about relationships, “holism and the interconnectedness of all beings” Greenwood, 2006, p. 13). In this chapter I share the pedagogical narrations that emerged from my work in the program in order to illuminate what occurred when the children, the educators, and I engaged in these activities. Through my reflections on these traces of practice moments I explore how learning and becoming with emerged through engagements with others, both human and more-than-human. I share and analyze several tensions, challenges, and questions that surfaced for me while reflecting on the documentation, and I also show the pedagogical growth that came about as a result of this process.

Learning with Culture, Becoming with Blackberry Paint

Three preschool children watch closely as another child presses down hard on the potato masher to break up the cool, thawing blackberries. “They are hard to squish,” she exclaims, while putting her weight into pushing down on the potato masher. I tell them that we need to squish the blackberries to get the juice to come out, which will be our blackberry paint. One child puts her finger in and touches the berry/juice concoction. “It’s cold,” she says. “Yes, I had to buy frozen blackberries because the fresh blackberries are not in season yet,” I tell the group. The big bowl is heavy, so an educator lends a hand to help the child pass it along. Meanwhile, a child dips her fingers in to retrieve a berry that she quickly pops into her mouth. “Can we eat one?” a boy asks. Assured by their educators that they can each have a couple of berries to eat after we have made our paint, we continue our process. There is a sense of cohesion among the group, as everyone works together to make the paint. The children take turns to use a sieve to strain out the juice, they tell each other what kind of berries they like to eat. An educator tells us that she likes to pick blackberries in the summertime and how the juice

stains her hands. Another educator smiles as she tells the children that she enjoys eating her Grandmother's delicious blackberry jam.

According to Greenwood (2013), Indigenous ontology “is not about *knowing the things*, but about knowing things by being in relationship with them” (p. 99, italics in original). Following Greenwood’s (2013) understanding, I suggest that offering children opportunities to know “things” through relational experiences, as the educators and I did with the blackberry painting, may be supportive of Indigenous early learning pedagogies. The *British Columbia First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework* states that, “Quality ECD programs and services for First Nations children and their families are shaped by the nurturing relationships, natural environments, positive experiences, and rich cultures of each Nation” (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011, p. 10). Indigenous relational experiences, Greenwood (2013) explains, help to cultivate young children’s cultural identities. At Spirit Bear Child Care Centre, one way that Indigenous knowledges are nurtured daily is during what the educators refer to as “culture,” when the children, the educators, and any parents who are present gather with the culture teacher to sing traditional songs and to drum. Afterward the older children meet with the language teacher to learn the traditional language of the community. In retrospect our blackberry painting experiment is an example of how culturally significant activities can be a part of the regular programming that can add to or extend the regular scheduled cultural teachings.

Re-viewing our blackberry paint activity, I see that both human and more-than-human engagements were integral to learning and becoming with others (Greenwood, 2013; Ingold, 2000) in our activity. Ingold (2008) visualizes relationships as an entanglement of living things and non-living things that are intertwined, twisting, weaving, unweaving, and changing as they

are becoming in the world. This section explores how our activity together was an entanglement of human (i.e., children, educators, facilitator) and more-than-human (i.e., berries, potato masher, and sieve) relationships that facilitated learning with culture and becoming different than we were prior to our experience with blackberry paint. Considering this relational approach within our activity, I explore how children and educators came to know berries by being in relationship with them through our activity.

Knowing Berries

The activity of making blackberry paint gave the children an opportunity to get to know berries, a natural material that is significant to Indigenous culture (First Nations Health Authority, n.d., p. 26). While working with the blackberries, the children came into contact with three properties about the berries: their consistency, their temperature, and their taste. The children learned by watching the other children or by mashing the berries themselves. They seemed to discover that even though the berries are firm, they are full of juice that is released by mashing them firmly. Some noted that the berry mixture was cold, and many others commented that the berries themselves are sweet to eat. As I re-reflect on our berry paint activity, I realize that we were “listening” to what the berries could teach us, and that this listening could not have happened without being close to the berries and *engaging with them*, with our arms, our hands, and all of our senses. Many ECE’s suggest that experimental learning is more meaningful than being told information, such as that berries can be juicy, cold, and sweet (Peterson, DeCato & Kolb, 2015; Rushton, Juola-Rushton & Larkin, 2010). Ingold (2000) perceives organic life as “the creative unfolding of an entire field of relations within which beings emerge and take on the particular forms they do, each in relation to the others” (p. 19). With Ingold (2000), I imagine that in our process of mashing and straining the berries, learning emerged through connections

and interactions with children, educators, berries, and other materials. The entanglement of children, educators, berries, and materials in our activity brought forth a “creative unfolding” of relationships with berries, culture, and each other (Ingold, 2000, p. 19).

The educators provided the inspiration for this activity as they shared with me that blackberries and salal berries grow in the area, and that these are a vital part of their culture, which they wanted the children to learn about. In reflection, I notice that this became an active time for the children to relate with the berries and one another, rather than a time to listen to an educator or other adult filling them with facts about berries. In the process of making blackberry paint, the children experienced taking turns, first to break up the berries, then to strain the berries, and finally to separate out the juice. Through engaging in these steps, the children had opportunities to communicate, self-regulate, and cooperate, social skills that are suggested to form and nurture positive relationships (Kemple, 2017). Greenwood (2013) quotes Little Bear who says: “our stories and elders’ teachings are about living our lives in a ‘good way’ by living our values (such as caring, sharing, strength, honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect) in order to achieve balance and harmony” (p. 101). The children in the group had the opportunity to practice many of these social values, with the guidance and role-modelling of their educators. I think that the relational skills that children can build through group learning complement the Indigenous cultural value placed on nurturing relationships (Greenwood, 2013). Our group experience is an example of an intergenerational learning collective with participants ranging from age four to fifty. In some ways that are comparable to an Indigenous approach, Reggio Emilia preschools also embraces intergenerational relationships and democratic practice by engaging with children and parents as citizens, welcoming their active participation in the schools (Rinaldi, 2006). In considering Greenwood’s emphasis (2013) on relationships being

central to Indigenous culture, I suggest that young children who take part in cultural group activities can, in relationship with their educators, learn social skills that nurture their relationships in addition to the cultural values of their Nation (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011).

Being with Tensions

In reflecting on the documentation from the berry painting activity, I became attuned to several tensions within myself. I regard these tensions as “productive moments of change that have the potential to move forward [my pedagogical] understandings” (Tippins, Neuharth-Pritchett & Mitchell, 2015, p. 281). Firstly, I recall being unsettled that we used frozen berries purchased from the store that were then thawed in a microwave for the activity. Although this was quick and easy, it also raises some questions for me. Where did these berries come from? What were the conditions in which they were picked, processed, and transported? Which/whose bodies were impacted in their growth, processing, and transportation? Having arrived from another place, are they safe to eat? Did any microscopic organisms attach themselves to the berries and come along for the ride? Would choosing berries in the local community be safer, have less environmental impact, and be more culturally appropriate? I wonder also if I have romanticized an image of berry growing, picking, and engaging with, as a learning-with-culture activity. Am I viewing berry picking as a recreational activity rather than from a cultural perspective that may include serious harvesting? While I think that the paint can be viewed as a gift from the berries, I also wonder if using food, in this case blackberries, as a material to engage with is something that we as educators should be doing? Our activity seems to be contradictory to cultural practices of eating berries and giving thanks to Mother Earth for her bounty. I also reflect that we did not give thanks for the berries during or after our activity. If I

have the opportunity to facilitate a cultural activity in the future involving food, I will ask the educators if they think it is culturally appropriate to give thanks. If they do, I will ask them what cultural protocols should be followed.

Secondly, as I re-view this activity, I wonder about my role as a facilitator in an activity that I have deemed related to Indigenous culture. I am not an Indigenous person, but rather a white, third-generation Canadian of European heritage who is a visitor to the territory, community, and child care centre. I know that enforced assimilation policies of Euro-colonial settlers and the Canadian government have been destructive to Indigenous people and their culture, and that colonization continues to impact Indigenous people in many ways (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007). As a non-Indigenous facilitator, assisting in the programming, what biases might I have unintentionally brought to this activity? Did I facilitate the activity from an individualistic, Western stance rather than being mindful of the collectivist worldview? For example, did I overcontrol the activity rather than inviting the educators to be part of the facilitation? Did I focus more on the activity itself rather than on relationship building? How can I act as a visitor facilitator without presenting myself as yet another white person “expert” here to help an Indigenous community? In a non-Indigenous facilitator role, I did not give the children any cultural information on berries as this is not part of my background and not my place to share. However, the result was the children did not receive cultural learning about berries. In hindsight, I would have asked the educators if they wanted to share cultural information on berries, or if they wanted a community member to share this with the children. Perhaps this Indigenous knowledge learning about berries could have taken place at culture time.

Becoming Otherwise

“Coming to know and to be is both individual and collective, both process and product, both internal and external, and originates in the energy of relational experiences” (Greenwood, 2013, p. 100). Within our blackberry activity we (i.e., the children, educators, and I) came to know both individually and collectively, through what we did *and* what we made. My individual learning cannot be isolated from the people, materials, voices, emotions, and so forth that were part of this moment. While much dominant ECE discourse focuses on process (Gibbons, 2007; Kim, Park, Lee, 2001) the product of the berries and the resulting paint itself was integral, inseparable, from the experience. For each person involved in the blackberry paint activity, coming to know and to be, was internal, the thoughts and feelings experienced within, and external, through engagement with berries and each other.

I am coming to understand more fully the importance of relationships in early learning programming. In my re-reflection after the project, I thought about the discoveries the children made while getting to know berries, and how they related with their peers and educators. These relational connections served as the foundation for the children to learn more about berries and culture, but also about each other. I no longer think of relationships as only an essential component to practice but rather I realize now that they are pervasive and all-connecting.

I gained a deeper understanding of the cultural relevance of relationships experientially, by spending time with the educators and by taking part in the child care community’s gatherings and activities. This deep knowing is not something that can be fully understood except through engagement (Greenwood, 2013).

