

Jickling, B., Blenkinsop, S., & Morse, M. (2023). An introduction to wild pedagogies. In S. Priest, S. Ritchie & H. Ghadery (Eds). *Outdoor Learning in Canada*. Open Resource Textbook. Retrieved from <http://olic.ca>

An Introduction to Wild Pedagogies

Bob Jickling, Sean Blenkinsop and Marcus Morse

Bob Jickling is Professor Emeritus at Lakehead University and has interests in environmental philosophy; environmental, experiential, and outdoor education; and philosophy of education. In *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene* he and others of the *Crex Crex Collective* attempt to find openings for radical re-visioning of education. As a longtime wilderness traveler, much of his inspiration is derived from the landscape of his home in Canada's Yukon.

Sean Blenkinsop is a professor in the faculty of education at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada. He grew up in the boreal forests of northern Canada and has more than 30 years of background in outdoor, environmental, and experiential education. Now, as a researcher and educator, he has been involved in starting and researching three nature-based, place-based, eco-schools (all in the public system).

Marcus Morse is an Associate Professor of Environmental and Outdoor Education at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He grew up in Tasmania, exploring the island's rivers, coastlines, and mountains where he developed a passion for being outdoors. His teaching is focused on place-based, attentive, and relational environmental education, while his research interests include outdoor environmental education, place-based studies, river experience, and wild pedagogies.

Extraordinary Times

We live in extraordinary times. The Earth is stressed in ways humans have never witnessed and the stories of our times are being written in mass species extinctions, extreme weather events, and accelerating climate change. Each successive report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is more dire than the last. It has become apparent—as if wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, and floods aren't enough—that timelines for change are urgent and climate change will influence our lives dramatically. However, the consequences facing our children and grandchildren are likely to be catastrophic (IPCC, 2023). It is also a time of social upheaval and of war, pandemic, protest, polarization, and climate-induced migration. Meanwhile, nature is crying.

We do not even have adequate language to describe the epochal scope of the coming change. Terms such as Anthropocene do not adequately capture the scale of Earth's shifting geostory (Latur, 2014). Perhaps it is another human mistake to even think we can fully describe what is happening. The Earth is writing the script and "modern" humans are, for the most part, not listening. One thing is clear, the future is uncertain.

It would be a mistake to think that we humans can control the pending crisis or that we can avert it with more technological innovation. If we are to affect the environmental trajectory, then it will not be by using the same kind of thinking that created this social and environmental upheaval. We cannot continue to act as we are. So, what might potential responses entail?

Troubles in Education

Education is often invoked as a way out of crises, yet this can be fraught. Many current modes of education are, at best, pervasive in their rational, reductionist, measurable, and neo-liberal driving forces. And they operate on a scale that makes them seemingly impenetrable to change. Bauman (2005) is just one of many scholars who is doubtful that deploying typical educational strategies will bring about change.

He insightfully asks, can education ever be effective; will it ever be able to “avoid being enlisted in the services of the self-same pressures they are meant to defy?” (Bauman, 2005, p. 12). We share his skepticism and fear that much educationally attempted change unavoidably tends to bend back in the direction of the status quo. This seems to be especially true for those of us working in modernist, globalized, westernized, euro-centric, neo-liberal, colonial, Cartesian, and/or anthropocentric educational narratives.

If evidence is pointing towards the need for significant cultural change and not just mere tinkering, then education must be at the heart of this project. Change does not happen by naming the possible goal and hoping we get there. To move people, a culture even, from where they are—ontologically, ethically, metaphysically, practically—to somewhere else must involve teaching and learning. To disrupt the current pace of environmental destruction and climate change, we cannot continue to do the same things; we cannot continue to be the same people; and we cannot continue to be the same educators.

Of course, there are many superb teachers who push limits and disrupt the status quo. As Au (2011) remarks, even in the face of high stakes testing there will be teachers who find ways to do what they call “real teaching” (p. 39). From this short but evocative expression of our present situation, two questions arise for educational consideration: First, what will it take to nurture healers and restorers of the Earth? And second, what continues to hold us back?

The Emergence of Wild Pedagogies

Wild pedagogies is a relatively new idea that arose first in Canada, and since 2014 has been embraced by an emerging international group of educators. Together we seek to explore and expand this idea for significant educational change. The book, *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene* (Jickling et al., 2018), was published as a provisional gathering of ideas. It rests on the premise that the modernist relationship to the natural world must change, urgently; and that education is a necessary, even fundamental partner in such a project.