Learning with the Land, Becoming with Branches, Feathers, and Moss

I arrange a collection of branches, feathers, moss, and other materials on the floor at the side of the gathering space in the Elder's room. I then add some containers, a few small toys, and a tiny mirror. The educators and I have arranged that the activity be available for the children to explore when they would have ample time for engagement. Two children seem to be curious as they look at the materials. "You can make a forest, if you want," I suggest. After a little encouragement the children kneel on the ground and begin to touch some of the materials. One child puts a branch in a container and works hard to make it stand up, but it keeps falling over. The children are busy touching and rearranging the materials. An educator comes by with her camera and snaps a couple of pictures of the children engaging with the materials. Noticing a large feather, a boy picks it up and runs his two fingers down the length of it. "This is so soft," he says. Another child who is standing beside the others has a glass jar with moss in it. She drops it bit by bit onto the floor. "What is this?" she asks. "That's moss," I tell her. One of the educators tells us some of the traditional uses for moss, including as diapers. A child picks up a toy troll and the small mirror. She holds the troll in front of the mirror so that it can see itself, and mumbles something in a deep voice. Appearing to have a plan, two children gather some of the items and take them to the other side of the room. It is not surprising that the materials have spread across the room.

Greenwood and de Leeuw explain (2007) that Indigenous knowledge, transmitted from one generation to the next, can be learned from the land, from the stories that the Elders tell about the land, and from Indigenous peoples' relationships to the land. Furthermore, they declare that nations "arise from their connection with the land and from a strength of culture that grows

from this connectivity” (p. 48). Similarly, the *British Columbia First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework* states that ECD programs and services “must be imbued and anchored in First Nations knowledge, beliefs and values rooted in a connection to the land and to all living beings” (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011, p. 10). With these cultural understandings, I am curious whether introducing an activity involving natural materials – as the educators and I did with the branches, feathers, and moss – might promote connections to the land and to culture. As in the previous activity, the branches, feathers, and moss activity is another opportunity to explore human and more-than-human entanglements within early learning environments.

According to Ingold (2008) the environment “comprises not the surroundings of the organism but a zone of entanglement” (p. 1796). In other words, rather than understanding the environment as everything that exists around organisms, Ingold’s zone of entanglement offers a way to see environments as a “tangle of interlaced trails, continually ravelling here and unravelling there, [where] beings grow or ‘issue forth’ along the lines of their relationships” (p. 1807). Putting Ingold’s (2008) conceptualization to work, I re-view our activity for how some of the tangles – children, educators, branches, feathers, and moss – issued forth in their relationships with one another, and with their connections to culture and to the land.

Tangles with Natural Materials

The branches, feathers, and moss activity gave the children an opportunity to explore natural materials from the land. The educators had arranged that the branches, feathers, and moss could be in a location where the children could easily reach them. I noticed that the children seemed to be curious about the branches, feathers, and moss that I had placed on the Elder’s room floor. I wondered if this was due to having these natural materials from nature inside rather

than outside. However, reflecting on the interconnectivity of all things, and how the children were entangled with the materials in our blackberry paint activity, I think it is likely that the children just wanted to connect and relate with these newly presented things in their early learning environment (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Ingold, 2008). Ingold (2000) points out that although Western science recognizes the biological similarities that human beings have to other organisms, Western science's foundation is built upon the conceptualization that human beings are separate from nature. He notes that activities in nature, such as gathering and hunting, and activities that are cultural constructions of nature, such as singing and storytelling, should not be viewed as dichotomous as both sets of activities are ways of dwelling in the world. In our activity, the children were attentive to the branches, feathers, and moss, through their actions (e.g., touching, rearranging, balancing, and dropping) as well as by listening to the cultural knowledge that their educator shared with them. I think the physical, relational, and oral encounters that the children experienced in their tangle with branches, feathers, and moss, their educators, and other children, were valuable ways of dwelling in their early learning environment.

The concept of environment in discourses of ECE is often narrowly thought of in terms of spaces that are organized for children (Rinaldi, 2006; Rinaldi, 2013; Swann, 2008). Ingold (2000) explains that “‘environment’ is a relative term – relative, that is, to the being whose environment it is” (p. 20). Therefore, reflecting on the experiences of the children involved in these activities, the environment is everything that exists around them, takes on meaning for them, and can be thought of as developing with and around the them (Ingold, 2000). As the children spent time with the branches, feathers, moss, and other items in their environment, I noticed that they manipulated them in a variety of ways. While kneeling on the floor, one child

was intent on trying to get the branches to stand up in a container. Another child picked up a feather off the ground and used his fingers to stroke it from top to bottom. While standing up with a jar full of moss in her hands, another child chose to drop small pieces of moss onto the ground. Like his conceptualization of a zone of entanglement, Ingold (2000) says that land can be broadly conceived of as “a field of dwelling for beings of all kinds, human and non-human” (p. 139). Children can connect with the land through experiences on the land and through the Elder’s stories (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007). As the children engaged in the activity, they had an opportunity to learn more about one of the natural materials from the land and its connection to culture by listening to their educator talk about some of the traditional uses of moss. I note that cultural information sharing was also part of our previous activity when the educators shared their memories about blackberries. Referring again to the *British Columbia First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework*, I think that in addition to giving the children information about their culture, this kind of interaction helps to grow relationships with their educators, with their rich culture, and with the natural materials from the land (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011). Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) emphasize that when Indigenous educators share their traditional knowledge through stories, children can learn about the connections to the land and to the culture. They explain that teachings of connections to land, earth, and culture are passed on through storytelling, ceremonies, and customs. Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) declare that, “Indigenous knowledges and ways of being build on knowledges that have passed on intact through generations” (p. 50). I think it likely that among the educators at Spirit Bear Child Care Centre there is plenty of local knowledge of land and culture that can be shared with the children through information sharing, storytelling, songs, or in other meaningful ways throughout the daily program. The educators and children may extend their

activity with branches, feathers, and moss to other places on the land. For example, they may want to try to find more branches, feathers, and moss on their land, spend time with them there, and then bring them back to child care centre environment.

Considering Challenges

Greenwood and de Leeuw (2007) suggest that with community support “pedagogical teachings on connections to lands and ancestral knowledges” can be part of the early childhood learning programming that will “link young children to their communities and Indigenous lineages” (p. 53). As I re-reflect on this understanding, my first challenge considers how our activity with branches, feathers, and moss might have provided the children with a more meaningful cultural connection to the land. As a non-Indigenous person, I need to learn from the local Indigenous educators and the community members who are knowledgeable about their land and culture. Reflecting back on both this activity and the blackberry paint activity, I did not spend enough time communicating with the educators about their land and their culture. Considering that relationship is central to Indigenous knowledge(s) (Greenwood, 2013), I was remiss not to communicate more with the educators about their land and culture. In retrospect, I would have asked the educators, the culture teacher, and the language teacher if they would share stories, songs or memories with the children related to the branches, feathers, and moss. Having more time to be at Spirit Bear, to be together and to be on the land may have brought out a variety of questions. In wonder with time and “being there” what the educators might have suggested as meaningful ways for the children to learn about land, place and culture using branches, feathers, and moss or other natural materials? For example, would they have wanted the culture teacher to teach the children about these natural materials from the land during culture time? Indigenous early learning programs must be strongly secured in community

consultation and ongoing community engagement to integrate Indigenous pedagogy within the programming (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007). Mary Rowan (2017) argues that “the combination of thinking with land and working with Elders serves...to open up myriad possibilities in order to enable more meaningful content, pedagogies and educational opportunities” (p. 8). This leads me to ask, who are the people – Elders, parents, community members, and others – that would be willing to share their time and resources related to culture and the land? What protocols are needed to encourage them to share their cultural knowledge with the children? With Greenwood and de Leeuw’s (2007) understanding on the key role of community engagement, I think that these questions may help to explore ways of extending young children’s learning about land and culture.

My second challenge arising from the branches, feathers, and moss activity centers on spending time on the land. I had suggested that the children and their educators might choose to go outdoors to find branches, feathers, and moss. Would it have been more meaningful for the educators and children to find and relate with the natural materials on the land? These natural materials exist in the nearby forest, but the educators told me that they are concerned as sometimes there are cougars and bears in the area. Of course, safety is a valid concern. Does this mean avoiding this curricular experience? What is the level of risk? What precautions could be taken so that the children could have experiences in the forest? Could the Elders, the culture teacher or local rangers be consulted? Child care licensing regulations also shapes these decisions, and although there can be good reasons for having regulations (e.g., regulating group sizes, health, and safety guidelines), these are based on a Westernized approach to caring for and educating young children. As Greenwood (2009) points out, “many of these provincial standards and regulations are in discord with First Nations beliefs and values” (p. 120). This leads me to

ask, in what ways can Elders and educators negotiate with child care licensing officers if there are regulations that impede implementing their cultural ways of knowing and being, such as connections with the land? Could Indigenous curricular experiences – for example, the children and educators spending time on the land and learning about the flora and fauna from an Elder – be a move towards mobilizing traditional Indigenous ways of knowing and decolonizing ECE? As I look back on our branches, feathers, and moss activity, instead of bringing these materials inside, I could have asked the educators if we could take the children outside to look for branches, feathers, and moss in a location on the land that they were comfortable with.

Growing Forth

Ingold (2000) proposes that “both plants and people... ‘issue forth’ along lines of growth, and both exist as the sum of their trails” (p. 144). Within our branches, feathers, and moss activity the children, educators and I had opportunities to grow through our relationships with natural materials from the land and with each other. For the children, these opportunities provoked curiosity and interest in the materials from the land. Growing forth within this experience meant engaging with the natural materials and listening to or sharing cultural knowledge. My learning about supporting young children’s Indigenous connections to land and culture was possible through the experience of our activity that involved both engaging with and listening to others.

As I am growing forth I am coming to understand some of the Indigenous connections of the land and culture and some possibilities for supporting these areas within Indigenous ECE programming. I now understand that supporting these connections to land and culture requires community engagement in the early learning programming, especially with Elders, cultural teachers, or others who have Indigenous knowledge of the land and culture. I have learned that

oral transmission of information through many traditional means (e.g., stories, songs, ceremonies, memories, sharing of information) is key to support young children's connections to land and culture. I am intrigued by the possibilities of children, along with their educators, Elders, culture teachers, and parents, spending time on the land, time enriched with Indigenous oral traditions.

Learning with Materials, Becoming with Bodies in Motion

I bring in a large canvas and drape it over a round table. The children press their bodies into the table and watch me set out four bowls of different coloured paints and some new purple paintbrushes. They push their arms into smocks and reach for paintbrushes and begin to paint the canvas in front of them. A child puts a paintbrush into the yellow paint and coats the canvas in front of her. She then walks around the table to dip her brush in red paint. She walks back to her yellow painted spot and coats it with the red paint. The colours blend together as the canvas absorbs the liquid. As the paint dries, the colours darken, and the canvas begins to harden. Walking around the table, a child paints a large circle around the edge of the canvas by holding her paintbrush on the canvas. Now, paintbrushes tickle children's palms as each child around the table paints his or her hands. One girl paints her arms, too. A child lifts her hand up to examine it, and notices the paint running down: "Look, I have green blood!" she exclaims. The children begin to talk with each other about blood.