Wild pedagogies began with two questions. First, why is it so darned hard to change the educational direction of our times; are we really fooling ourselves when we think we are making progress? Second, what has gone so badly wrong with relationships between humans and nature under the influence of western cultures? A favourite answer to these questions is unquestioned assumptions. And the one word that links our two questions and these assumptions is *control*; we modern humans most often seem to believe that we should exert control: we should be the masters of just about everything. Many readers will recoil at this thought, and in a sense, quite rightly. We are doing good stuff; we outright reject the urge to be in control; there are lots of signs of progress. However, most of us are marinated daily in the cultural values of western societies and it is near impossible to simultaneously keep track of all the cultural assumptions that press upon us. Even the most conscientious amongst us can miss deeply embedded assumptions that bend our best intentions back towards the status quo.

In seeking to understand the problem of control, we propose challenging existing assumptions, rethinking possibilities, pushing open doors to educational opportunities, exposing the limitations of current ways of knowing and being in world, and embracing learning opportunities arising from engaging with the more-than-human world. In short, we’re seeking to loosen the

leash of control a little or maybe a lot. We are specifically seeking to renew our art and practice of teaching and to make it less controlled by cultural norms, less dogmatic about expectations, and more disruptive and rebellious. We seek intentional activities that provide fertile fields for personal and purposeful experience without controlling the environment and its actors, learners, or educational outcomes. In short, we seek to make it *more wild* (Blenkinsop & Morse, 2017). So, in our work, we are proposing something we have called *wild pedagogies*. Below, we consider what this means in terms of education and our relationships in the world.

Wild Pedagogies in Education

By introducing wild pedagogies, we suspect that we are giving a name to what many educators are already striving to do. Some will be teaching outside of mainstream education. Some will be outdoor leaders, wilderness guides, environmental educators, or interpreters. Others will be involved in social justice issues and work with the homeless, the marginalized, and those with special needs. Still others will be involved in community education projects, cross-cultural settings, or have worked abroad. One thing that often unites such an eclectic group of educators is an enthusiasm for making a difference in the world and an understanding that mainstream education is, at best, incomplete. For many, they also know that transformative experiences do not easily fall within prescribed teachable goals and formal subjects.

Perhaps the keyword here is “prescribed.” Learning must typically serve the ends of the education process based on predetermined outcomes and preferably those that are measurable. The learning environments are predominately classrooms. The language and metaphors for teaching and learning reflect an established educational culture in ways that are prescriptive. Even within education faculties there can be enormous efforts to prescribe and control the education of teacher candidates (Jickling, 2009). Where we feel that these demands have become less rigid, we find opportunities.

Despite curriculum control, testing pressures, and these deeper cultural constructs, many committed teachers do find ways to resist and to create space for what they consider meaningful transformative, even *wild*, teaching. Without sliding into an unstructured free-for-all, many outdoor educators are finding ways to loosen forms of control, to act in solidarity with the marginalized, to bring the voices of the voiceless to students, to push back against the often implicit anti-environmental orientations of the cultures they are immersed in. They are enacting pedagogies that are less objectively oriented and more co-constructed, less human-expertly known and more epistemologically diffuse, less universal and more place responsive. In short, they are wilding their practices.

Into the Wild World

Any meaningful shift from the present status quo will most likely require a profound change in the way most of us humans (though, not all) relate to the world around us. We need to be different. Reimagining relationships within the world will require disrupting dominant human-centered thinking and hierarchical positioning. We will need to move from simply controlling the world around us to thinking of ourselves as being emotional, educational, and ecological partners within this more-than-human world. Rather than attempting to domesticate the lands that we inhabit, we must move towards appreciating this land’s inherent wildness; to appreciate its agency and its capacity to shape understanding of our presence in it. To do this we work with the idea of wilderness, and its relative wildness, to leverage our thinking. We suggest it is timely to re-think, once again, what these concepts have been, what they are, and what they might become.

We acknowledge, at the outset, the colonial legacy of wilderness and the impact this has had in the disenfranchisement of peoples and cultures the world over (Bird Rose, 1996). And we recognize that wilderness can be positioned in a way that reduces its value to a backdrop as an inanimate set of resources, for human-centered and self-serving ends (Cronon, 1996). It can also be

positioned as a challenge to be overcome which often leads to images of heroic and/or colonial conquest. We acknowledge and agree with these critiques. However, with some reconsideration, we believe that there is value in a robust conception of wilderness that does not rest in, or rely upon, colonial tropes and heroic narratives.

Despite its historical liabilities, we argue that wilderness can be reconceived by tracing its etymological roots to “self-willed land” and, hence, its inherent wildness to freedom even. Such a new becoming points to a deeper understanding of relationship as remarkably different from the colonially infused concept. Capacity for self-will, or wildness, hints at concepts like inherent value, independent purpose, resistance, agency, and rights. For the wild pedagogies project, it also helps to problematize ideas about control. Hence, within the concept of wilderness lies wildness, and pedagogical inspiration. Wildness, we argue, resists the kinds of control that can limit educational opportunities. This also suggests that the wild is not some place at a distance from most human life, but that the wild can be found in places close to home, in urban, suburban, and industrial zones, and that is it within us all. So, an important question becomes: How might we allow the self-willed nature of human and more-than-human others, and the places we inhabit, to enter more fully into our practice?

The Shape of Wild Pedagogies

It would be tempting to think of wild pedagogies as a tight framework, but that would not be correct. Our intention is that wild pedagogies will be a provocateur at the intersection of imagination and praxis. That it will be an active agent of discovery, more generative rather than prescriptive. It is about the act of wilding education, rather than aiming for a particular destination. Wild pedagogies are not about replacing other “educations” such as environmental education or place-based education or outdoor education and so on. Rather, it is a *tool* intended for *all* educators to question their practices evermore deeply. As such, we hope that wild pedagogies will inspire responses that are creative, courageous, and radical, because that is what our times urgently require.

Who Are Wild Pedagogies For?

Educational change will not arise from any particular location and must be a broad undertaking. As educators ourselves, we see challenges facing education, and it is natural to begin with our professional kin. Most obviously, we are writing for environmental educators, outdoor educators, place-based educators, forest-school educators, and a vast array of like-minded others. However, we are forever reminded that the educational problems of our times are systemic and deeply cultural. So, we believe that this work has something to say to all those working and studying in formal education systems, whatever labels you choose to describe your work.

Education also takes place at home, at work, and in community activities, with our children, our peers, and our friends, and our neighbours. Education takes place in museums, aquariums, parks, playgrounds, summer camps, and social service agencies. As such, there are educational steps that can be taken by parents, students, community educators, teachers, school principals, academics, business leaders, policy makers, health-care providers, wilderness guides, ministers of education, and other politicians. The time for this collective response is now. We must critically and thoughtfully examine human activities on earth by considering our deepest assumptions, ideals, values, and worldviews. This is the work of everyone attempting a wilding of education.

Touchstones for Wild Pedagogies

It is not easy to quiet the ever-present normative chatter that bombards our minds. As we attempt to disrupt one set of social norms, we are surrounded by others that press us to conform. It is impossible to break free entirely from all deeply embedded and powerfully controlling instincts. In the following section, we offer a series of touchstones to help cut through this chatter and support the practical work of wild pedagogies. The touchstones stand as reminders of what we are trying to do, or as ideas to return to, and they help us to bring focus to some key issues that inhabit the core of this educational project.

Each touchstone below begins with a brief description of a pedagogical consideration and concludes with a series of questions. Touchstones are intended to be revisited, refined, and reconsidered. Indeed, this version of wild pedagogies has two more touchstones than the original version (Jickling et al. 2018). The touchstones can become points of departure and places to revisit. As such they are not intended to be dogmatic, but simply a gathering of emerging ideas and practices. They are not intended to define wild pedagogies; rather, they should act as agents or provocateurs of discovery for inspired practitioners. We hope you enjoy them.

Touchstone #1: Nature as Co-teacher. We believe that education is richer, for all involved, if the natural world and the many denizens that co-constitute places, are actively engaged with, listened to, and taken seriously as part of the educative process (Crex Crex Collective, 2018).

At one level this touchstone might appear easy to understand and even put into practice. The claim is that the natural world is a vibrant, active, agential place that is worth listening to, attending to, building relationship with, and learning from. Accepting this perspective likely means that educators will spend more time outdoors and thus find different pedagogical possibilities and new affordances being engaged. However, at another level, this touchstone has significant implications for what knowledge is and how learning happens. If nature becomes a co-teacher then the human, often considered as the sole possessor, arbiter, and conveyor of knowledge is de-centered and learning becomes a shared project that is no longer ever complete or human-based (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010). If we take this concept seriously, the impacts can be profound.

How might more-than-human and/or material others be understood as active collaborators or instigators in pedagogical activities, rather than objects of study? In other words, how might we move on from learning about the more-than-human world to learning with and from it? How can we acknowledge the role of the other-than-hu-

man (including the material other) as active agents, capable of being entangled with pedagogical events? Quay and Jensen (2018), for example, assert the need to widen educational approaches and reach beyond human-centric ideas of teacher-centered pedagogy and student-centered learning, to include more-than-human-centered learning.

Such opportunities remain strong within the lives of children, and for adults the challenge can be to acknowledge such possibilities. As Rautio (2013) suggests, “to appreciate also the momentary and the seemingly unguided in children’s everyday lives ... we would have to embrace the thought that teachers—those who invite, guide, support and steer us—can also be other than human beings” (p. 402). As an example, consider a moment on an outdoor walk when students’ attention is drawn towards some damp moss and micro-worlds atop a rock slab. They may lie down on the warm surface of the rock bringing their eyes to meet the moss world. This change in perspective might create a frenzy of excitement. At this moment, as ant trails emerge here and there, and water seeps through the moss forest creating miniature rivers, nature as co-teacher is taking over. Students are drawn, by the moss, into engaging in conversations with each other and the place— “why does moss feel so soft?” — “who lives within the moss?” — “what systems are they using to organize their lives?” This touchstone is a reminder that pedagogical response in such moments (through language, movement and time) ought to reflect the active agential role of nature.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- How can I invite the natural world to be present as a co-teacher in my practice? How can I allow other teaching voices to be heard in their own ways?
- How have we been able to learn about, with, and from the more-than-human world?
- How can my class and I contribute to the flourishing of each other and those other

beings that we live amongst?