I have moved the canvas to the infant/toddler centre. I guide two toddlers to chairs that are positioned across from each other at the rectangular table over which the canvas is draped. They sit down and then wiggle their bodies to get comfortable in the chairs. One of the toddlers lifts his brush and dips it into a bowl of blue paint. Intent on what he is

doing, he makes sweeping motions with his arm and paints up and down the canvas in front of him. The toddler across from him paints large orange circles, moving his upper body at the same time. He continues to paint round and round, and then stops to put more paint on his brush.

Greenwood (2013) explains that human beings come to know the world and the things in it through their “personal experiencing of relationships” that draw on “multiple ways of being and coming to know one’s being” (p. 100). As previously discussed, relationship is at the heart of Indigenous ontology, which according to Wilson (2008), is “a process of being in relationship with others in the world” (as cited by Greenwood, 2013, p. 99). With these ideas, I wonder how activities such as our canvas-painting activity can give children opportunities to learn more about others and themselves as they relate with and express themselves with materials (Cook, 2006). I turn to Ingold’s (2010a) guideline for artists/makers to “*follow the materials*” (p. 8, italics in original) to highlight the dynamic and evolving process involved in being in relationship with materials. He explains that materials, with their variable properties, change, mix and blend “within fields of force and flows of material” as they are made into things (Ingold, 2010b, p. 91). While generating things the artist/maker is like a wanderer who intervenes with materials, improvising, and shaping them as the creative process unfolds (Ingold, 2010a). This section explores how the children, educators and I followed the materials within the canvas-painting activity and became otherwise through bodies in motion.

Following Materials

The educators had expressed an interest to experiment with their programming by giving the children access to a variety of materials that they could manipulate and explore, and a fair amount of freedom to relate to them in the ways they wanted. They supported the children by

giving them sufficient time to get to know the materials. This interest in materials facilitated an emerging curriculum. According to Hussain, Conner, and Mayo (2014), educators who follow an emergent approach are attentive to the many ways in which children's experiences in their programs enhance their learning, and are then ready to respond with thoughtful changes as needed. In the canvas-painting activity, the educators appeared attentive to how the children were responding to the paint, brushes, canvas, smocks, tables and chairs, and room. For example, they did not interrupt the children when they were painting their hands and arms, but instead saw the value of the children feeling and following the paint, and therefore found creative ways to alleviate concerns about mess. The large canvas cloth that the educators had chosen for the children to paint took on a new role, functioning more as a tablecloth once the children became interested in painting their hands and arms. The educators did not redirect the children back to painting the canvas, but rather adapted to the emerging curriculum. Emergent programming requires listening. Rinaldi (2006) explains that,

Listening is an attitude that requires the courage to abandon yourself to the conviction that our being is just a small part of a broader knowledge; listening is a metaphor for openness to others, sensitivity to listen and be listened to, with all your senses (p. 114).

The educators in our canvas-painting activity listened to the children and were sensitive and responsive to the ways that the children related with the materials. The children listened to the materials through their senses as they connected with and responded to the materials. According to Ross and Mannion (2012), "many approaches to curriculum design and planning ignore the role of place and material" (p. 304). I think that bringing materials to the forefront of pedagogy and programming requires that materials are understood as dynamic and relational (Charteris, Smardon & Nelson, 2017; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Ingold (2010a) puts

forward that neither humans nor materials are agents but instead are “trajectories of movement, responding to each other in counterpoint, alternatively as melody and refrain” (p. 96). In our canvas-painting activity, I noticed that the paint’s liquid consistency was part of the paint-child engagement. Does the feel of the liquidy paint on her hands prompt her to react by lifting her hand to look at it, at which time the paint’s response is to trickle down the back of her hand? Does the trickling paint then provoke a response from the child, saying it looks like green blood? Ingold’s (2010b) viewpoint of human and more-than-human relationships is that they are dynamic and responsive. In my opinion, these holistic and relational perspectives are congruent with Indigenous ways of knowing and being that value harmony in relationships and connection with everything in the environment (Greenwood, 2013).

Bodies, both human (children and educators) and more-than-human (paint, brushes, canvas cloth) were essential in our canvas-painting activity. Ingold (2007) states, “the properties of materials, regarded as constituents of an environment, cannot be identified as fixed, essential attributes of things, but are rather processual and relational” (p. 7). Further, “they are neither objectively determined nor subjectively imagined but practically experienced” (Ingold, 2007, p. 7). Throughout the children’s practical and active experiences of relating with the canvas, brushes and paint they generated some of the properties and behaviours of these materials. For example, as the child painted with red paint over the yellow paint, the materials responded in a blending process as the two paint colours combined with one another and were absorbed by the fibres of the cotton cloth. As the child walked around the table, with paint-coated brush touching the canvas, the processual response of the paint was that, as it gradually came off the brush, less paint was transferred to the canvas cloth. The relational processes of child and materials were evident with the circular arm movements made by the toddler while holding the paint-coated

brush on the canvas, in concert with the liquidy properties of the paint as it was swept by the brush's bristles onto the cotton fibres of the canvas, enabling the paint to adhere to it.

Considering Ingold's insights on materials being processual and relational, known through practical experiences, I think that early learning programming can offer many opportunities for human bodies and more-than-human bodies (materials) to actively relate, as we did in the canvas-painting activity.

Questioning Practices

The *ELF* “provides questions for reflection to guide people who care for and educate children in providing learning experiences that support young children's optimal well-being” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p. 17). The *ELF* and the questions within adopt an anthropocentric viewpoint, that positions the child as the main consideration in the programming. The *ELF* is situated in a dominant Euro-Western ECE paradigm that sees materials and others in the world as being for children's development. As I learn with Ingold's and Greenwood's theoretical perspectives, I extend the pedagogical questioning that the *ELF* promotes to recognize both human and more-than-human bodies and the interconnectivity of all things in the world. Reflecting on our canvas-painting activity, my questions relate to understanding of both art and bodies in ECE. My first questions focus on choosing materials for art activities. As I think beyond solely human considerations, I think about my responsibilities to all bodies when choosing materials. In re-reflection on the paint, brushes, and canvas cloth in our activity, I question what is essential to know about these materials. Are there concerns around the production of the materials (e.g., toxic waste) that could negatively affect human bodies, more-than-human bodies, and other constituents of the environment? Are there any concerns connected with the use or disposal of the materials? What are Indigenous views on material

choices and their possible impacts on human and more-than-human others in the world?

Greenwood (2009) imparts a traditional teaching that encourages striving for harmony in relationships to ensure “wholism and connection of all beings” (p. 41). Does our choice of paint, brushes and canvas cloth materials align with this Indigenous teaching? What are the specific cultural teachings of the Nation that might affect the choices of materials in early learning programming? As with my questions in our previous activities related to Indigenous knowledges, I would turn to Elders for their guidance in answering these questions.

My second question concerns the regulation of children’s bodies in ECE practice. I recognize that my DAP training impacted how I directed the children’s bodies during our canvas painting activity. For example, I guided the toddlers to sit down across from one another to paint, instead of allowing them to stand up and have more access to movement. While my intention was not to restrict the children’s bodies, my actions did inhibit their range of movement in a way that affected how they could interact with the materials and with one another. Clark (2014) discusses that “developmentally informed art practice is based upon binaries (e.g. subject/object, mind/body, human/nonhuman) that maintain the borders between bodies that regulate power structures” (p. 132). Was I using the chair and the table as a way to regulate the children? Was my desire to have the toddlers sit down a response to what I think they “should” be doing at this stage of their development? Child development discourses “have offered, as certain and objective truth, the individual’s progress through universal developmental stages, a ‘grand narrative’ that has done much to produce the constructions of young children and early childhood institutions” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). Another dominant discourse, that of school readiness, has created pressure on institutions to increase academic content (Fuligni, Howes, Huang, Hong & Lara-Cinisomo, 2012; Walter & Lippard, 2017). However, resistance,

primarily in the ECE field, has led to alternative discourses. One indicator for school readiness is the possession of self-regulatory skills (Blair & Raver, 2015; Fuligni et al., 2012; von Suchodoletz, Gestsdottir, Wanless, McClelland, Birgisdottir, Gunzenhauser & Ragnarsdottir, 2012). Was I trying to help the toddlers self-regulate by having them sit in chairs across from each other, so they could focus? Were my actions with the toddlers following a school readiness discourse to prepare the children for the 3-5-year-old centre? I am unsettled by the many times that I followed these deeply engrained ideas and practices without questioning them. I realize that by not questioning dominant discourses, I may practice in ways that could restrict, control or even harm human or more-than-human bodies. As I view all bodies as valuable, I seek to challenge anthropocentric notions, to ask critically reflective questions, and to make ethical decisions in early learning programming and practice.

Lines of Becoming

Ingold (2010) proposes that, by following the materials, makers will weave “their own pathways or lines of becoming” (p. 91). In the canvas painting activity, each child personally experienced the canvas, paint, and brushes in an active, and relational process that evolved as they listened to and responded to the materials. Following an emergent approach, the educators gave the children opportunities to engage with materials so that they could follow the flux and flows of the materials. I learned through our canvas painting activity that art materials are not simply objects for the children’s use in art activities but rather they are “powerful forces that suggest, provoke, and produce both subtle and dynamic flows, and transformations and relationships between other materials, objects, and humans” (Argent, 2016, p. 61).

As I weave my lines of becoming through this activity, I regard all bodies, human and more-than-human as having value both in and beyond the world. In the canvas painting activity,

I continued to engage with Greenwood and Ingold's perspectives both of which guide my learning beyond an anthropocentric viewpoint. Greenwood (2009) explains an essential lesson for Indigenous living is "an understanding that all beings are connected" (p. 238). The body is not enclosed unto itself, but rather grows along the many diverse paths as it entangles with others in the world (Ingold, 2008). From these and similar understandings, I have come to respect the vital place both human and more-than-human bodies have in the world and in early learning programming. Furthermore, I realize that I have a responsibility to make ethical decisions related to all bodies – human and more-than-human – in my ECE practice and early learning programming.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 contained three pedagogical narrations from moments that unfolded when the educators and I implemented some of the curricular activities. These pedagogical narrations were stories of learning and becoming with human and more-than-human others, stories that revealed engagement as being foundational to early learning programming. In my reflections I considered how learning and becoming emerged through entanglements with human and more-than-human others. My pedagogical narrations integrated Indigenous perspectives that emphasized relationships as central to learning and living in the world. I shared and examined several tensions, challenges, and questions that surfaced for me while reflecting on the documentation, and I also critiqued the pedagogical growth that came about as an outcome of this process.

Chapter 4: Learning and Becoming with Documentation and Stories

“The world is made up of stories” (Spears, 2005 as cited by Greenwood, 2009, p. 183), and as Greenwood (2009) explains “these stories form our understanding of the world, our relationship to it, and every aspect of our learning about it” (p. 183). The world can be understood as a place of continual movement and becoming, in which humans and more-than-human others are understood by the very pathways, or *stories*, “along which they have previously come and are presently going” (Ingold, 2011, p. 141). Drawing on Greenwood’s (2009) and Ingold’s (2011) writing that identify stories as being integral to learning and becoming with others in the world, I suggest that the practice of engaging with pedagogical narrations, a process that is built through documentation and stories, is well positioned to support emerging early learning programming within situated cultural contexts. This final chapter explores this proposition by reflecting back over my project to review how pedagogical narrations were engaged with and how they could have been engaged with more, in order to provide suggestions for using pedagogical narrations in the future.

According to Hodgins (2014b), using pedagogical narrations in practice is “an act of storying” (p. 111). She explains that storying in this sense, takes place through sharing documentation, engaging in collective dialogues, and sharing these reflections with others. Hodgins and Kummen (in press) emphasize that this process “occurs *in relationship with others* (e.g., children, colleagues, ideas, materials, places, stories)” (p. 8, italics in original). Collective dialogues based on practice stories provide meaningful opportunities for educators, children, and community members to co-construct programming that is shaped by the local culture and context. As described in Chapter 2, pedagogical narrations (or stories of practice) do not definitively represent what happened but instead are always partial, subjective, and incomplete

traces of practice (Hodgins, 2014b). With a postfoundational lens, as previously described, these narrations are understood as agentic, meaning that they *do* something. With this perspective, pedagogical narrations are not so much, or only, a thing, but rather they “act as a verb, an apparatus of change” (Hodgins, 2014b, p. 117), one that can provoke critically reflective thinking and thoughtful decision-making. Chapter 3 provided several examples of how traces of practice provoked my critically reflective thinking. My on-going reflections of these traces can be provocations for my future decision-making. Chapter 4 explores my experiences of storying with the educators and on my own, and some of my insights on the values, the benefits, and the possibilities of engaging with documentation in emergent early learning practice. In the first section of this chapter I consider the process and impact of storying with the educators. The next section includes some of what I consider to be key insights of learning and becoming with documentation and stories, as lived through this project, for emerging programming and pedagogies in First Nations programs. Chapter 4 concludes with a brief summary of the project, and my key learnings and thoughts from the project that may serve as a resource for engaging in storying for emerging early learning programming in First Nations communities.

A Knot of Stories

According to Ingold (2011), “every place, as a gathering of things, is a knot of stories” (p. 154). The project at Spirit Bear was a “knot of stories,” stories of learning and becoming with humans and more-than-human others. Through the pedagogical narrations shared in Chapter 3, I have unravelled some of the stories from that knot. They are my tales of storying with educators within the child care centre. It is important to note that the stories I chose to share leave out other ones for, as explained, the process of pedagogical narrations is always partial (Hodgins, 2014b; Pacini-Ketchabaw, di Tomasso & Nxumalo, 2014). But those particular stories importantly

helped me to focus on the process of storying together with the educators in the programs and what I might do differently in a future project.

Storying and Learning Within the Project

The educators and I experimented with storying to plan curricular activities that supported children's learning and becoming as well as our own. As noted in Chapter 1, I introduced pedagogical narration during my presentation on emergent ECE strategies by sharing a trace of practice from the natural paintbrushes activity. I showed the educators some of the photographs of the children engaging in this activity while I read a short narrative based on my observations. Chapter 2 described how one of the purposes of pedagogical narrations is to make learning visible. Prior (2003) puts forth that documents such as photographs and written stories, "make 'things' visible and traceable" (as cited by Hodgins, 2014b, p. 87). In her overview of the process of pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, Rinaldi (2006) explains that critically reflecting on traces of practice and discussing these reflections with others is an important part of a pedagogy of listening that can reveal children's various approaches to learning. I noticed that making a moment of practice visible to the educators at the presentation provoked the educators to share their insights on children's learning and curricular activities.

After my initial introduction of pedagogical narrations to those in the project, the educators and I continued to experiment with storying at our reflection meetings. At each meeting I read a short story from my observations of an activity to inspire critical reflection and dialogue. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) explain that documentation of practice can stimulate reflection, inquiry, and insight into children's learning and becoming. The children's engagement in the curricular activities was integral to our storying. The children's words and their movements, along with the pictures that I took of them with my camera, were a valuable part of

the stories that I shared with the educators and what I developed into pedagogical narrations in Chapter 3. One of the children asked to see the photographs that I took of them with my digital camera, which I then showed them on the camera display. This is an example of how the camera, the child, and myself were interconnected within the storying process in that moment (Hodgins, 2014b).

The pedagogical narrations shared in Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) also make clear that documentation of practice can stimulate questions and theories about educators' learning and becoming as well as children's. For example, after reading my painting narration at one of the reflection meetings, the educators shared their stories about paint and a variety of ideas for practice (i.e., keeping activities open-ended, ensuring there are opportunities for hands-on art, creating ample time for exploration). The strengths of the educators at Spirit Bear were evident when they engaged in the curricular activities and as they shared their knowledge and experiences with the children. Their pedagogical knowledge and skills were made visible through both documentation and storying with the educators. This was a similar experience to that reported by Hughes (2007) in her work with early childhood educators in a Head Start program. Regardless of the length of their ECE experience or the level of their education, all educators can contribute to the program by sharing their knowledge and their interests.

Documenting and storying our local lived practices supports educators in facilitating *contextual* curriculum, curriculum that has emerged from the dialogues between children, educators, and the environment (Rinaldi, 2006).

While program moments were documented and shared within our reflection meetings, the educators also photographed the project activities and posted some of these on the Spirit Bear Facebook page as a means to invite family participation and/or feedback. Photographs of the

blackberry paint activity, for example, may make visible the children's and educators' learning *with* human and more-than-human others and the educators' early learning pedagogies. Stories of learning with human and more-than-human in the early learning program can be shared with interested individuals in the First Nation community to make the children's and educators' learning visible to them and to invite their participation in the program. Sharing stories outside of the child care centre can be an invitation to community members to take part in further storying practice moments, adding their own stories to deepen the interpretations of the practice moment.

Missed Opportunities

I have noted that the children's engagement in the curricular activities was integral to the storying that took place amongst the participating educators and me. As I reflect back over my project I recognize that the children's interpretations were missing from this process. While the educators' thinking and my critical reflections (as shared in Chapter 3) are valuable, seeking out the children's ideas and feedback could have enriched our collective thinking. Documenting their theories and interpretations could have made their learning/theories visible. My original intention was to invite the children's and parent's interpretations of project moments, but my plans for this did not come to fruition (see Chapter 1). Hodgins (2014b) explains that children and adults interpret traces of practice "individually or collectively to make learning visible" (p. 110). If the children had viewed the documentation of the activities and been invited to share their thoughts on the moments, their learning and on how they wanted to continue the exploration could have come into our collective dialogue and decision-making process.

In reflection, perhaps having fewer activities in my project would have helped to create opportunities to have conversations with the children about their engagements in the program. I was very focused on bringing the activity reflections back to the educators to hear their thoughts

and to co-construct the next activity, but I did not bring the children into this process. If I had allotted more time for conversations with the educators and more time for including the children, it may have helped us to collectively dig deeper into early learning and pedagogy by sharing questions, insights, concerns, and ideas. Fewer activities could have supported a deeper engagement as well. For example, making the berry activity a longer project by spreading it out over several visits, instead of presenting a new project each time I visited, could have provided more chances to get to know berries, to gain cultural knowledge about them, and to generate and hear stories connected with them. In hindsight, I perhaps placed too much emphasis on preparing and implementing activities that could be considered a starting point or provocation for a pedagogical narration process, and not enough emphasis on the pedagogical process as a means to engage in dialogue for the purpose of co-constructing programming.

Reflecting back, if I had directed more of the focus of pedagogical narration on co-constructing programming, the educators, children, and I could have had conversations on traces of practice to collectively plan where an activity would go next. The objective of the curriculum is to keep the ideas coming so that the activity(ies) will continue (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). So, rather than being a one-off activity, an activity can carry on according to the interests, theories, and ideas of those who took part in the pedagogical narration process. Ross and Mannion (2012) declare that “curriculum can only be lived as an on-going process, an improvisation, a response to a context inherent in the relations among people, places, materials and activities” (p. 307). In hindsight, I would have collaborated with the educators and children to organize opportunities to document, to interpret, to dialogue, and to create activities that could continue on in a living and emerging process.

In retrospect, I would have created more time for the Sprit Bear community (i.e., educators, children, Elders, culture teacher, heritage language teacher, parents, other family members, other interested individuals) to participate in pedagogical narration to share ideas for the emerging programming. This would have involved inviting Spirit Bear community members to interpret the narrations, to share their knowledges (e.g., ECE, Indigenous, personal) and their stories (e.g., experiences, memories), and to collaborate on curricular decisions. Participation such as this enables community members to give their input on educational content that meets the specific values and needs of their community (Wright, 2003). Educators, children, and others involved in storying may also decide to share stories with as many people as possible in their First Nation, or even beyond their own community (e.g., child care centres, city library). Sharing these stories may invite interest in and dialogue on Indigenous ECE pedagogy.

Insights for Emerging ECE in First Nations Programs

Pedagogical narration is a means of making children's learning visible. However, it is not just a matter of making visible what children think and do but also "making pedagogical work visible and subject to *interpretation and argumentation within a community of participants*" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 157, italics added). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) put forth that it is this critical step that enables the community of participants to challenge dominant discourses, move beyond normative frameworks, and resist dominant regimes of truth. With pedagogical narration, educators can expand their thinking beyond dominant discourses such as child development theories and not assume them to be Truth or automatically follow them without question. Pedagogical narration used in this way is a useful process for challenging educators and others within the collective to expand their ECE pedagogy by critically reflecting with multiple perspectives, theories, and interpretations.