- What are my teaching habits that can distance, background, undervalue, or denigrate the natural world?

Touchstone #2: Complexity, the Unknown, and Spontaneity. We believe that education is richer for all if there is room left for surprise. If no single teacher or learner can know all about anything, then there always remains the possibility for the unexpected connection to be made, the unplanned event to occur, and for a simple explanation to become more complex (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 84).

This touchstone prioritizes the unpredictable as it pushes back against the desire to control and contain. Embracing complexity requires acknowledging that not everything can be completely known, and that learning cannot be predetermined or packaged in advance, without the potential loss of serendipitous learning. Complexity can be understood as dynamic, fluid, and unpredictable, and is best described in reference to qualities without fixed boundaries. Wild pedagogies call upon educators to be open to spontaneous, complex, and sometimes surprising occurrences. For educators this touchstone can involve risk as the emergent tends to complexify situations and curriculum design can no longer focus on simply positing desired learning outcomes and then pushing students towards those chosen particulars (Green & Dymont, 2018). The world does not in fact work in such a clean, predictable, linear fashion and something important is lost when we assume that it does.

In many educational contexts, there exists a reliance on learning about the world through ideas of separation, classification and knowable objects. Learners, for example, can be encouraged to delineate individual objects, identify them, describe them and expound knowledge about them, as objects of study. Yet such ideas continue to reinforce individualistic subject/object relational understandings of the world. This touchstone asks, what might occur if we resist the ingrained urge to classify and define something, and instead search for complexity, perme-

ability, interconnectedness and the unknown as we meet the world?

Consider, for example, a moment when students notice a mushroom growing at the base of a tree. They might be intrigued by the colour, smell and form. There might be an urge to classify the mushroom, to record its colour and form (even to pick the mushroom), and to learn more about this individual species. Yet, if we resist such urges, we might deliberately encourage a search for complexity and spontaneity. If we provide time and encouragement to explore and consider what we might learn from fungi with questions such as—“what do you notice about the trees, plants or surfaces they are growing on or near?”—“why do you think these fungi exists in this place?” We might then feel a hint of the relational way that mushroom exists. Indeed, we might learn a great deal not only from these mushrooms but also from an experience that welcomes complexity and entanglements as a source of knowledge, understanding, and even positionality in the world.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- How did I embrace complexity in my teaching today? Was there room for the unknown, spontaneous, and unexpected to appear, and be taken seriously?
- How did I empower learners to embrace the complexity of knowledge and not reach for easy answers? Did they encounter the incomplete nature of knowledge today?
- Did I take risks today in moving away from attempts to control assumed ends? How can I continue that tomorrow?

Touchstone #3: Locating the Wild. We believe that the wild can be found everywhere, but that this recognition and the work of finding the wild are not necessarily easy. The wild can be occluded, made hard to see by cultural tools, by the colonial orientation of those doing the encountering, and, in urban spaces, by concrete itself (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 88).

For many outdoor environmental educators, the wild is more clearly apparent the farther one gets from urbanization. It can be hard to ignore the wild when standing by a waterfall deep in the Australian rainforest, or at the crest of a Norwegian glacier. But this touchstone acknowledges that the wild can be located anywhere: in the rural, standing on the ice, indoors, and in the deeply urban. Yet in any context (including the rainforest or arctic) the wild can be, and often is, obfuscated by cultural and colonial overlays. The child who sees the mushroom pushing up next to the tree, for example, can note its resilience, its wildness, and its self-willed nature. Seemingly just as easily that child can reconfirm human hubris by taking it for granted or crushing it flat. As such, educators will also be challenged to name and respond in critical ways to the language, the metaphors, and the actions that confirm environmentally problematic narratives and prevent learners from encountering the wild, their own or that of others, and enacting their own freedom. Despite the incredible efforts of many urban outdoor environmental educators the murmur of the wild can, at times, be drowned out by the noises, smells, impositions, and demands of a human culture that claims superiority and buries the other in its myriad constructions (Derby et al., 2015).

This touchstone brings the critical into wild pedagogies. It cautions against the cultural constraints inherent in contemporary public education and modernity's colonial orientations towards the natural world, and many people. Taking this touchstone seriously challenges educators to think about their own positioning and privileges, including those relative to the more-than-human world. It challenges educators to be constantly aware of how the status quo is sustained by the language and metaphors, the structures they work within, the tools they employ and it challenges them to devise ways to disrupt this status quos. Wildness asserts a resistance to such implicit means of control. One way to locate this wildness is to be deliberately open to it, to acknowledge, and to welcome it. This can require a shift in perception. Within education, for example, control is often structurally asserted through

walls of buildings, timing of classes, arrangements of desks, and universal and measurable outcomes. These structures reinforce relationships of power. There is something comfortable about going along with known practices. To deliberately seek and engage with the wild, can be risky as it disrupts these relationships.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- How can I enable encounters with wild, self-willed, communities in the spaces that my students co-inhabit? How can we ensure these encounters are acknowledged?
- How can we recognize human-centered habits, dominating impulses and urges to control and “manage” the natural world around us, and within our curricula? How can we respond to these tendencies?
- How can we help students “lean into” difficult encounters with human privilege, alienation, and dominance?

Touchstone #4: Time and Practice. We believe that building relationships with the natural world will, like any relationship, take time. We also believe that discipline and practice are essential to this process (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 92).

This touchstone focuses on two key discussions: process and practice. Both are ultimately interested in building and maintaining relationships within the natural world, particularly in places we inhabit. Focusing on process suggests that building relationships is aided by spending time in places, immersed in and listening to the world (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). However, we might also be aided by reconsidering how we conceptualize time, finding ways to slow down, changing habits that separate us from others, listening to our bodies, and those around us, in different ways, and immersing ourselves in what some have called deep time. Focusing on practice implies discipline. The work required to build rich relationships is reminiscent of the work required to develop a meditative practice. Such practices are about the how of teaching and the habits that underpin this work.

But slowing down and allowing ourselves and our students to be present and engage directly with the work means stepping away from some of the ways we have been taught to teach. It means taking a risk and being willing, as a teacher, to give up full control and make space for the more-than-humans and the unexpected outcomes. Giving up control requires trust: not just trust in our students, but also in the places we inhabit. Planning teaching sessions can be uncertain. There can be some fear that the session will not keep students occupied, or that they might not learn enough. But if we trust our students, and places, to generate pedagogical possibilities, then we might be able resist the urge to retreat to conventional sequences of pre-determined activities (see for example, Morse et al., 2018). We might find the confidence to allow students to authentically settle into a place, to listen to myriad voices and to allow experiences to run their course. In doing so, we might resist what Jardine (1996) describes as “pedagogical hyperactivity.”

Educators, themselves, require time and practice to build and maintain significant relationships with and in the more-than-human world. At the heart of this touchstone is making time to deliberately encounter the wild. This means more than just encountering the wild within, but also the actual wild outside: wild landscapes, animals, plants, and situations. Part of this practice is learning or relearning how to be outdoors. It can also be considered a practice that requires listening deeply to potential co-teachers as an integral part of recognizing and working with wild others.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- Can I leave enough time and space in my teaching for engagement with the nearby natural spaces and more-than-human beings?
- How are we able to step out of schools’ linear time together and work in different ways? How are we to recognize that some will need more time than others?

- Am I able to notice and support learners who are trying out new habits? Am I trying new practices myself, and reflecting on these attempts?
- How can I nurture my own immersion in places? How can I build relationships with these places and the beings encountered?
- What opportunities do my students have to develop their intuition and other marginalized ways of knowing and understanding?

Touchstone #5: Cultural Change. We believe that the way many humans currently exist on the planet needs changing, that this change is required at the cultural level, and that education has an important role to play in this project of cultural change. We also believe that education is always a political act, and we see wild pedagogues embracing the role of activists as thoughtfully as they can (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 97).

This touchstone begins with a radical premise: much of current educational practice, particularly that which rests on the same theoretical footing as modern western culture, is anti-environmental. By maintaining the status quo, or simply trying to tinker with the edges of what currently exists, will not be enough to change the human/nature relationship or even limit the destruction being wrought. As such, wild pedagogies is a project of cultural change. This makes educating an explicitly political act and places the teacher in the role of activist, recognizing that the choices being made in the classroom have explicit and implicit implications for how learners come to understand themselves, what it means to be human, and the importance of the more-than-human world therein.

Education is always a political act. Through language, attitudes, and curricula, we either reproduce or disrupt the status quo and in turn shape social, cultural, and ecological futures. In many outdoor environmental education contexts, it is possible to assert, through language and narratives, the agency of places. For example, when we arrive in a place, we might initially take the time to introduce it as a place, a community, a culture, with agency and histories (not only hu-

man or necessarily in human timescales). We might even allow the place to introduce itself in subtle ways. In other words, rather than arriving in a place, staking our claim, and readying to use the place for an activity; we might rather walk slowly, listen carefully, be respectful, allow time to settle, and offer some stories that acknowledge and deliberately pay attention to its agency.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- Where are my old habits limiting possibilities—in response to existing curricula and values embedded my workplace? What would it take to be satisfied with my response?
- What am I doing to help learners develop political agency? Am I offering them realistic tools to imagine alternative futures and support change?
- What politics of the natural world have we encountered? How have we brought them into our learning spaces?
- Have learners been given opportunities to consider their current relationships with places they inhabit and the other beings that live alongside? Did they have the right to change these?