Of critical importance for First Nations child care programming is that pedagogical narration is not used as another colonizing tool. The dangers and histories of documentation are linked to Eurocentric establishments of colonization that are “solidly entrenched in the political, social, economic, educational, and spiritual frameworks that continue to marginalize and encroach on FN knowledge, belief systems, and way of life” (Battiste & McLean, 2005, p. 2). A postfoundational lens brought to the process of pedagogical narration stresses multiple knowledges and perspectives, and interpreting and living pedagogies as contextually relevant (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). With this lens pedagogical narrations are not about nailing down practice based on a set of predetermined ECE outcomes that have been established through dominant Western developmental knowledge. By thinking with postfoundational perspectives that challenge Eurocentric child development perspectives and approaches to ECE I contend that space is created for Indigenous knowledges and approaches to guide ECE programming and pedagogy in First Nations communities. These perspectives can encourage educators to question, for example, what they think is meaningful for young children’s learning *in their culture*. This section explores the importance of thinking beyond developmental theories for generating emergent programs within First Nations child care centres.

Thinking with Theories Beyond Developmentalism

Pedagogical narrations can be useful for confronting some of the complexities of practice when thinking with theories beyond developmentalism (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Theory and practice can work in an integrative way to bring fresh perspectives to pedagogy. For example, by critically reflecting with Ingold and Greenwood, while interpreting the stories, I came to view learning and becoming as occurring *with* human and *with* more-than-human others. Hodgins (2014b) explains that thinking with theory when interpreting pedagogical narrations is

an integral component of the process. Stories of practice are not shared/offered and then left to “speak for themselves” (p. 112). Reading Ingold while critically reviewing moments from my project shaped my interpretations and raised new questions, such as those related to the dynamic and relational child/paint engagement. Without Ingold’s understandings, my thinking over our collective dialogue on materials may not have extended beyond an anthropocentric view that situates materials as simply being there *for* the children’s use.

A postfoundational lens brought to the pedagogical narrations process challenges many traditional divides in Western educational practices: theory/practice, researchers/educators, adult/child (Hodgins, 2012). Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) explain that challenging Western educational practices from a postfoundational lens does not mean saying that they are wrong, therefore creating another divide, but rather working to use alternate theories to expand and complicate pedagogies. Through the practice of pedagogical narrations, scholars’ works are not positioned as superior or separate from practice. Hodgins (2012) explains that “through the practice of pedagogical narrations, the lines of distinction between child and adult are blurred in part because of the emphasis on being in relationship with” (p. 8). Sharing pedagogical narrations within the learning community provides educators and other community members opportunities to engage in relationships with each other and to engage “in relationships with ideas” (Hodgins & Kummen, n.d., p. 10). As I re-reflect on the reflection meetings that the educators and I had together, I realize that we did not explore some of the complex issues in ECE practice. What might have emerged had the educators and I read Ingold or Greenwood together? How could bringing Indigenous scholars’ theories to our pedagogical conversations help move beyond developmentalism and into complex areas of practice that are relevant and meaningful to Indigenous ECE? Thinking with these scholars impacted my re-reflections on the project

moments and I believe that in my future practice it would be beneficial to integrate theorists and scholars' insights into conversations with educators.

Matter as agentic. With Ingold's (2010) understanding of following materials, I observed and documented the rhythm and flow that unfolded as the children engaged with the materials and as the materials responded. With this learning and my observations of child/material relationships, I became curious about postfoundational understandings of materials. Within the growing reconceptualist movement in ECE, scholars and others are working with postfoundational ideas to consider new and alternative viewpoints for the field (Moss, 2007). Some reconceptualist scholars have taken an interest in thinking about matter as agentic and the meaning of matter to ECE practice. Some scholars, for example, describe material and child encounters as intra-actions to identify "that distinct agencies do not precede interaction, but rather emerge through their intra-action" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 201). From a material relationist lens, each body (e.g., child, canvas, paint, brushes) in an encounter or an event, such as our canvas-painting activity, has a performative role. According to Lenz Taguchi (2011), each material "can be understood to form an assemblage of forces and flows that emerge in the interaction in between these different components" (p. 38). She puts forth that the forces and flows of the activity become "a collective and collaborative responsibility on behalf of all organisms present, whether they are human or non-human" (p. 48). In this view of learning that is not hierarchical or human-centered, the child's actions do not take center-stage in their experiences with materials. This is because the "responsibility is thus built into the immanent relationship in-between everything in the encounters" (Lenz Taguchi, 2011, p. 48), both human and more-than-human.

Land as alive. For Indigenous peoples, EuroWestern ideas of matter as agentic and human and more-than-human entanglements asserted by scientists and theorists are anything but new revelations. For millennia, Indigenous cosmologies have declared the interconnectivity of all things in the world. Watts (2013) notes that non-Indigenous theories on agency place humans and more-than-humans in an interconnected web of relationships, but she critiques that the carefully designed definitions within these theories attribute a slightly better status to humans. Little Bear (2009) declares that “in the Indigenous world, everything is animate and has spirit” (p. 7). Many Indigenous cosmologies describe agency “as being tied to spirit, and spirit exists in all things, then all things possess agency” (Watts, 2013, p. 30). Now as I am re-reflecting and critically thinking on my narrations related to the land, I focus on Indigenous knowledges of land as agentic. Little Bear (2009) explains that the land gives life like a mother. Land is referred to as the first teacher from whom learning flows (Greenwood, 2009; Little Bear, 2009, Styres, 2011). Watts (2013) puts forth that “land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (p. 21). Many Indigenous societies believe that humans are made from the land and therefore have the ability to communicate with land (Watts, 2013). I observed that during their activities, the children paid close attention to the berries, branches, feathers, and moss, as if they were listening to these organic materials from the land. Kimmerer (2013) explains that many Indigenous languages identify living things as a verb rather than a noun. She gives the example of a bay, explaining that it could only be a noun if “water is dead” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 55). Kimmerer (2013) points out that each living thing is referred to as “who,” not “what,” therefore giving it respect. She also suggests that very young children have respect for living things, as they have not yet been taught otherwise. I observed the respect that the Spirit Bear children had for the branches, feathers, and moss as they related with them in

the activity. How might the programming continue to nurture this respect that young children have for the land and the things from it? If Elders, educators, and other members of the community teach the young children Indigenous knowledges, heritage language, and traditional stories about the land, would these teachings encourage the children to maintain respectful relationships with all things?

In retrospect, if the educators and I had conversations about land during our reflection meetings, I wonder what their views would be on the agency of land and of communication with the land. Dialogues like these may have led to experiences on the land in which the children could have learned cultural knowledge and brought their valuable theories to the conversations. I wonder, if the educators had shared their Indigenous knowledge and cultural stories about the land during a group gathering, such as one of our reflection meetings, how this might influence their curricular choices about learning with land.

Learning with land is influenced by the complex histories of the land and the place where Spirit Bear is located. When I asked an educator about the land, she shared with me how government decisions about her Nation's land have harmed their cultural way of life. Watts (2013) explains that Indigenous people are an extension of the land that they live on, and that colonization has unsettled their abilities "to communicate with place and has endangered agency amongst Indigenous peoples" (Watts, 2013, p. 23). How might the early learning programming work to revitalize these deep connections with land and place? Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, and Coulthard (2014) state that land-based education that works to restore and sustain "Indigenous life and knowledge, acts in direct contestation to settler colonialism and its drive to eliminate Indigenous life and Indigenous claims to land" (p. 3). As a result of thinking with Indigenous scholars and listening to the educators as they shared their experiences, I am more

aware of Indigenous peoples' deeply personal relationships to land, and I now understand that land is a part of who they are. The educators told me about the land, about some traditions connected to the land, and about their experiences on the land, such as encounters with animals. For me, learning about these connections adds another layer to the already devastating effects of the colonization of land. Greenwood (2009) states that "early childhood settings will [can] be contested places and sites of decolonization" (p. 235). A focus on learning with land in the early learning "shifts the knowledge/power equation away from predominating Euro-Western systems, as being with land requires local knowledge and expertise" (Rowan, 2017, p. 16).

Greenwood et al. (2007) recommend that Indigenous communities that implement culturally-specific early learning curricula be vigilant in ensuring that Indigenous knowledges remain the central focus. Using pedagogical narration while thinking with scholars of Indigenous knowledges is a process that can be useful for Indigenous educators. It makes learning visible, and it holds promise for shifting from EuroWestern approaches to ECE. For example, educators confront issues of "school readiness" skills and want to dialogue on what, if any, meaning they might have for Indigenous early learning, embedded in Indigenous knowledges. The educators are the key to beginning and maintaining the practice of using pedagogical narration with children, parents, and other Spirit Bear community members and extending invitations beyond the centre.

If Spirit Bear community members were to take part in storying, they could share their cultural knowledge and enrich the early learning program. They may be motivated through this process to participate in the early learning programming in a variety of ways. Little Bear (2009) explains that including the community in the programming is essential for Indigenous people who "understand the world in terms of relationships" (p. 22). Storying may be appealing to

community members, as storytelling is a traditional way of learning for Indigenous people of all ages (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007). Greenwood (2009) states that the transmission of knowledge “is done through language, stories and storytelling, ceremonies, symbols” and more (p. 32). Storying may draw out resources such as these that community members may want to share with the Spirit Bear learning community. I think that storying with the Spirit Bear community while thinking with Indigenous knowledges can be integral for creating early learning programming that is authentic for their First Nation.

Project Write-up Summary

Within this report I have detailed my journey through a community-engagement project with a First Nations community to introduce some emergent approaches into their preschool and child care programs. Chapter 1 provided an outline of the development of the project, and an overview of its context, participants, objectives, and project activities. Chapter 2 provided a literature review of emergent approaches in ECE that served as the framework for the development of my project, particularly focusing on the context of British Columbia , considerations for culturally appropriate pedagogies in Indigenous communities, and the tool of pedagogical narration. Chapter 3 shared three pedagogical narrations from the project that storied learning and becoming as emerging through human and more-than-human entanglements. My pedagogical narrations integrated Indigenous perspectives, highlighting relationships as being essential to learning, becoming, and living in the world, and illuminated several pedagogical tensions, challenges, and questions. Chapter 4 has offered a conclusion by exploring the process of storying and the potentialities of working with documentation in emergent early learning practice. In this final section I share five key learnings and some of my thoughts for the future

that resulted from my experience in the project, which may serve as a resource for future projects in this area.

Key Learnings and Thoughts for the Future

My first key learning is the recognition of the centrality of relationships to engaging in storying when creating emerging programming in the local context. Relationships (with all things in the world) are considered by most Indigenous scholars as the “cornerstone of Indigenous knowledge(s)” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 49). I learned with Indigenous scholars and the Spirit Bear educators that relationships with all things in the world are all-encompassing and pervasive. I now realize that these relationships *emerge* through opportunities to be with others and to engage with them in the early learning program.