Touchstone #6: Forming Alliances and Building Community. We believe that the colonial ethos of resource extraction is not separate from, but is yet another shade of the many hierarchies of dominance that exist amongst humans. For this reason wild pedagogues seek alliances and build community with others, not only in the environmental world, but across all people and groups concerned with justice (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 102).

This touchstone seeks to remember the importance of, and to work towards building, strong alliances and flourishing communities, while at the same time reminding us not to forget the human in all of this work. Here the implicit goal is to push against the challenges of individualization and alienation and, at the same, to resist the colonial move to separate marginalized groups,

be they human or other-than-human, and place them at odds with each other. To create flourishing equitable communities, we need to listen and learn from each other. Here educators across formal and informal spectrums can work with and learn from others: outdoor leaders, classroom teachers, students, community elders, Indigenous practitioners, and activists.

Often our intuitive pedagogies can be about asserting control, and in so doing we can shy away from the risks of vulnerability, anxiety, and uncertainty both for ourselves and for our students. Yet being open to others and understanding knowledge as situated and incomplete is a critical part of forming alliances and expanding educational opportunities. Newbery (2012) suggests, in considering colonizing outdoor environmental education pedagogies, “often, our pedagogies work to contain conflict and anxiety, thereby containing, rather than opening up, possibilities for learning” (p. 38). Proactively forming alliances and building a sense of community could include, for example, engaging with Indigenous community members prior to, or during, an outdoor experience, seeking permission to travel on lands or waterways, taking the time to hear and understand their stories including traumatic histories, and through dialogue that acknowledges our own culpability in colonizing practices.

Taking risks, forming alliances and strengthening communities offers new and exciting educational possibilities. How, for example, might Indigenous knowledges offer pedagogies of kinship with places? How might such ways of knowing provide alternative relationships? And, how might the lives of our students be strengthened through an enlarged sense of community? Building community can provide connections, support systems, and resilience as everyone works towards shared goals, as well as important experiential opportunities for understanding relationships. Forming authentic alliances with others involves acknowledging, welcoming, and appreciating differences such that change might begin to happen together.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- Who makes up my communities when I think of doing wild pedagogies work? Why? Who is left out, but should be included? Why?
- How do I support my communities and how do they support me? How can I foster these same questions in my classrooms or other learning spaces?
- How do my various communities make decisions? Who is affected by these decisions?
- What can I do to bring the natural world more explicitly into community decision making?
- How may my communities encourage one another to depart from the status quo? How do we encourage and challenge each other, allow for mistakes, and rebound from setbacks?

Touchstone #7: Learning That is Loving, Caring and Compassionate. We believe that, if given the opportunity, humans are able to develop rich relationships with myriad members of the more-than-human world. These relationships of reciprocal care are part of overcoming the alienation that exists between many humans and the natural world (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 126).

Where does care and compassion incubate, where does it arise, and can we even control it? It is insightful to revisit some contemporary environmental writers and consider how they have described, sometimes implicitly, their own caring and empathetic relationships with the more-than-human.

For example, the Norwegian eco-philosopher, Næss (1988), was explicit about the origins of his own compassion, and solidarity with the world around him. He repeatedly pointed to his experience of watching a writhing flea die in a bath of acidic chemicals. In this recognition of his own empathy for and affiliation with the suffering of the flea, he began to see, encounter, and even be in the world differently. He continued to work with these revelations, developing his theory of eco-philosophy, for more than four decades. Similarly, the well-known American conserva-

tionist, Leopold, described his own inescapable discovery of care, and the limits of his own understanding, the day he watched a wolf die. This moment fell outside of his normal experiences and he wrestled with it for the rest of his life. As Leopold's thinking evolved, he eschewed ideas that rested on the presumption of human dominance. And he gave us the idea that, "We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in" (Leopold, 1966, p. 251).

Carson (1962) thrived during her rural childhood on the family farm. There she rambled extensively, sometimes with her mother, and developed her sense of curiosity. As an inspiring young writer, her love, care, wonder, and awe for the world around her first appeared in stories written for children's magazines. Though she may not have thought of it in these terms, her writing highlights the agency of her cohabitants and their role as teachers. She found that learning, during these days on the trail, could be joyous. The foundational experiences Carson enjoyed as a child appeared to shape the publication of her landmark book *Silent Spring* (Greenwood, 2018).

When surveying these three examples it is possible to trace some entwined traits running through them. All are profoundly sensual and arise out of first-hand experience. All require being in the world. All evoke care through emotional engagement, empathy, and identification. This care can also evoke sadness, disenchantment, and anguish. These examples point to understandings that aren't solely located in an individual human; the natural world exerts agency, perhaps even a kind of teaching.