I reflect on my relationships with the educators throughout the project. One barrier was the limited time we had together due to the short length of the project. Regardless of this, I think that the educators and I developed positive relationships. Another barrier to building close relationships in the project is the fact that I am not an Indigenous person. I do not have Indigenous roots, history, or community membership. Although I consider myself an ally of Indigenous people, I am a white person whose heritage stems from European and British settlers who, like myself, bear the responsibility for colonization. Neither I nor any of my family members have suffered the injustices of colonization. I recognize that this is a barrier to creating close relationships in community-engagement projects with First Nations.

For Indigenous educators, children, parents, and community members in the program, the process of storying supports the Indigenous tenet of the centrality of relationships (Greenwood, 2009) as all community members are welcome to share insights and build relationships with others in the program. Since the beginning of time, stories and storytelling

have been a way of transmitting Indigenous knowledge and nurturing relationships (Greenwood, 2009). Indigenous educators may find the documentation process of storying to be a fitting way to cultivate relationships with others and to enable these relationships to emerge from within the program. Growing relationships through storying is a gradual process that can unfold without added pressure or sudden changes in programming. It may begin with educators reflecting on one small way to involve children or parents in storying. The team may decide that each educator will be observant for opportunities to connect with a child or parent. These connections could be an opportunity for the educator and child or the educator and parent to just spend time together as well as listen and share stories with one another.

My second key learning is focused on time. According to Rinaldi (2006) any growing, influential relationship requires time for creating the relationship. Time and opportunity are required for engaging in storying to create the emerging programming, for supporting learning, and for becoming with human and more-than-human others. Time is also required within the emerging program to nurture these relationships with others, and for relating to the things in the world that are significant to culture. I learned through the project work that children are an integral part of the documentation process, and that time and opportunities need to be created for their involvement in the emerging program. I reflected on the fact that time could be made available for children's engagement by making small adjustments to the program. For example, as I shared at the beginning of this chapter, if I had planned fewer project activities then there would have been more time for including the children in the interpretations of the documentation, and more time for them to engage in the curriculum.

I reflect that there needs to be time and opportunity for all of the educators on the team to be involved in storying for the emerging program. Some of the educators in the project noted on

the questionnaire that they would have liked to have been more involved in the project, but that they were needed to care for the children. This made me reflect on the importance of creating opportunities for all of the educators to be involved in the emerging program, regardless of their part-time or full-time status, years of experience, level of education, or any other factor that may set them apart. Each educator in the emerging program has meaningful knowledge and insights to share with the learning community. I think that participating in storying for the emerging program can give all educators a voice in the programming, leading them to value their practice more and to take pride in it. Educators may first want to talk as a team about the conditions they require in order to feel comfortable sharing their insights and ideas with one another. Perhaps there are Indigenous protocols for group gatherings that they would like to follow when they meet.

This leads to the question of how storying with all members of the collective can be gradually integrated into the program schedule. The practice of storying is not meant to add extra hours to the work-day or the added stress of trying to fit in time to document and meet together for discussions. I think that the process of storying in the program can begin in a small way. A team may decide that one person, any educator that is interested, will start the process by documenting and then sharing their traces of practice with the team to invite their input. Then they may proceed with each educator being aware of practice moments in the program. A camera and writing materials can be available for all educators to document. If an educator sees a practice moment that catches their eye they can briefly write down what they are observing. Using this process is not meant to be an added pressure but a practice that the collective engages in for extending their learning and engagement in the emerging programming. Any educator who happens to notice something captivating can jot it down. When an educator has the chance they

can expand upon their documentation and interpret it. The teaching team can decide on a convenient time to meet and talk about an educator's documentation and any implications for their learning and/or plans for co-constructing the emerging program with the children and with each other.

My third key learning is that opportunities and time be made available for inviting community members to participate in storying and the emerging program. One of the educators shared with me that it has been challenging to get parents involved in the program, although they have tried and continue to try various ways of including the parents and other family members. She thought that this was because the child care programs were new to the community and that the members were not used to it yet. This led me to reflect on some other possible barriers to participation. For some Indigenous people, educational institutions may not feel emotionally safe due to the destructive consequences that institutional forms of education have had on generations of Indigenous peoples (Hare & Anderson, 2010). Schools and educational programs might remind them of the residential schools that they attended or that they have heard about. Other barriers resulting from oppressive colonial control may cause some Indigenous people to think that they do not have the authority, position, or educational level to be involved in the early learning program. Although these could be barriers to participation in storying for the emerging program, I think that it is possible that with time and with the formation of trusting relationships some of these barriers could be reduced.

When an educator thinks that a trusting relationship is established with a parent or parents, they may choose to share some of the children's stories with them and talk about the stories and the programming. This sharing could take place at the beginning or end of the program day or at any convenient time for parents and educators. Storying for the emerging

programming need not be confined to the child care centre, but can take place in any location, such as a band office, a field, an Elder's garden, the forest, the beach, and so on. Educators may want to arrange walks or visits within the community as part of the program. This is a way to invite community participation that does not require community members to come to the child care centre. Community members may want to take part in the program without having any expectations put upon them for sharing their stories and insights if they choose not to.

My fourth key learning is that emerging programming can be informed by other successful emergent approaches locally and worldwide. The municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and New Zealand's early learning curriculum *Te Whāriki*, were influential to this project. However, as the project unfolded, I came to realize more fully how each program needs to be situated in and emerge from and within the local community and culture. I think that a community that tries to duplicate Reggio Emilia or *Te Whāriki* in their early learning program would find that the approach can not fully meet the community's needs or values or promote the Indigenous knowledges that they would like their children to learn about. For example, the *Te Whāriki* framework may not emphasize drums or blackberries, two aspects of their culture that the Spirit Bear educators told me that they wanted the children to learn about.

Some of the educators shared with me that they found the project ideas exciting and that that the ideas inspired them to try some new activities with the children. One of the educators told me she had found an interesting Indigenous project on the web and was thinking about how she would adapt it for her community. This is an example of how emergent activities can be sources of inspiration and can provide resources that can be modified to suit the local context. Spirit Bear educators may want to contact their peers at other First Nations child care centres in order to exchange information and ideas.

My final key learning, and the most vital, is that storying for the emerging early learning programming in First Nations communities must be led by *Indigenous knowledges and local cultural knowledges*. “Indigenous knowledge(s) provide children [and others] with opportunities to learn their *specific ways of knowing and being*” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 238, italics added). According to Hare and Anderson (2010), “Indigenous knowledge must be at the core of indigenous early learning experiences—as culture, language, values, and healthy approaches to living and learning define quality early childhood education and care for Aboriginal children, families and communities” (p. 20). Leading with Indigenous knowledges is vital to cultural growth and identity, to keep the programming grounded in the local culture, and to resist EuroWestern approaches to early learning that may be unethical and may not meet the needs and values of the community (Greenwood, 2006; Greenwood et al.; 2007; Greenwood, 2009; Hare & Anderson, 2010).

A possible barrier to leading with Indigenous knowledge is the promotion of school readiness activities in ECE programs. Parents of preschoolers may be concerned about preparing children for elementary school. This may be in part because, as Anuik, Battiste, and George (2010) point out, Indigenous educational acquirements are not on par with the non-Indigenous population. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (2014) final report, “The low standard of education in residential schools led Indigenous people into chronic unemployment or underemployment” that “led to levels of poverty, poor housing, substance abuse, family violence, and ill health” (p. 61). Education is a priority, and learning is a holistic process for First Nations people. However, public schools continue to use Eurocentric approaches and curriculums (Anuik et al., 2010). For these reasons, educators in early learning programs may be prompted to teach school readiness skills such as printing the alphabet and

numbers. One of the educators shared with me her experiences of using pre-kindergarten workbooks in preschool and how this approach conflicted with her own philosophy of play-based ECE. The Spirit Bear teaching team may want to talk about any considerations or concerns they have around school readiness and how they can promote the centrality of leading with Indigenous knowledges. The educators may want to consider the ways in which they can foreground Indigenous knowledges in the emerging program.

I think that it is valuable for educators to share their understanding of Indigenous knowledges and cultural experiences in the program. As areas of interest emerge in the program, educators may seek further knowledge from Elders or the culture teacher. To continue to learn more about Indigenous knowledges, educators may want to read Indigenous scholars while they work with the documentation. Then they may want to talk with each other about the scholars' insights and how they apply to the documentation and the emerging program. As the program unfolds, the educators may decide to invite Elders, cultural teachers, language teachers, parents, or any other community members to share their Indigenous knowledges or local knowledges with the children and with the educators. They may want to ask the community to engage in dialogue about their views of "school readiness" and their hopes for the care and education of their youngest community members. In an Inuit program, educators found that engaging with documentation (learning stories) was an "impetus for strengthening connections with Elders, who became further recognized for their role as valuable transmitters of cultural knowledge" (Rowan, 2011, p. 104). As the program emerges and a particular area of interest arises, educators could ask if there is a community member who could share cultural knowledge on this topic. This type of involvement can be flexible, such as dropping off an item or casually talking to a small group of children.

Introducing Indigenous knowledges in the program can take place on the land. According to Rowan (2011) “Indigenous knowledge must be gained through experiences on the land and with people” (p. 42). Community members may be more comfortable to share about some aspect of the land (e.g., foliage, animals) or a traditional story of the land if they are outdoors where activities can be more relaxed and experiential. An educator could take some notes to record a programming experience on the land to later make a story, interpret it, and eventually share it with the team. Sharing stories of the children’s learning about local Indigenous knowledges may encourage members of the learning community to share their cultural knowledges in the emerging program. As community members see the children learning Indigenous knowledges, they may be more comfortable with and supportive of the early learning program. The educators may want to share a story of the children learning Indigenous knowledges with the community council members. Ultimately, it is the educators who decide on the approach, the ideas, and the activities that they think are appropriate for their emerging early programs. Of vital importance is that the central resources for First Nations emerging early learning programs are the Indigenous knowledges of the community (Greenwood, 2007).

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Appendix A

Memorandum of Understanding**██████████ First Nation – School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria**

1. This MoU serves as a record of agreements about an informal, engagement between ██████████ First Nation and students and faculty of the School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC) at the University of Victoria.
2. Our engagement is mutually non-binding and non-formal, and does not represent a contract or obligation to produce deliverables. If events transpire that prevent the completion of projects by students, whether due to unforeseen changes in the students' ability to complete the work or due to unforeseen changes in the community's ability to support the work, neither party will have a basis for complaint or to make demands.
3. There is no funding available to support the project work. Neither the students nor Community members will expect to provide or receive money or goods with a monetary value.
4. The primary nature of the students' engagement is "project" work that is intended to meet a practical need identified by the Community. The primary nature is not "research". Typically a project involves conversations with children and families in order to gain insights and obtain feedback on project activities. This information is not intended as objective data collection for primary research purposes. No 'data' gathered through conversations with community members will be owned, possessed or controlled by the students or the University of Victoria.
5. The Community will inform the students and their supervisors of Community ethics and students and their supervisors will abide by these ethical principles and protocols. Students and supervisors will also take steps to consult with ██████████ regarding ethics surrounding their planned activities before engaging in those activities. The signatories to this Agreement perceive no need for the proposed project work to be reviewed by a body external to the Community, including the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. The signatories perceive their own oversight of the projects as necessary and sufficient for providing ethics approval and ongoing monitoring of ethical practice.
6. All photos/videos taken by students will also be shared with ECE practitioners and no photos/videos will be shared outside of the

community. No photos/videos or other information (e.g., audio recordings) will be taken or stored using smart phones.

7. The Community reserves the right to vet any information about the community (e.g., facilities, environments, programs) and community members (e.g., parents, children, families, practitioners) before information is disseminated beyond the community, in any form, including reports, pamphlets, photographs, videos, etc.
 8. The School of Child and Youth Care reserves the right for students' work to be represented in individual project reports, for these to be read by members of their supervisory committee, and for their reports to be filed in the permanent collection of the University of Victoria libraries.
 9. The [REDACTED] Daycare Committee and ECE Coordinator will create, collect, and show the students and their supervisors a 'waiver' for parents to sign, attesting to their agreement for the students to conduct their projects in the community.
-
10. Each student will present their project concept, activities, goals and written report to members of the Daycare Committee, Council and ECE Practitioners, and will strive to respond to requests and input from community members.
 11. The Community will provide input and support to the students to enable them to make timely progress on their projects in order to benefit the Community and provide the conditions for students to complete their project requirement for their MA degree in the School of Child and Youth Care.
 12. The Community will provide a community member to serve on the students' supervisory committee. This person will be [REDACTED]
 13. The Community will provide a primary contact person for the students to arrange their visits, project activities, and processes for the Community to stay informed and have opportunities to provide input and vetting of students' project work and reports/products. This person will [REDACTED]
 14. The students will provide a schedule for timely conduct and completion of their projects by the end of February, 2017.

15. The Community will assist the students to stay on track with their project timeline.
16. Each students will provide a copy of a current Criminal Record check to [REDACTED]
17. The Community will inform the students and their university supervisors of any concerns that may arise about their engagement with the Community and facilitate conversations to address concerns or prevent or resolve conflicts. The MoU and Annexes (e.g., project descriptions) is intended as a record of agreements and as a tool for project communications. It is not intended to create inflexibility; it is non-binding, informal and subject to change.

Date: August 16, 2016

Signed:

Appendix B

Emerging Early Learning Programming

Community Engagement

Project with

██████████ First Nation

2016-2017

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Many Indigenous communities are exploring ways to shape their early childhood programs to reflect the unique cultural knowledge and values of their Nations (Smith-Gilman, 2015).



Planning for this community-engagement project began in July 2016 in response to ██████████ First Nation's interest in bringing Reggio Emilia-inspired and emergent learning approaches into ██████████ programs. The main goal of the project was to lend support to educators to implement emergent and open-ended activities in the infant/toddler, 3-5 year, and preschool programs.

Rationale

The *BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework* advocates for early learning programming for children and families that is “culturally connected and spiritually rooted in the traditional language and histories of their families, communities and Nations” (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011, p. 13). ECE programs for First Nations children in BC should focus on cultural knowledge and language (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011). Indigenous knowledges lie at the heart of early learning programming that is culturally appropriate for First Nation programs (Greenwood, 2009).

The project was based on widely accepted Indigenous knowledges and local knowledges. These formed the foundation of the project and supported programming that emerged from and within the local context.

Emergent approaches, such as in Reggio Emilia and Te Whāriki, both of which are influenced by culture and context, serve as positive examples to inspire emergent approaches for First Nations programs. Hewett (2001) explains that the Reggio Emilia approach “is strongly influenced by a unique image of the child and is deeply embedded within the surrounding culture” (p. 99). Like Reggio Emilia, the New Zealand framework known as *Te Whāriki* values the local culture and relationships within the local context.

Aligning with both Indigenous knowledges and emergent approaches, the project was supported by postfoundational viewpoints that promote both human and more-than-human relationships (Hodgins, 2014b; Ingold, 2008). To experiment with emergent ideas the educators and I engaged with pedagogical narration (Government of BC, 2008b).

Project Activities

The project engagement took place during four two-day visits to [REDACTED]. As project leader I collaborated with the educators to introduce some hands-on and experiential programming activities with the children. I led reflection meetings with the educators to reflect on documentation and to share insights. The project activities took place in three phases.

Phase One included getting to know each other and sharing experiential programming ideas. In response to the children's interest in paint, I introduced a "natural paintbrushes" activity in the 3-5-year-old centre, offering the children branches, sticks, and pinecones to paint with.

On the second day I gave a presentation on emergent ECE approaches and pedagogical narration. Many ECE ideas and cultural connections were shared within the group. The children were given activities to engage with during the presentation, including the "forest activity" (playing with organic items).

Phase Two consisted of two visits. On the first visit I introduced a canvas-painting activity which stemmed from the educators' interest in trying this activity. We had our first reflection meeting, and I shared a trace of practice that I had documented from the natural paintbrushes activity. We talked about paint in ECE, and the educators shared cultural traditions of using paint. On the second visit I prepared for the Parent and Family Social. I set out handouts and a poster showing photos of the children engaging in the activities, and arranged a "come and create" activity which consisted of recycled materials and colorful duct tape.

The second day we made blackberry

paint with the preschool children. This idea came from the educators sharing that berries are important to culture. We had our second reflection meeting and I shared a trace from the "come and create" activity. This led to conversations on process and product in ECE programming.

Phase Three centered on celebrating our time together in the project. I prepared some food for the lunch that we would have the next day, and I helped to clean out some art supplies. On the final day, we had a superb lunch with the educators and children from both centres. I thanked the educators for being involved in the project and for sharing with me their knowledge of ECE and of their culture. I gave them a thank-you card and let them know that the canvas was my gift to [REDACTED]. The educators thanked me and gave me a beautiful handmade button apron, a crocheted headband, a keychain necklace, and a thank-you card. After the lunch I gathered the feedback sheets. I met the educators who were available and spoke with them individually about their experiences of the project, and had a final discussion on ways of bringing reflective documentation into their programs.

Stories of Learning & Becoming

Three pedagogical narrations emerged from my work. These helped to illuminate what happened when the children, the educators, and I engaged in these activities. In the narrations, I prefer the term "learning with" to "learning from," as learning "from" implies a one-directional process. I borrow Haraway's (2008) use of the word "with" to highlight that learning is a relational process that happens with human beings and more-than-human beings (e.g. things, animals, plants). I interpreted the narrations using the understandings of Margo Greenwood and Tim Ingold, as they support this idea of human and more-than-human relationships. While they are "learning with" others in the world, children and adults are "becoming with," meaning that they are continually changing. Through my reflections on traces from several activities, I explored how "learning with" and "becoming with" emerged through engagements with others, both human and more-than-human.

Pedagogical Narration (Storying)

Pedagogical narration is an effective tool for planning emergent early learning programming (Government of BC, 2008b).

The process consists of "observation, documentation, interpretation, dialogue, and (re)interpretation wherein a group (e.g., educators, parents, children) work collectively to experiment with interpretations and questions" (Hodgins, 2014a, p. 786). It begins with the careful observation and documenting of practice moments ("traces"). These traces can illuminate some of the ways in which children are learning (Government of BC, 2008b). Later, at a quiet time, an educator can interpret the documentation. Interpretations can then be shared with a group of people to invite critically reflective dialogue (Government of BC, 2008b). Sharing with others, educators generate more questions and gain further insights into children's learning. In this ongoing process, educators dialogue with colleagues (and other adults) on their programming insights and ideas and include the children in the discussions and the planning (Government of BC,

Stories of Learning and Becoming

My first narration was *Learning with Culture, Becoming with Blackberry Paint*. Greenwood (2013) explains that Indigenous ontology “is not about knowing the things, but about knowing things by being in relationship with them” (p. 99). My narration explored how children and educators got to know blackberries by being in relationship with them. The children came into contact with three properties of berries: their consistency, their temperature, and their taste.

As they made the blackberry paint the children took turns, first to break up the berries, then to strain the berries, and finally to separate out the juice. Through engaging in these steps the children had opportunities to communicate, to self-regulate, and to cooperate, social skills that are suggested for forming and nurturing positive relationships (Kemple, 2017).

My second pedagogical narration was *Learning with the Land, Becoming with Branches, Feathers, and Moss*. This activity gave the children an opportunity to explore natural materials from the land. The *BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework* states that ECD programs and services “must be imbued and anchored in First Nations knowledge, beliefs and values rooted in a connection to the land and to all living beings” (First Nations Early Childhood Development Council, 2011, p. 10).

As the children spent time with the items, I noticed that they manipulated them in a variety of ways. For example,

The children learned more about one of the natural materials from the land by listening to their educator talk about some of the traditional uses of moss.

My third narration was *Learning with Materials, Becoming with Bodies in Motion*. The canvas-painting project gave children time to develop relationships with the materials. Greenwood (2013) explains that, **Human beings come to know the world through their “personal experiencing of relationships” (p. 100).**

Ingold’s (2010a) guideline for artists is to “follow the materials” (p. 8) to highlight the evolving process involved in being in relationship with materials.

The educators appeared attentive to how the children were responding to the materials. They did not interrupt them when they were painting their hands. Throughout their active experiences of relating with the canvas and other materials, the children generated some of properties of materials. As one child painted with red paint over the yellow paint, the materials responded in a blending process as the two paint colours combined with one another and were absorbed by the cloth’s fibres.

Storying and Learning in the Project

The educators and I experimented with storying to plan curricular activities that supported children’s learning and becoming as well as our own. I introduced pedagogical narration during my presentation on emergent ECE strategies. The educators and I continued to experiment with storying at our meetings. At each meeting I read a short story from my

conversation. The children’s engagement in the curricular activities was essential to our storying. As I reflect back on the project, I realize that the children’s interpretations of the documentation were missing from this process. Their ideas and feedback could have enriched our collective thinking. If the children had been invited to share their thoughts on the moments, on their learning, and on how they wanted to continue, their exploration could have come into our group dialogue and decision-making process. If I had allotted more time for conversations with the educators and more time for including the children, it may have helped us to collectively dig deeper into early learning practice by sharing questions, insights, concerns, and ideas. Having fewer activities could have supported deeper relationships with others, leaving more time for “being there.”