Such a collection of traits has significant educational implications. What does teaching practice begin to look like if we take these insights seriously? If, as Derby (2015) suggests, "We have come to experience 'school life' and learning as fundamentally prosaic; characterized by fragmentation, emotionless and exacerbated by the privileging of epistemic foundations such as anthropocentrism, reductionism, linear causality, and dualism" (p. 25), then there is a lot of work to do.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- What did I do today that required learners to be sensually present in their learning? What did I do today that required learners to encounter the other, to feel care, and to notice the more-than-human world?
- What have I done to accommodate experiences that exist beyond the capacity of language to fully describe and evaluate?
- Even though some learning cannot be measured, it still exists. How can I create a positive space in my evaluation scheme to honour this existence?
- Have I considered how to hold space for learners as they encounter the range of emotions that appear in response to burgeoning care? What kinds of skills and supports can I offer them as they act in ways that are at times contrary and potentially threatening to the system in which they live and learn?

Touchstone #8: Expanding the Imagination. We believe that the ecological world has changed dramatically and that public education has to change in response. Future teachers can no longer be trained for a system that leaves students ill-prepared to respond to current crises and imaginatively unable to create new responses (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 131).

Here we draw on research from a radical public school to better understand the role the imagination plays in learning (Blenkinsop *et al*, 2018). The authors of that work focused on four ways policy can hinder innovation. However, the one that best translates into this discussion about teacher education was called the “self-limited imagination.” The emergence of this category was a surprise, though once named its presence became ubiquitously visible.

Self-limited imagination is not a case of something that has been thought of before, but is being ignored. Nor is it something that is deemed impossible. Rather, it was more about alternative policies not being imaginable at all! It appeared

to be about people not having the experiential materials, the flexibility of mind, the institutional permission, the cultural range—whatever the blinder might be—to bring into consciousness an idea as even possible. This was about an imaginary limit being reached. When something beyond these imaginary boundaries was offered, the response was often complete blankness, or the muttered “I have never even thought of that...” This is striking. When not addressed, it stands to thwart far-reaching or radical innovation and indeed wild pedagogies.

We should also note that the “self-limited” part of this discussion might be a misnomer. For as we explored the idea, it became clear that imaginative limits are contained within cultures and systems. We must be aware that the imagination is not as broad and flexible as suggested in everyday understanding. For educators, this has important implications. Not only do we have to recognize our culturally limited imaginations, but part of our pedagogical work might be to expand the range of cultural options available to teachers. The languages we learn to speak, and the foundational stories we are told, shape who we are in the world. However, they also limit what we can think and imagine.

The challenge of expanding imagination is difficult and has implications for how we imagine and then re-create ourselves as teachers. However, there are some things to consider. We can name this limitation for educators and posit it as part of our practice. This might in turn act to de-centre the teacher as expert and open the space for risk-taking, for pedagogical exploration, and for humility regarding expertise. For if we are imaginatively limited by our histories and cultures, then none of us has the whole answer. This might also leave more space for the unusual, the crazy, the spontaneous, and those ideas characterized as “just won’t work” to find some fertile ground in which to prosper. Our sense is that this might in fact be the very places from which the best ideas will come for responding to the changing world we are in.

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- What did I do with my practice today that pushed outside the students' previous experiences and my own imagination?
- What new "stuff", experiences, and stories did I add to the mix? How are students taking up, working with, and being changed by these diverse cultural tools?
- Did I notice my proclivity to "not do" the seemingly unusual or limit learners seeking to do the same? Did I make a considered attempt to provide space for the unusual to happen?
- What cognitive, physical, cultural, and natural tools am I working with right now? What new ones might I try introducing? Where might I look to find additional ideas?
- What are the edges of my experience that might limit how far I can imagine into a different kind of education? What are the limits of my own imagination?
- What sources of inspiration am I seeking to support and enhance pedagogical change and development?

Concluding Thoughts

We must act differently. We cannot continue as we are and education must play a role in the cultural change required. Orr (2017), like many others, calls for serious educational change, because "without exaggeration it will come down to whether students come through their formal schooling as more clever vandals of the Earth and of each other" on one hand, "or as loving, caring, compassionate, and competent healers, restorers, builders, and midwives to a decent, durable, and beautiful future" (pp. ix–x) on the other. What will it take to nurture caring, compassionate, and competent restorers of the earth?

With wild pedagogies, we aim to provoke opportunities for reimagined relationships, to partner with more-than-human communities, and to nurture caring and compassionate educators. Responding to the ecological and social crises of our times, however, will require more. In work-

ing with students and communities to enact such cultural change, educators and researchers are called to rethink education, reimagine pedagogies, and, when needed, to fiercely resist the status quo: to be rebel teachers. By framing key underpinning ideas of wild pedagogies, situating them through the touchstones, and then experimenting with our practices, we hope to have offered a way forward that can provide possibilities for each of us to become better educators and allies of, for, with, and in the more-than-human world.

References

- Au, W. (2011). Teaching under the new Taylorism: High-stakes testing and the standardization of the 21st century curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(1), 25-45.
- Bauman, Z. (2005). *Liquid Life*. Polity Press.
- Bird Rose, D. (1996). *Nourishing terrains: Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness*. Australian Heritage Commission.
- Blenkinsop, S., & Beeman, C. (2010). The world as co-teacher: Learning to work with a peerless colleague. *Trumpeter*, 26(3), 26–39.
- Blenkinsop, S., C. Maitland, & J. MacQuarrie. (2018). In search of policy that supports educational innovation: Perspective of a place- and community-based elementary school. *Policy Futures, online*.
- Blenkinsop, S., & Morse, M. (2017). Saying yes to life: The search for the rebel teacher. In B. Jickling & S. Sterling (Eds.), *Post-sustainability and environmental education: Remaking education for the future* (pp. 49–62). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blenkinsop, S., Telford, J., & Morse, M. (2016). A surprising discovery: Five pedagogical skills outdoor and experiential educators might offer more mainstream educators in this time of change. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 16(4), 346–358.

- Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Crex Crex Collective, Hebrides, I., Affifi, R., Blenkinsop, S., Gelter, H., Gilbert, D., Gilbert, J., Irwin, R., Jensen, A., Jickling, B., Knowlton Cockett, P., Morse, M., Sitka-Sage, M., Sterling, S., Timmerman, N., & Welz, A. (2018). Six touchstones for wild pedagogies in practice. In B. Jickling, S. Blenkinsop, N. Timmerman, & M. D. Sitka-Sage (Eds.), *Wild pedagogies: Touchstones for re-negotiating education and the environment in the Anthropocene*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness: Or, getting back to the wrong nature. In W. Cronon (Ed.), *Uncommon ground: Rethinking the human place in nature* (pp. 69–90). W.W. Norton.
- Derby, M. (2015). *Place, Being, Resonance: A critical ecohermeneutic approach to education*. Peter Lang.
- Derby, M., Piersol, L., & Blenkinsop, S. (2015). Refusing to settle for pigeons and parks: Urban environmental education in the age of neoliberalism. *Environmental Education Research*, 21, 378–389.
- Greenwood D. A. (2018). Rachel Carson's childhood ecological aesthetic and the origin of the sense of wonder. In, Cutter-Mackenzie A., Malone K., Barratt Hacking E. (Eds) *Research Handbook on Childhood Nature*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer.
- Green, M., & Dymont, J. (2018). Wilding pedagogy in an unexpected landscape: Reflections and possibilities in initial teacher education. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 21(3), 277–292.
- IPCC. (2023). *AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023*. Accessed March 27, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/>
- Jardine, D. (1996). "Under the tough old stars": Meditations on pedagogical hyperactivity and the mood of environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 1(1), 47–55.
- Jickling, B. (2009). Sitting on an old grey stone: Meditations on emotional understanding. In: McKenzie, M., Bai, H., Hart, P., Jickling, B. (Eds.) *Fields of green: Restorying culture, environment, and education*. Hampton Press.
- Jickling, B. & Blenkinsop, S. (2020). Wilding Teacher Education: Responding to the Cries of Nature. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*. 23(1), 121-138.
- Jickling, B., Blenkinsop, S., Timmerman, N., & Sitka Sage, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Wild pedagogies: Touchstones for re-negotiating education and the environment in the Anthropocene*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Latour, B. (2014). Agency at the time of the Anthropocene. *New Literary History*, 45(1), 1-18.
- Leopold, A. (1966). *A sand county almanac: With essays on conservation from Round River*. Sierra Club / Ballantine. [First published in 1949/1953].
- Morse, M., Jickling, B., & Morse, P. (2018). Views from a pinhole: Experiments in wild pedagogy on the Franklin River. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 21(3), 255–275.
- Næss, A. (1988). Self-realization: An ecological approach to being in the world. In J. Seed, J. Macy, P. Fleming, & A. Næss (Eds.), *Thinking like a mountain: Towards a council of all beings*, (pp. 19-30). New Society Publishers.
- Newbery, L. (2012). Canoe pedagogy and colonial history: Exploring contested spaces of outdoor environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 17, 30–45.
- Orr, D. (2017). Foreword. In B. Jickling & S. Sterling (Eds.), *Post-sustainability and environmental education: Remaking education for the future* (pp. vii–xi). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Quay, J., & Jensen, A. (2018). Wilding ontologies through wild pedagogies. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 21(3), 293–305.

Rautio, P. (2013). Children who carry stones in their pockets: On autotelic material practices in everyday life. *Children's Geographies*, 11, 394–408.

Wattchow, B., & Brown, M. (2011). *A pedagogy of place*. Monash University Publishing