Looking back, I would have created more time for the [REDACTED] community to participate in pedagogical narration to share ideas for the emerging programming. This would have involved inviting community members to interpret the narrations, to share their knowledges and their stories, and to collaborate on curricular decisions. While working with pedagogical narration, I learned that theory and practice can work in an integrative way to bring fresh perspectives to ECE. With Indigenous scholars I gained Indigenous perspectives on land. By thinking with postfoundational perspectives, space is created for Indigenous knowledges and approaches to guide ECE programming in First Nations communities.

Project Insights & Thoughts for the Future

Relationships are considered by most Indigenous scholars as the “cornerstone of Indigenous knowledge(s)” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 49). I learned with Indigenous scholars and the [REDACTED] educators that relationships with all things in the world are all-encompassing and pervasive. I also learned from engaging in the project work that relationships *emerge* through opportunities to engage with others, both human and more-than-human, in the early learning program. I reflect on my relationships with the educators throughout the project. One barrier to building stronger relationships was the limited time we had together. Regardless of this, and that I was a non-Indigenous visitor to the community, I think that the educators and I developed positive relationships.

Since the beginning of time, stories and storytelling have been a way of transmitting Indigenous knowledge and nurturing relationships (Greenwood, 2009). Therefore, storying as a documentation tool may be a fitting process for engaging with the emerging programming and for developing relationships with others. Growing relationships through storying is a gradual process that can unfold without dramatic changes in programming. Educators may want to reflect on one small way to involve others in storying. For example, the team may decide that each educator will be observant for opportunities to connect with a child or parent. These connections can be opportunities for the educator and child or the educator and parent to just spend time together as well as to listen and share stories with one another.

Time and opportunities are needed for engaging in storying to support learning with and becoming with human and more-than-human others, to nurture these relationships with others, and for relating to the things that are significant to culture. I learned that children are an integral part of the documentation process. I reflected that space could be made for children’s engagement by making small adjustments in the program. For example, if I had planned fewer project activities, there would have been more time for including the children in the interpretations of the documentation, and more time for them to engage in human and more-than-human relationships. The participation of all the educators is also important. Some of the educators said that they would have liked to be more involved in the project activities. Therefore, I reflected that storying includes all educators regardless of education or experience. Each educator in the emerging program has meaningful knowledge and insights to share with the learning community. Storying is not meant to give educators extra work, but is a practice that all educators on the team can engage in, in flexible ways. A team may decide that one person, any educator that is interested, will start the process by documenting and then sharing their traces of practice with the team to invite their input. Then they may proceed with all educators being aware of practice moments in the program. Any educator who happens to notice a particular practice moment can jot it down, and then later expand upon their notes and interpret them. The teaching team can decide on a convenient time (e.g., nap time) to meet and talk about these traces and any implications for their own learning and for their plans for the emerging program. Before sharing stories, the educators may first want to have conversations about what conditions they require in order to feel comfortable sharing their insights and ideas with the team. Are there Indigenous protocols for group gatherings that they would like to follow when they meet?

Community participation in storying enhances the emerging programming. The educators told me that they have tried various ways to get the parents and community members involved in the program, but that the community is still getting used to having child care in the community. I reflected on possible barriers that might inhibit Indigenous community members from participating in child care programs. For some Indigenous people, educational programs may not feel emotionally safe, as they may be reminders of the residential school systems and the destructive consequences that these educational institutions have had on generations of Indigenous peoples (Hare & Anderson, 2010). To increase emotional safety for participation, it may be helpful for storying to regularly take place outside on the land. This may be a way to invite the community’s participation by not requiring community members to come to the centre. When the timing is right and relationships have been formed, an educator may decide to share a story from a program moment with a parent and talk about it.

Other emergent approaches local or worldwide can be a source of inspiration for emergent programming. The municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and New Zealand’s early learning curriculum Te Whāriki, were influential to the project.

Project Insights & Thoughts for the Future

activities with the children. Other Indigenous communities that have emergent programs can be helpful resources. Educators can adapt ideas to meet the needs and values of their community. One of the educators shared with me that she found some interesting activities on the web and was thinking about ways to adapt them for their program.

Indigenous knowledges and the cultural knowledge of the community are **vital** to storying for the emerging programming. Indigenous knowledges support cultural growth and identity, keep the programming grounded in the local culture, and resist EuroWestern approaches to ECE that may not meet the needs and values of the community (Greenwood, 2009; Hare & Anderson, 2010). One barrier to leading with Indigenous knowledges may be pressure to include kindergarten readiness activities in the programs. One of the educators shared with me her experiences of using pre-kindergarten workbooks in preschool and how this approach which conflicted with her own philosophy of play-based ECE. The teaching team may want to talk about any considerations or concerns around school readiness and how they can promote the centrality of leading with Indigenous knowledges. I learned that it is valuable for educators to share their understanding of Indigenous knowledges and cultural experiences in the program. As areas of interest emerge in the program, educators may seek the input of Elders or the culture teacher if they have questions about Indigenous knowledges. Educators may invite Elders, cultural teachers, or any community members who want to share their Indigenous knowledge. The emerging program can take place on the land. According to Rowan (2011) "Indigenous knowledge must be gained through experiences on the land and with people" (p. 42). Community members may be more comfortable to share about some aspect of the land (e.g., foliage, animals) or a traditional story of the land if they are outdoors, where activities can be more relaxed. Ultimately, the educators decide on the approach, the ideas, and the activities that they think are appropriate for the emerging early learning programs. Of vital importance is that the central resources for First Nations emerging early learning programs are the Indigenous knowledges of the community (Greenwood, 2009).

Resources

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Appendix C



Hello, my name is Stephanie Hayes. Thank you for allowing me to visit your beautiful community of [REDACTED] for this community-engagement project. I am looking forward to collaborating with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to introduce some experiential early learning programming strategies at [REDACTED]. I am finishing my Master of Arts degree at the University of Victoria. I worked as an early childhood educator for many years. I am the mother of two adult daughters and I have a seven-year-old granddaughter. My home is quiet now as my girls live in Alberta. For down time, I like relaxing with my husband, Mike, and our large friendly cat. I enjoy hiking and knitting. I am looking forward to spending time at [REDACTED] and getting to know you and your children over the next couple of months.

Appendix D

Learning through Play

The main way young children learn is through play. They enjoy playing with their families, with their friends, and by themselves. Children and adults can learn from each other when they play together.

Some things to keep in mind about young children:

- ❖ They want to be active and enjoy hands-on activities.
- ❖ They thrive on open-ended activities.
- ❖ They may want to help with grown-up tasks and to use adult items (when safe to do so).
- ❖ They delight in learning more about things that interest them (bridges, owls, trains, etc.).
- ❖ They need a good amount of time to get involved in their play (at least one hour).
- ❖ They require a warning before it is time for them to stop playing or else they might feel annoyed.

**Fun Activity Ideas**

- Make forts inside or outside out using whatever materials you have on hand (wood, sticks, chairs, blankets, fabric, tarps, large boxes, etc.).
- Play hide and seek, tag, or freeze tag, bat a balloon or ball, freeze dance.
- Make a sensory bin out of any large container and fill with sand, water, grass, etc.
- Play in the dirt or sand; add water for even more fun!
- Provide paint brushes and water for 'painting outside.'
- Have a car wash (tricycle or ride-on) or toy wash.
- Switch it up: bring inside activities outside and outside activities inside.
- Cook or bake.
- Clean: children love small spray bottles and a cloth.
- Play dress up.
- Provide adult pots and pans for play.
- Create with plain paper, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue.
- Grow and tend a garden and/or plant inside.
- Show a child something you like to do.
- Let a child show you something that they can do.
- Walk in nature or in the community and collect natural items.
- Make or provide playdough and use nature items for poking or imprinting.
- Play with scarves or capes.
- Paint with brushes or finger paint.
- Sing, dance, clap your hands, play instruments.
- Read a story and then act it out.
- Play with bubbles.
- In a container or sink of water, add objects and see what floats and what sinks.
- Make an ice castle out of different sizes of ice (freeze in containers).
- Play in the rain and splash in the puddles.
- Build or construct with loose parts.

Loose Parts

Children find their own loose parts to play with, such as sticks and rocks. Lisa Daly explains in her book *Loose parts inspiring play in Young Children* that “Loose parts are natural or synthetic found, bought, or upcycled materials that children can move, manipulate, control, and change within their play.”

Italy’s Reggio Emilia early learning programs incorporate a variety of loose parts in all areas of their child care centres. Loose parts are so versatile that they can be combined with toys, blocks, and art materials. They can be used inside or outside.

They can be recycled items, objects you have around the house, or inexpensive items purchased from the dollar store. You may want to observe your child playing to get an idea of what they are interested in, and then gather some loose parts that suit their interests. Small children may need to be given larger pieces, or else watched closely while they play with smaller loose parts.



Loose Parts List

spools,
toilet paper and paper towel rolls
lids of all sizes
boxes
straws
wood pieces, planks, rings
tires
string
wire
beads
buttons
cardboard
flowers
pinecones
branches
feathers
sticks
moss
tubes
clothes pegs
popsicle sticks
leaves
shells
rocks, stones, pebbles
cork
ribbon
containers
fabric and much more!



Playing with loose parts inside
or outside is so much fun!!!



The Reggio Emilia Approach

“A hundred worlds to discover, a hundred worlds to invent, a hundred worlds to dream.” –Malaguzzi



The Reggio Emilia approach began in a small city in Northern Italy following World War II. It was founded by Loris Malaguzzi and interested parents who wanted an innovative education for their children.

A strong and positive ‘image of the child’

The ‘One Hundred Languages of Children’ refers to the many ways children symbolically communicate.



Uses pedagogical documentation to make children’s learning visible and to support emergent programming

Early learning environments are considered to be a third teacher. They often have mirrors, materials of many textures and colors, and natural items. They use light and reflection to pique children’s interest and curiosity.



Relationships are essential for learning: educators, parents, family members, and community members all play a part in educating young children.

Provocations are experiences that are shaped according to children’s interests and that encourage their active engagement in learning. Educators ask questions or have discussions with children to extend a topic.

Early Learning Programming Strategies Feedback Questions**Project Facilitator: Stephanie Hayes**

In what way or ways did you find the pedagogical narrations and reflective discussions useful for exploring programming ideas? If you did not find it useful, why was this?

What did you like about the provocations and what would you change?

Do you have any other comments on this project?